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Charter School Leaders and Their Students' Resilience

A Dissertation Presented

by

Katy B. Angelone

Submitted to the Graduate School of Education

Lesley University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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Educational Leadership Specialization

Charter school leaders and their students' resilience

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Lesley University

Ph.D. Educational Studies
Educational Leadership Specialization

Approvals

In the judgment of the following signatories, this Dissertation meets the academic standards that have been established for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this multiple composite case study was to develop descriptive accounts of the thoughts, beliefs, actions, and assessments of charter school leaders regarding their efforts towards students' resilience-building. Survey results from 46 participants identified eight Massachusetts charter school leaders who prioritized resilience-building within their schools. Semi-structured interviews with eight participants inquired about their reasons and methods for resilience-building in their schools and the factors and conditions that inhibit and foster their efforts. The qualitative data analysis yielded five findings. Participants operated from two orientations: resilience empowers learners and cultivates self-directed learning; and resilience is needed to manage traumatic experiences in student's lives. These two orientations became the basis for the two case studies. They explained empowerment in terms of students developing independence, problem-solving, using multiple attempts to complete difficult tasks, and utilizing strategies to overcome trauma. Participants reported that building resilience in their students requires programming that is culturally relevant, culturally supportive, and connected to students' lives. According to these leaders, engaging school programs that give students a voice, demonstrate that academic work has real-world consequences, and enable students to have a positive impact on their community are essentials elements of building resilience. Participants stressed the importance of creating a welcoming, safe, and nurturing climate in their schools as a necessary part of resilience building. The findings indicate that school leaders need multi-faceted and intentional approaches to leadership that both empower students in their academic and personal lives and acknowledge the high impact trauma has on contemporary youth and their schooling.

Key words: resilience, charter school leader, youth and adolescent trauma

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My journey as a Ph.D. student would have been impossible without the constant support that I received from several integral people in this journey. My senior advisor, Dr. Paul Naso, provided endless hours of dedication, patience and support as I in-turn emerged into a more patient and thoughtful researcher during this process. He challenged me to move beyond my comfort level and to grow immensely as an educator, writer and as a student and for that I am forever grateful. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Kerry Clery and Dr. Stephanie Spadorcia for the encouragement, thoughtfulness, and guidance that they have given me, as well as for dedicating their valuable time to participate in my doctoral committee. I am extremely grateful to the eight participants who granted an interview and the valuable insights regarding resilience that they shared with me.

My career as an educator has been enriched by the hundreds of students who have been not only a name on my roster, but children who I have seen grow into adults with their own careers and in some cases, adults who I have had the honor of teaching alongside. My students are truly part of my heart and represent my love for learning. I often see the world anew each day through their eyes. I hope that in some way I have touched their lives as greatly as they have touched mine.

After finding out that I was pregnant with my first child two weeks after receiving my acceptance to the Educational Leadership program, I knew that I had a difficult decision to make, which was whether or not to pursue my doctorate. I am sure I made the right one, and I know that my son James is an incredibly important part of what motivates me to become a better parent, teacher, and person. I decided to pursue this degree despite the challenges I knew I would face as a new mother, because someday, I want my son to know that you can accomplish

anything even if it seems impossible. James was with me as I was pregnant through my first summer residency and was in my arms as a shy toddler as I presented my dissertation proposal to the entire Educational Leadership and Adult Learning communities during my third residency. It is because of my love for him that I will always continue to grow and learn, and I hope he will always be proud of his mom.

My husband, Jimmy Angelone III, has been my solid foundation through this process. What a roller coaster ride it has been! Jimmy has boosted my spirits, empathized with my frustrations, loved me endlessly and unconditionally. He is my rock, and I could not have done this without his constant encouragement and support.

My incredible mother Babette Haley has been one of my biggest supporters along this ride. For the love, knowledge, time and many life lessons she has bestowed upon my son, for endless meals and for the incredible time, love, support, patience and guidance she has provided along this ride. I would not be the person I am without her.

Ari Angelone and Holly Angelone, it is your journey as students that encouraged me to write this paper. To see your successes and your struggles as you moved through school, to see you constantly overcome the many obstacles you have faced in your lives. You have both shown me what resilience is all about, and you have inspired me to write this paper to help others understand that they can continue to grow, to learn, to face new challenges and to find new strength within themselves each and every day that they never knew that they had. I love you both tremendously.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my late father, Paul Joseph Haley. He challenged me

once to change the world. I pursued this doctoral degree because of the strength, integrity,

endless love, knowledge, and the passion for learning he instilled in me. I hope that I have made

him as proud of me as I always was of him. Dad, I am grateful, I love you and I hope to make the

positive impact on this world that you always hoped I would.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF APPENDICES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Schools in the 21st century are tasked with much more than teaching academics. They

also must recognize and support students as they face the many obstacles present in modern life.

The ability of people to overcome these challenges in life is often labeled as resilience. The

development of resilience skills is considered essential for student success (Dorsey, 2017).

While many schools make the development of resilience-building skills a priority, this study

specifically focuses on how charter schools address the development of resilience-building skills

with their students. Supporters of charter schools claim that these schools are one type of school

that can prepare students for life's obstacles by focusing on the development of real-life skills. It

is notable that proponents of charter schools maintain that they are well-positioned to support the

building of resilience for all youth and may provide an alternative option for students who may

wish to attend a school other than the public schools in their district (Dorsey, 2017, p. 1).

It is evident that (a) charter schools are considered a school choice option for students

whose families wish for an alternative to traditional public schools (Cohen, 2017, p. 2); (b) that

these schools are often placed in poor, urban neighborhoods and enroll a great number of

students who are considered at-risk based on the various challenges that arise from urban poverty

(National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2014); and that (c) charter school leaders often

claim to be focused on teaching their students to be resilient so that they can become successful

in life (Rocketship, 2018; Sisulu-Walker School, 2018; Lowell Community Charter Public

School, 2018). Less evident in the literature are illustrations of how charter school leaders put

resilience-building into practice with their students.

As a teacher in a charter school, my personal and professional interest in the development

of charter school students has begun to take a scholarly focus. Though the charter school I work

in is not located in the city of Lowell, my charter school does serve students from the city of Lowell, one of the major urban areas in the state of Massachusetts. Over the last decade that I have worked as an educator in this charter school, I have participated in efforts to incorporate resilience building into the school-wide focus on the learning outcomes and integrate these efforts not only in the core curriculum, but through specific activities geared toward developing resilience traits. My colleagues and I subscribe to the idea that if we include a project-based approach to curriculum where students are expected to master specific character outcomes, including problem-solving, community membership, effective communication, and self-direction, we are providing conditions that enable resilience skills to develop.

My extensive experience as a charter school educator has shown me the potential within charter school environments to develop resilience in their students. While I recognize that enrollment in charter schools alone does not develop resilience, I have witnessed how the intentional efforts of charter school leaders towards developing a school culture supporting resilience has a great impact on a child's ability to thrive. Although my experience reinforces my belief in the potential for schools to have such an impact, I recognize the need to examine these endeavors by charter school leaders more closely to develop an understanding of the complex reasons they have for implementing their resilience-building efforts, as well as their perceptions of these efforts. It is this quandary that provides the foundation for my research.

Statement of the Problem

"Children and adolescents worldwide experience a variety of adverse experiences that have the potential to disrupt typical development" (Noltemeyer & Bush, 2013, p. 474). These experiences can involve trauma, socioeconomic status, and poor living conditions among others. Despite these stressors, many children exhibit resilience and are able to overcome the many

obstacles they face. According to Noltemeyer and Bush (2013), resilience does not refer to a specific character trait, but it is considered a process influenced by certain characteristics of an individual, as well as by the various social systems and environments that exist in that individual's life, including the school environment (p. 476).

Many researchers explain that resilience "emerges within an interactive model where the relationship between a risk factor and a negative outcome is weakened by the presence of one or more protective factors" (Noltemeyer & Bush, 2013, p. 476). In resilience literature, it is well-documented that the nature of relationships within the school environment can positively influence a child's capacity to thrive and overcome adversity (Johnson, 2008; Berliner and Benard 1995; Cardon, 2000; Noltemeyer & Bush, 2013, p. 479, Capuzzi and Gross, 2014; Tough, 2008; Bounds & Walker, 2014; Perez-Felkner, 2015). The effects of the protective factors created by the school-family-community connection are extensive. Bryan (2005) describes these protective factors as "risk-reducing mechanisms" (p. 220).

The significance of a child's school experience in the development of resilience has led many school leaders to incorporate practices designed to foster resilience. Charter school leaders are no exception, and due to their greater degree of freedom related to curriculum development, they may have more options for incorporating a resilience model into their programming than their counterparts in traditional public schools (Ferrerya & Kosenok, 2018, p. 160). Charter schools are often established in impoverished areas as a school choice option for families who are unsatisfied with their experiences with their local public schools or who wish to provide an alternative to a traditional public-school education. Because of the prevalence of children with high-risk factors in their populations, charter schools are often recognized as arenas where administrators should focus on incorporating a resilience model into their school programming in

an attempt to obtain long-term results, thus increasing the likelihood that students will become happy and successful adults (Gleason, 2016, p. 2).

Although charter schools that claim to be successful often include as part of their mission statements a focus on developing well-rounded and resilient children (U.S. Department of Education. 2004, p. 6; Rocketship Schools, 2018; Lowell Community Charter Public School, 2018), it is not always evident how charter school leaders convey the importance of these resilience efforts, incorporate the development of this resilience model into their programming, develop the supports and skills needed, and address the barriers they encounter when attempting to implement a resilience model. It is reasonable to assume that reflecting upon their resilience-building efforts will help charter school leaders better support their students and staff in the development of resilience in students. Fostering school conditions that enable young people to overcome a variety of adverse experiences is a critical need for society and arguably the most important role of any school leader.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the explanations charter school leaders have regarding their resilience-building efforts and their perceptions of how those efforts are operating in their schools. Literature exists regarding (a) the efforts of charter schools in creating viable options for school choice (Buckley & Schneider, 2009, p. 2, Hill, 2006, p. 7); (b) the types of charter schools that exist (U.S. Department of Education. 2004, p. 2-4); (c) the challenges facing charter schools (Hill, 2006, p. 7); and (d) the demographics of the student populations of charter schools (Bounds & Walker, 2014; Ferreyra & Kosenok, 2018). Aspects of charter schools receiving less attention include the general pedagogy of charter schools, and this includes the efforts of charter school leaders in developing resilience traits in their students, their views on

these efforts, and finally, what hinders and supports these efforts. There also appears to be a gap between what charters say their schools will do and details about the "real-world implementation of this pedagogy" (Buckley & Schneider, 2009); this study focused specifically on how charter school leaders view their schools' efforts, supports and obstructions in incorporating the development of a resilience model into the curriculum of their schools.

Charter school leaders have been advised to factor resilience-building efforts into their curriculum in an effort to promote academic success (Tough, 2016). School leaders have been urged to develop innovative programming to ensure that all students within their schools have opportunities to build the social and emotional skills needed to be resilient and must consider that not all teaching methods are always effective in producing resilient children (Tough, 2016).

This study intended to develop descriptive accounts of charter school leaders' thoughts, beliefs, efforts, and assessments of resilience-building within their schools. The accounts of these leaders will be presented as a case analysis involving two cases. These particular accounts are based on the knowledge gained from surveying and interviewing charter school leaders regarding their resilience-building efforts and perceptions.

In order to learn more about the resilience-building efforts and perceptions of charter school leaders, I used the following research questions to guide my research:

- Why do charter school leaders regard the cultivation of resilience in their students a school responsibility and how do they communicate this understanding to their school community, including parents, staff, and students?

- How do charter school leaders facilitate curriculum, instruction, and programming that cultivate resilience in their students?

- What do charter school leaders report are the factors and conditions that inhibit and foster their efforts in improving resilience in their students?"

Definition of Terms

Charter School- Charter schools are identified by Bounds & Walker (2014) as public schools that operate "according to a contract, or charter, which a government regulatory body issues" (p. 3). Bounds & Walker (2014) go on to describe the autonomy that is associated with planning curriculum and instruction in these schools, while still requiring accountability to strict state standards on a regular basis (p. 3). The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (2014) describes charter schools as being a school choice option that enables parents to send their children to a school that will provide a different way of operating in order to meet the needs of all students (p. 1). Ferreyra and Kosenok (2018) describe charter schools as school choice options that are run independently from the many regulations established by traditional public schools and are run by private individuals and associations (p. 160). For the purposes of this study, charter schools are defined as a school choice option that is run independently by private citizens, governmental associations, or organizations; and are free from the regulations of traditional public schools.

Charter School Leader- Charter school leaders are, for the purposes of this study, recognized as the Principals, Deans, Executive Directors, teacher leaders and other administrators that are in charge of the day-to-day operations of their schools.

Massachusetts Charter Schools- This study will focus on Massachusetts charter schools. These are schools that can include students in grades K-12 and that operate under a five-year charter. Massachusetts Charter Schools operate with increased freedom and accountability, are able to dictate their own budgets, and can hire and fire teachers and other staff at their own discretion.

Massachusetts Charter Schools receive a review by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education at the end of their five-year cycle and if they show evidence of positive results during these five years, their charter is renewed, and if results are not favorable, the Department can choose to not renew their charter (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018).

Resilience- The literature and research regarding resilience offers a variety of definitions. Berliner and Benard (1995) refer to resilience as the potential for youth to have healthy relationships and the ability to be functional adults (p. 3). Resilience is defined by Capuzzi and Gross (2014) as the tools young people have inside themselves for overcoming adversity and reaching for their dreams (p. 45). While Noltemeyer and Bush (2013) claim that there is no universal definition for resilience (p. 475), they do agree that resilience refers to patterns of behavior where youth exhibit the ability to adapt and overcome adverse experiences (p. 476). It is this definition that was used for this research paper.

Students/youth at risk- Researchers use the term at-risk as a way to identify the circumstances of children living in adverse situations, rather than as a way to identify the child. Most of the available research, however, concerns students living in urban poverty who are classified as being members of a minority. Kamenetz (2015), for example, explains the rise of the use of the term students at-risk to classify children in poverty as arising from the publication of the "policy report, "*A Nation at Risk*" (p. 5). Belfield and Levin (2012) describe these youth as individuals who "without greater family, public and community support…will experience substantially diminished opportunities over their lifetimes" (p. 1). Students at risk are often the focus of resilience-building efforts within schools as these students are the most likely students in a school to struggle with developing resilience due to the many adverse situations in their lives. It

is important to recognize that students who are at-risk are not incapable of learning, but that they have more obstacles to overcome in their learning process. In this paper, therefore, the words "at risk" will not be used as a label that categorizes students, but rather as a way to refer to conditions arising from a complex set of circumstances that make the development of resilience particularly challenging for some students. The only exceptions, or course, will occur when the phrasing is included in quoted content drawn from other sources.

Significance of the Study

The need for school staff members to facilitate their students' resilience is critically important, and especially so for charter school leaders who tend to lead schools populated with disproportionate numbers of disadvantaged youths (Gassama, 2012; Perez-Felkner, 2015). The findings of this study will be significant for current and future school leaders who wish to incorporate resilience-building efforts within their schools. This study connected findings to the current research available regarding resilience programming within charter school environments by providing insight into how charter school leaders describe their efforts towards building resilience in their schools. The literature surrounding resilience programs highlights the potential of these programs to promote healthy social, emotional, and physical growth in students who are at-risk (Perez-Felkner, 2015; Gassama, 2012, Tough, 2016). Perez-Felkner (2015) determines that how members of the school community react to a student can affect a student's resilience as they pursue a path to college (p. 4). Fostering resilience skills in students often requires a joint effort by the home, school, and community of these youth (Belfield & Levin, 2012, p. 1). It is the efforts of charter school communities, and specifically the efforts of charter school leaders, towards fostering these resilience skills, that provides the foundation for this research study.

This study serves as a resource to those leaders and teachers within school communities

who must plan the curriculum for their schools by acting as a guide to which these educators can refer as they identify ways that other school leaders have implemented resilience-building efforts. This study attempts to reveal the perceptions of charter school leaders regarding their resilience building efforts with students, to examine how they facilitate these efforts within their schools, and to identify leaders' perceptions regarding factors that inhibit and support their resilience efforts with students. Findings may lead other educators to use various methods that may have proven successful for participants in the study regarding building resilience skills in students or as a guide to planning professional development efforts regarding teaching staff about resilience-building. Due to the life circumstances of their student populations, charter school leaders have a critical responsibility to develop resilience-based programs within their schools to foster these important life skills, as many of the students within charter schools, and especially in urban charter schools, are classified as at-risk due to their socioeconomic backgrounds (Marshall, 2017, p. 1). Becoming more informed about the resilience-building practices of the participants in the study regarding their resilience-building efforts provides a guide for other school leaders to implement similar methods within their own schools.

This study provides cases, or instances, of charter school leaders elucidating beliefs, actions, and reasoning related to their resilience-building in their schools. Some of the students who attend charter schools often have particular needs concerning resiliency. Public charter school students make up a mere 6% of our nation's students enrolled in public schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). With improved understanding of how charter school leaders implement resilience-building efforts, we can potentially better support this population.

This study is significant to the field of education because it has the potential to reveal how charter school leaders understand and think about resilience-building. Broadening the

literature regarding how charter school leaders implement and value their resilience-building efforts provides insight into new ways to implement such efforts for charter school leaders, as well as other school leaders with an interest in resilience-building, as to how to incorporate these efforts into the curriculum and/or programming of their school(s).

This study offers school leaders a collected perspective drawn from the participants as to why resilience-building is so important for all students. The perspectives of the charter school leaders in the study may or may not be similar to other school leaders who refer to the study as a reference for their own practice. In addition, this study can become a resource that encourages reflection and dialogue about resilience building in charter schools. Without stories and illustrations of the resilience-building efforts of charter school leaders, it is difficult for school leaders to replicate successful efforts for future practice. The failure of school leaders to recognize the critical need to foster resilience skills in all students within their schools can result in a curriculum program that is ill-suited or an instructor that is ill-prepared to motivate and support their students, and especially so for students at-risk in their efforts for completing high school and entering the job force or higher education. The perceptions of charter school leaders regarding resilience efforts must be documented to better support the many students at-risk in public charter schools by providing a resource for school leaders to replicate successful efforts.

Delimitations of the Study

This study had several delimitations. Participation was limited to school leaders at charter schools serving the middle and high school levels, though some schools also included elementary grades from K-5. Middle and high school leaders in charter schools often have similar responsibilities. My familiarity with this type of environment makes it possible to ask informed

questions related to curriculum in these grade levels and to recognize many of the nuances of the curriculum and programming at each level.

While charter school leaders have a wide variety of responsibilities within their schools, this study did not focus on all of these responsibilities. The study was focused only on the thoughts and perspectives of charter school leaders regarding their efforts at fostering resilience in students through their planning, implementation, and monitoring of resilience-based curriculum, not on perspectives about other job responsibilities of these leaders.

The charter school leaders chosen for the study identified themselves as employed in Massachusetts charter schools due to the proximity to the researcher and the ability to visit these schools for interviews. Each of the charter school leaders chosen for the study works at a charter school that is categorized by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as a Commonwealth charter school, due to the similarity to my own school's classification as a Commonwealth charter[1], and my familiarity with this type of school. In addition, the study was limited to the specific leaders of charter schools who have a direct role in the development, implementation and/or monitoring of curriculum, regardless of the title that these leaders are given, as the structure of charter school administration can differ from public school administration, and because the study focused specifically on resilience-building in charter schools. These leadership titles can include Dean, Executive Director, Curriculum Coordinator, Head of School, Team Leader, or Principal among others. Charter school leaders who identified resilience as an important component of their school programming were included in the study. Teacher leaders who self-identified as being in charge of the development, implementation and monitoring of curriculum were also considered

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[1] independent public schools that operate under five-year charters granted by the Commonwealth's Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

for the study. Those charter school leaders who did not identify as participating in curriculum development, monitoring and/or implementation were not chosen for the interview phase of the study. Teacher leaders who have been in their current role for 2 years or more were considered for interviews, but those with less than 2 years in their current role were not included.

Review of the Literature

Chapter Two is a review of the literature that was used to inform the research study. It includes four primary areas of focus.

The first body of literature examines the works of several authors (Purcell (2020), Lippman & Schmitz (2013), Hughes & Smith (2020), Lukianoff & Haidt (2018), Gillihan (2019), Waters, Carr, Kefalas, & Holdaway (2011), Thompson, Coleman, O'Connor, Farrell, & Sullivan (2020), Kowalski (2019), Grimalt, Van den Hazel, & Bose-O'Reilly (2019), Taylor & Murray (2020), Solomon, Maxwell, & Castro (2019), Morsey & Rothstein (2019)) to provide insight into the complex set of societal conditions faced by 21st century youth that make their future less certain than past generations. The literature examines many of the stressors in their lives that may impact their ability to develop resilience, including: (a) their likelihood to have increased exposure to violence; (b) environmental concerns; (c) an increase in exposure to drugs and alcohol; (d) racial and gender discrimination; (e) the influence of technology; and (f) decreased financial stability. The section further examines how these stressors affect students' ability to develop resilience and describes how the prevalence of trauma present in the lives of 21st century youth impact their ability to develop resilience. The literature focuses on the prevalence of depression and anxiety among today's youth (Hidaka, 2012). Gassama (2012) and Haeseler (2011) identify the particular set of characteristics that classify youth at risk and emphasize their tendency to have a more difficult time developing resilience.

The second body of literature focuses on the nature of resilience in 21st Century youth. Insights from Gassama (2012), Capuzzi and Gross (2014), Berliner and Benard (1995), van Breda (2011), Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000), Masten (2018), and Duggal, Sacks-Zimmerman, and Liberta (2016) and others explain how researchers define resilience, advances in understanding the concept of resilience, and how researchers describe the intrinsic protective factors within a child that aid in their development of resilience.

The third body of literature examines the impact of resilience building practices in school communities. Many researchers including Utley, Kozleski, Smith, & Draper (2002), Perez-Felkner (2015), Lamperes (1994), and Johnson (2008)) have focused on the development of resilience to support children so that they are able to thrive in school and later in life. Plumb, Bush, and Kersevich (2016) recognize the need for inclusion of trauma-informed care in schools to better support students affected by trauma. They claim that when protective factors are present within the school environment, it supports all students in developing resilience. The literature emphasizes several protective factors that aid in the development of resilience in students: (a) the impact of parent involvement as described by Jeynes (2007, 2010), Burrington (2015), Haeseler (2011), and LeMoine and Labelle (2014); (b) the importance of the teacher-student relationship as identified by Lamperes (1994), Gassama (2012), Bryan (2005), Frelin (2015), Johnson (2008), McMillan and Reed (1994), Wright (1994), Capuzzi and Gross (2014), and Lencioni (2005); (c) the ability to learn how to problem solve using hands-on, project-based and conflict resolution learning, as described in the works of Sitzer and Stockwell (2015), Plumb, Bush and Kersevich (2016), Cardon (2000), Tough (2008), Bounds and Walker (2014), Perez-Felkner (2015), Shure (2001), Darling-Hammond, Zielezinski and Goldman (2014), Wright (1994); (d) and the impact of the school community as described by Perez-Felkner (2015), Gassama (2012), Belfield and

Levin (2012), Weir (2017), Masten, (2014). Luthar and Eisenberg (2017), Masten and

Coatsworth, as cited by Plumb, Bush and Kersevich (2016), Swaedener and Lubeck (1995),

Linquanti (1995), and Kerstetter (2016).

The fourth body of literature examines the nature of charter school programming as

described by Finn, Manno and Wright (2017), Cohen (2017), Prothero (2018), Jacob (2017), Hill

(2006). This section explains: (a) the design of charter schools as recognized by Buckley &

Schneider (2009); (b) charter school programming around resilience as described by Dorsey

(2017), the National Alliance for Charter School Programming (2014), and Cannata, Thomas and

Thombre (2013); (c) the role of the charter school leader in the development and/or

implementation of resilience building programming in their schools as noted by the Center for

Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2018). Aykac and Msengi (2019), Dugan

(2017), Hayes, Arafeh, & McDaniels (2015), Cotton (2003), Leithwood, Seashore Louis,

Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004), MacIntyre, Charbonneau, and O'Keefe (2013), and Candal

(2016); (d) why charter schools are focusing on fostering non-cognitive abilities in their students

as described by Garcia (2014), Farrington, Johnson, Allensworth, Nagaoka, Roderick and

Beechum (2012), and Kerstetter (2016); (e) the importance of promoting mental, emotional and

physical well-being of students through character education as seen in the works of Martinez

(2015), McGeown, St Clair-Thompson, and Clough (2016), Garcia (2014), Jeynes (2009), Rubin

(2016), and Smagorinsky and Taxel (2005), extracurricular activities as noted by Kim (2015),

Darling-Hammond, Zielezinski, & Goldman (2004), (Berlin, Dworkin, Eames, Menconi &

Perkins (2007) and Kronholz (2012), and self-care practices as identified by Fishbein, Miller,

Herman-Stahl, Williams, Lavery, Markovitz and Johnson (2016).

Examining the connection between the impact of societal conditions and stressors, the nature of resilience in 21st Century youth, the emphasis placed on resilience building practices in school communities and resilience building within charter school settings was critical to the study because it helped identify the urgent need for school leaders to make resilience building a priority within their schools and helped explain why charter school settings are a place where resilience building practices are necessary and how these schools are prioritizing resilience building and putting these efforts into practice. Overall, these four bodies of literature provided insight into the perspectives of charter school leaders regarding their resilience building practices within their schools. Each of these areas of scholarship is discussed within Chapter Two.

Design of the Study

This section provides a description of the methods and procedures guiding the study. Also included within this section is a description of the study's setting, the selection of participants and the role of the researcher. Additionally, the research procedures for data collection, data management, and data analysis are identified.

This qualitative study used a multiple-case study research method that includes two composite cases to explore the perspectives of charter school leaders regarding their resilience-building efforts within their schools. According to Yin (2009), case studies focus on contemporary events (p. 8), and examine why decisions were made, how they were made and with what result (p. 17). This fits well with the study, wherein two composite cases help to reveal the perspectives of several charter school leaders regarding their resilience-building efforts. Each of the two cases is based on one orientation of school leaders towards how they approach their resilience-building practices. In this study, a survey was used to identify interview participants. The primary source of data for this study were eight individual interviews conducted with eight

charter school leaders located in several charter schools located in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in primarily urban settings.

My role within the study was as a researcher. I have personal experience as a charter school educator for most of my teaching career. Because of this direct connection to the charter school setting, it was important for me as the researcher to be aware of my own biases regarding the topic of resilience practices within charter school settings and to ensure that I did not let my own biases interfere with the data collection or data analysis processes during the interviews with charter school leaders.

Data collection consisted of two phases. Demographic data was collected from a series of demographic questions within the online survey phase, which was the first phase of the study. This information was used to help identify the population being interviewed during individual phone or in-person interviews. Interviews were scheduled at times and using methods (in-person or phone) that were convenient to the participants. Interview locations included both phone interviews and the participant's school.

All interviews were recorded using an audio recorder within my computer. All data collected from the interviews was stored securely within a password protected document on my own computer. Survey data was only reviewed by me and was also stored within a password-protected document on my password-protected personal computer. The names of the participants are known only to me, and pseudonyms are used within the study to help protect the privacy of the participants. Following the completion of the research study, all transcripts, audio recordings and paper copies will be destroyed.

Data Collection

  In the first part of the study, I designed a survey (Appendix A) that was sent via e-mail to 139 charter school leaders at the middle and high school levels (though some also worked within the elementary school setting) in an effort to gain participants for this research study. A draft of the email sent to participants is included in Appendix A. The survey (Appendix B) was open for several weeks to allow time for participants to complete the survey. Of the 139 charter school leaders who received the request to participate in the survey, 46 responded to the survey. The survey inquired about the leaders' school structure, years of experience in their school, role in their school, and whether or not they considered resilience building within the school as a priority, as well as the presence of resilience building programming within their school.

  Charter school leaders who participated in the survey and who identified that they both participate in resilience efforts and are involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of curriculum were considered for the interview portion of the study. The final question of the survey indicated the participant's willingness to be considered for participation in Phase 2. The study resulted in eight total participants who were willing to participate in the interview phase.

  The participants chosen for interviews indicated that they had experience with and knowledge of methods for implementing resilience-building within a charter school environment. In addition, these participants are in a position to advocate, design and/or implement these methods within their schools. Those charter school leaders who actively incorporated resilience efforts within their school programming were considered as possible participants for the interview in the second phase of the study. All participants in the study had been at their schools for at least two years.

I designed an interview protocol (Appendix C) that was used to interview all eight of the survey respondents who agreed to participate in the interview. The interview questions aligned with the purpose of the study and were designed to gain a better understanding of the leaders' perspectives regarding their resilience-building efforts within their schools.

Data Analysis

After meeting with interview participants, the first step in the data analysis was to manually transcribe each of the eight interviews. I then examined the data collected from the interviews to first become familiar with what was present within the data and to understand how the responses aligned with my research goals. While reviewing the data, I looked for three major themes related to the research questions, which were: the value charter school leader's place on their resilience-building efforts, the ways that they implement resilience-building efforts, and what impedes or aids in their resilience-building efforts. Within each of these themes, I found several sub-categories, such as identifying different types of curriculum approaches that aid in building resilience. In addition, I analyzed the interview data to look for different patterns in how people responded that were consistent with the study's purpose, which was to highlight the perspectives of charter school leaders regarding their resilience building efforts within their schools. Eventually, I used multiple stages of categorizing the data, each of which is described in Chapter Three. I used tables and concept maps as methods for organizing and displaying the data. I was able to identify specific themes that existed in each of the interviews after reading the interview transcripts carefully. Because of the volume of data that was collected, it was important to winnow the data, as Creswell (2018) suggests (p. 192). This indicates that some data is used and deemed relevant to the study while other data was disregarded (p. 192). Using the coding process, as well as by organizing information from each of the interviews into tables and

concept maps, I was able to "generate descriptions or themes" (Creswell, 2018, p. 193) within

the data. Finally, analysis and integration of themes resulted in the creation of two cases which

are presented in Chapter Four.

Chapter Outline

The dissertation includes the following chapters:

- Chapter 1 consists of the introduction to the topic, the statement of the problem, the

    purpose of the study, guiding questions, definition of terms, significance of the study, and

    delimitations of the study.

- Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature regarding charter school programming, the

    resilience model, the importance of building resilience in students, and the

    implementation of resilience-building programming within charter schools.

- Chapter 3 includes an explanation of the design of the study, including a description of

    the Case Study Method. Also included is a description of the rationale for using the Case

    Study Method. This chapter describes how the Case Study Method was implemented,

    including an explanation of the survey instrument and interview protocol. Finally, this

    chapter describes the participants, the data collection method and the storage of data.

- Chapter 4 presents the data that was collected and coded from the charter school leaders

    regarding their perspectives on the implementation and effectiveness of resilience

    programming in their schools. The data is organized using a variety of methods,

    including tables, written descriptions of the data, and portions of the interviews that were

    conducted. The guiding questions help to organize the data in this chapter.

- Chapter 5 includes a discussion of findings and future implications for research regarding

    resilience, charter school leaders, and the long-term effects of teaching resilience.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Researching the topic of resilience and how it is addressed in school settings is an urgent matter in the field of education today. Twenty-first century youth are faced with a complex set of conditions that make the development of resilience in childhood and adolescence integral to their ability to be successful as they transition from their schooling to higher education or the job market (Purcell, 2020). "Schools are recognizing the importance of students' social and emotional well-being as well as a supportive school climate, more generally, in promoting positive academic and behavioral outcomes" (Lippman & Schmitz, 2013), making supporting youth in the development of resilience a priority of contemporary schools. Jones and Dolittle (2017) explain that supporting the social and emotional learning that leads to resilience building is very important for life outcomes such as "success in school, college entry and completion and later earnings" (p. 3). As a result of this increased awareness regarding the importance of social emotional health, it is common for contemporary schools to develop programming specifically aimed at aiding students in the development of resilience traits.

Montrallo (2014), Fallon (2010) and Finn, Manno, Vanourek, Finn, and Manno (2001) portray charter schools as settings that often emphasize resilience building programming for their students. As mentioned in Chapter One, charter schools often include as part of their mission statements a focus on developing well-rounded and resilient children (U.S. Department of Education. 2004, p. 6; Rocketship Schools, 2018; Lowell Community Charter Public School 2018). This research study focused on the perspectives of charter school leaders regarding their resilience-building efforts in their schools. In order to provide a context for this study, this chapter examines several bodies of literature in order to develop an understanding of: (a) the

impact of the particular set of societal conditions faced by youth in modern society; (b) the

nature of resilience in youth as well as insights into how youth develop resilience; (c) the history

and prevalence of resilience building programming in 21st century schools, and finally, (d) the

chapter contains an examination of accounts of how charter schools implement resilience

building programming. The distinct and intersecting themes in this scholarship provided a

foundation for this investigation of the perceptions of charter school leaders regarding their

resilience-building efforts within their schools for all students.

The Impact of Societal Conditions on 21st Century Youth

The mentality of contemporary youth and the society young people experience in the 21st

century is much different than that of their parents and grandparents. Children and adolescents in

the 21st century, known as Generation Z[2], face an unpredictable and everchanging set of

conditions. Hughes and Smith (2020) explain that a great deal of stress is placed on young

people in the 21st century, including: "industry 4.0, rapid technological advances, the challenges

of climate change, and in some countries, an aging population and workforce" (p. 7). Hughes and

Smith (2020) predict that due to the many issues of modern society, there will be a need for "new

youth policies and innovative practices...to address a potential tsunami of youth unemployment

and prolonged transitions between education and the world of work" (p. 7). In addition to the

obstacles they face as they enter an uncertain future after high school, adolescents also

experience a variety of stressors during their childhood and adolescent years. These issues

include but are not limited to school violence, an increase in the number of students reporting

depression and anxiety, childhood trauma, more students not suppressing their questions about

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[2] Generation Z= Those children and adolescents who are born between the years 1995 to 2015.

their gender identity, an increase in the numbers of immigrant and non-English speaking

students, and an increase in the numbers of children classified as homeless or living at or below

the poverty line (U.S. Surgeon General, 2001). Moreover, Lukianoff and Haidt (2018) claim that

even when students today "are reacting to real problems, they are more likely than previous

generations to engage in thought patterns that make those problems seem more threatening,

which makes them harder to solve" (p. 8). Recent studies have "revealed a troubling trend among

Generation Z (those born from 1995 to 2015), as rates of anxiety, depression, and suicide in this

cohort are markedly higher than in previous generations" (Gillihan, 2019). This trend has been

especially prevalent in young women from this generation (Gillihan, 2019). Gillihan (2019)

points to this trend of fragility among modern day youth, highlighting Lukianoff and Haidt's

(2018) theory that:

> many Generation Z college students seemed to hold beliefs that make them vulnerable to
> depression and anxiety" (pg. 1). Gillihan (2019) explains that Lukianoff identified three
> great untruths "that seem to be driving mental health struggles in Gen Z: you are
> fragile...if you feel it, it must be true...and life is about us versus them (Lukianoff &
> Haidt, 2018, p. 1).

The next sub-sections examine several of the conditions that youth in modern society

face, including: (a) a lack of control over their future, for adolescents and young adults in 21st

century society, (b) stressors in the environment of today's youth; (c) the presence and impact of

trauma in the lives of young people, and (d) the prevalence of depression and anxiety in children

and adolescents. The section concludes by examining the implications of trauma on youth who

are most at risk for failure.

Young People Today Face a Less Certain Future

Unlike the aspirations of many young people in the early 1950s, where adolescents hoped

to "finish school, get a job, and get married, set up an independent household, have kids and

settle into a career as a single-earner, two parent family" (Waters, Carr, Kefalas, & Holdaway, 2011, p. 8), today's adolescents confront a more uncertain, less predictable future. According to Waters et. al (2011), this is potentially due to a variety of factors, including (a) the change in gender roles for women as they are increasingly part of the workforce; (b) the greater numbers of people who never choose to get married; (c) an increase in the number of relationships outside of traditional marriage; (d) the numbers of people who go on to advanced schooling; and (e) due to increased amounts of schooling, a delay in the entry into the workforce by young people (p. 8). Increasing housing costs, a demand for more education and the costs associated with this education, and a lack of jobs available to those entering the workforce have also created challenges for young people's ability to live independently in modern society (Waters et. al, 2011, p. 8). Hughes and Smith (2020) recognize that "in this period of accelerated change and challenge, individuals need both appropriate tools and the right kind of mindset to find purposeful learning and work opportunities" (p. 8). Moreover, many young people today are not only trying to navigate a complex society but are trying to do so amidst a number of stressors in their environment.

Stressors in the Lives of 21st Century Youths

Many stressors are present for students in the 21st century, and especially so for students in urban low-income settings. The chronic stress faced by Generation Z results from many stressors in their lives. This section examines several of these stressors, including (a) an increase in exposure to violence; (b) environmental concerns; (c) prevalence of drugs and alcohol; (d) gender and racial discrimination; (e) increase in the negative effects of technology; and (f) increased financial instability.

Increased Exposure to Violence and Concern for Safety Among Generation Z

The World Health Organization (2020) identifies youth violence as a global public health concern, explaining that it ranges from "bullying and physical fighting, to more severe sexual and physical assault to homicide" (WHO, 2020). Thompson, Coleman, O'Connor, Farrell, and Sullivan (2020) explain that "exposure to violence is a significant public health concern that disproportionately affects adolescents living in urban low-income communities" (p. 509). Thompson et. al (2020) assert that "healthy development occurs most frequently when children's environments are both consistent and predictable" (p. 509) while "chaotic environments...are inversely related to positive well-being" (Thompson et al., 2020, p. 510). Thompson et al. (2020) also indicated that chronic life experiences that "produce significant physical, cognitive and environmental changes increase the risk for engaging in maladaptive behaviors" (p. 510), thereby increasing the risks that students living in chaotic situations may be exposed to violence.

With an increase in the number of school shootings and other acts of violence in society, students in schools today are extremely concerned for their personal safety. Not only are children and adolescents witnessing violence on television and on the Internet, but they are also seeing increased levels of violence in their home communities (WHO, 2020). In this case, Thompson et. al (2020) are referring to physical violence. The American Psychological Society or (APA) (2018) recognizes that 75% of youths ages 15-21 today consider school shootings a significant risk in their lives, compared to 73% of Millennials, 59% of Generation X and 56% of Baby Boomers who consider school shootings a significant risk (APA, 2018). The majority of Generation Z students recognize violence as a significant source of stress in their lives.

Environmental Concerns

The stark state of our environment has become a significant source of stress and concern for the generation of students in schools today (Kowalski (2019); Grimalt, Van den Hazel, and Bose-O'Reilly (2019); and Taylor and Murray (2020)). "Climate change potentially represents a major threat to the health and socio-economic stability of youth" (United Nations, 2021). The United Nations indicates that "the intensification of extreme weather events & climate change represents major threats to the health and well-being of youth—especially in developing countries, where the majority (almost 85%) of young people live" (United Nations, 2021). In fact, 73% of youth today have expressed concern over both the current and future state of the environment (United Nations, 2021). Kowalski (2019) pinpoints climate change as a multi-faceted stressor. It has direct impacts, such as sea level rise and severe weather which may cause natural disasters, but also impacts both those that are directly affected by environmental disasters and those who may be worried about environmental disasters (Kowalski, 2019). Due to the developing brains of teens, they may be especially "vulnerable to environmental stressors" and may be more likely to develop such conditions as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress and sleep disorders as a result of the severe impacts of natural disasters, severe weather, and climate change (Kowalski, 2019. Psychologists are becoming extremely concerned over the strain environmental issues are having on the mental well-being of young people (Taylor & Murray (2020). Many young people identify climate change as a priority and are recognized as being the population that has the power to transform our environment (United Nations, 2021).

Drugs and Alcohol

Nearly two in five young people report the opioid crisis as a significant source of stress in their generation (WHO, 2018). At least half of Generation Z people report that at least one

person they know is addicted to drugs or alcohol. A study published in the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* describes a 20% increase in fatalities from opioid drug overdoses for people ages 15 to 24 from 2006 to 2015, resulting in 36,422 opioid-related fatalities in 2015 (Decision Point, 2019).

The Intensifying of Gender and Racial Discrimination in the 21st Century

Many adolescents are profoundly affected by the racism and gender discrimination present in today's society. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) (2021) indicates that many minorities have suffered from ongoing and unjust discrimination. The World Health Organization (2018) recognizes discrimination as a significant source of stress among adolescents. NBC News (2021) explains that discrimination is "a universal problem, affecting the health of disadvantaged populations across the world" (NBC News, 2021).

Racism and gender discrimination are two such forms of discrimination that have received a great deal of media and public attention in the 21st century. The American Academy of Pediatrics (2019) recognizes racism as having a negative impact on the health and well-being of young people. "Failure to address racism will continue to undermine health equity for all children, adolescents, emerging adults and their families" (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2019). Similarly, many LGBTQ+ people recognize that an "LGBTQ student's education is negatively impacted because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity" (Casey & Levesque, 2018) and the discrimination they face due to their gender identity.

Racism. Since the beginning of the United States, when our Constitution was first written, racism has been an insidious part of American society that has resulted in oppression and violence. The blatant racism of the 20th century is often compared to the more subtle forms of racism prevalent at the beginning of the 21st century (Brown, 2004). Racism in modern times

often occurs in subtle ways such as through employment or housing discrimination. Oppression

in the job market is a pervasive issue for non-White people and especially for Blacks in the

United States (Weller (2019). Although Blacks have more access to jobs in recent years than in

the past due to record growth in the job market, they have less access to stable, well-paying jobs

than their white counterparts (Weller, 2019). Additionally, Solomon, Maxwell, and Castro

(2019) describe the "centuries of destabilization" that "have destabilized Black communities and

undermined their access to opportunity." With the gentrification of cities in the United States,

many Blacks are finding it hard to find adequate affordable housing within their own

communities. Unstable or low-paying jobs and poor housing options available to their families

have a significant negative impact on the mental well-being of adolescents (Morsey & Rothstein,

2019).

Recently, there has been a surge in headlines from national and global media outlets

regarding the increased attention given to the fights against racism. This outpouring of media

attention was prompted by several events beginning in the late spring and early summer of 2020,

when large-scale protests broke out worldwide after the death of a Black man, George Floyd, at

the hands of a White police officer in Minnesota. Although many of these protests were peaceful,

others led to violence and riots. This was one example of the ongoing and intensifying racial

discrimination that is still pervasive in the United States two decades into the 21st century.

George Floyd's death was a catalyst in making the Black Lives Matter movement significantly

more powerful. While the Black Lives Matter movement that is the focus of media headlines in

the 21st century has existed since 2013, it's recent surge in support at the time of this dissertation

has encouraged many famous people and groups to become supporters of the movement, thereby

increasing its voice in society and its popularity within the general public (Buchanan, Quoctrung,

& Patel, 2020). In fact, the protests following the death of George Floyd are considered by some

to be the "largest movement in U.S. history" with an estimate 15 to 26 million protesters

participating, according to several polls (Buchanan, Quoctrung, & Patel, 2020). The protests over

Floyd's death far surpassed the numbers of protesters in the 1960s civil rights movement,

indicating that the issue of racism and the efforts to end racism are at the forefront of the minds

of our global population and especially our national population in the 21st century (Buchanan,

Quoctrung, & Patel, 2020). The Black Lives Matter Movement has had a significant impact on

modern youth. By attending rallies and speaking out against discrimination and racism, young

people are showing their generation is "educated and passionate" (Agnoletti, 2021) about these

topics. Agnoletti (2021) identifies the role youth have always had in social change and compare

their impact to the role children had in the Children's Crusade of the Civil Rights Movement.

Now, perhaps more than ever before, youth are building solidarity through their digital

connectivity and ability to use social media platforms as a means for standing up for their

collective beliefs (Agnoletti, 2021).

Gender Identity Discrimination. Not only are people being discriminated against for

the color of their skin or for their race or religion, but also for their gender. Many adolescents

today are openly expressing their gender identification as members of the LGBTQ+ community,

much more so than in the generations of the past. This population of "children and teens who

express or identify their gender differently from their sex designated at birth are more likely to

experience prejudice and discrimination" (Katz-Wise, 2020) than their cisgender counterparts,

who may align more with traditional ideas of masculinity and femininity. Katz-Wise (2020)

describes this discrimination as causing stress that is harmful to the mental and physical health of

children and adolescents. The LGBTQ+ population are often the target of bullying and

discrimination in schools (Dwedar, 2016, para 1). Many school districts lack policies and

practices that support and protect LGBTQ+ students and staff from discrimination related to their

sexual orientation and/or gender and fail to implement protections that do exist for these students

and staff, resulting in increased levels of bullying, harassment, and exclusion from school

curricula and resources (Dwedar, 2016, para 1). Additionally, LGBTQ students often feel unsafe

at school, with only a quarter saying they do feel safe (Levy, 2018, para 8), which is a potential

cause of depression in the LGBTQ population. In fact:

> in a national survey of more than 12,000 LGBTQ teens aged 13 to 17, conducted by the
> Human Rights Campaign and researchers at the University of Connecticut, nearly 8 in 10
> reported feeling depressed or down within the previous week (Levy, 2018, para 10).

LGBTQ people who are also non-white experience additional stress and adverse effects to their

health and well-being as a result of bias around their intersecting identities (Human Rights

Campaign, 2018). This group of young people struggle with not only overcoming homophobia or

transphobia, but also racism, making it very difficult for them to express or understand their

identity (Human Rights Campaign, 2018).

Overcoming racism, gender discrimination, and other forms of oppression against

minority groups is an urgent need present in 21st century society, as this discrimination

significantly impacts the health and well-being of today's youth (ACLU, 2021). With violence

towards minority groups receiving a great deal of media attention recently, groups fighting for

racial and gender equality have become increasingly outspoken and sometimes militant in their

protests against discrimination towards minority groups. The ACLU (2021) highlights the need

for "new ways of thinking about and analyzing" (para 9) issues of discrimination and explains

that young people are often the catalysts of such thinking because they are not held back by the

barrier of experience and can look at "an old problem with fresh eyes (para 9). Adolescents

often are advocates of most of the social change that occurs in the United States (Gray, 2020)

A Generation of Digital Natives

Children and adolescents in the 21ˢᵗ century experience technology in all aspects of their

daily lives. Morris and Cravens Pickens (2017) highlight two distinct groups of people in society

today:

> digital immigrants, those who did not grow up with the high levels of accessibility who
> had to adapt to the new technologies, and digital natives, those that have been exposed to
> digital media from an early age. (p. 265).

The second group, digital natives, accurately identifies many children and adolescents who are in

society today. These youth have grown up with the use of technology. Morris and Cravens

Pickens (2017) explain that much research exists about both the positive and negative effects of

digital media on digital natives (p. 265). "Positive, prosocial use of digital media and technology

can aid in education and can help children develop interpersonal skills and empathy (Fisch &

Truglio as cited in Morris & Cravens Pickens, 2017, p. 265). Researchers have also indicated

that there are many negative effects of technology, "most often due to overuse" and can result in

"attention difficulties, poor academic achievement, and sleep impairments" (Morris & Cravens

Pickens, 2017, p. 265). Additionally, many young children have unmediated access to negative

content on technology, both through television watching and through the Internet, something

which Haeseler (2011) identifies as one of the risk-factors for labeling students "at-risk" (p. 490).

Furthermore, the negative effects of technology can potentially extend beyond childhood and

adolescence, with researchers finding that many adults have issues related to technology use and

physical and mental health outcomes, such as depression and anxiety (Morris & Cravens

Pickens, 2017, p. 265). Morris and Cravens Pickens (2017) have examined the impact

technology has on relationships, noting its potential to interrupt and affect interpersonal

interactions (p. 265). McDaniel and Coyne as cited in Mercer and Masten (2015) term these

interruptions "technoference" (technology interference). Problematic use of technology can also

impact "parent-child and co-parenting interactions" and can impede family happiness when

parents need to use their technology for "work purposes" during family time (Morris & Cravens,

2017, p. 265).

Increased Financial Instability

Members of Generation Z (those born from 1995 to 2015) face an uncertain economic

future. As young children, many members of this group were witness to the 2008 economic

fallout when many of their parents lost their jobs or faced financial instability (Piore, 2019). As a

result, many adolescents are scared to take risks because they had witnessed such economic

disaster (Piore, 2019). Piore (2019) identifies this group of young people as "practical and

cautious" (p.1). As children of the "brooding" Generation Xers, Generation Z was faced with

parents who were often stressed and anxious, often due to the lasting economic hardship they

faced as a result of the crash of 2008 (Piore, 2019). These increased levels of anxiety and stress

in the parents of Generation Z impact the level of trauma experienced by Generation Zers on a

wide scale (Piore, 2019).

This likelihood of current as well as future stressors to have a significant impact on the

mental health of young people is concerning, and one that must be addressed in 21st century

schools. This was especially evident during the Covid 19 pandemic as students experienced (a)

the shutting down of their schools for safety purposes; (b) increased isolation at home, (c) impact

on family employment situations, (d) greater challenges in attending religious and extracurricular

activities, and the inability to interact with family and friends except in virtual situations,

resulting in increased anxiety and depression in youth (Hawes, Szenczy, Klein, Hajcak, &

Nelson, 2021). The Covid 19 pandemic is just one of many startling examples of the complex

stressors that have severe implications on the social and academic experiences of today's youth

and can cause significant trauma in the lives of young people.

Prevalence and Impact of Childhood Trauma on Today's Youth

Trauma is considered to affect approximately two-thirds of all Americans (Plumb, Bush

& Kersevich, 2016, p. 38) and is thought to affect all areas of life. Many of those affected by

trauma are children. Trauma is identified as a type of stress that can negatively impact the brain

because of its extreme nature (Plumb, Bush & Kersevich, 2016, p. 38). Stress can also positively

affect the developing brain. If "the stress a child experiences is predictable, moderate, and

controlled, then the child will likely develop resilience" (Plumb, Bush & Kersevich, 2016, p. 38).

However, when a child's stress is unpredictable and uncontrolled, their body can actually

develop an "acute vulnerability" to the stress response (Plumb, Bush & Kersevich, 2016, p. 38).

Plumb, Bush, and Kersevich, (2016) explain that there is a correlation between adverse

childhood experiences (ACEs) and having trouble functioning throughout life. They state that

"children experiencing high levels of toxic stress are unable to achieve their full academic

potential" (Plumb, Bush & Kersevich, 2016, p. 38).

Types of Childhood Trauma

Plumb, Bush and Kersevich (2016) identify three distinct types of childhood trauma:

acute trauma, which describes a single traumatic event, such as a victim of an earthquake;

chronic trauma, which describes ongoing abuse to the mind or body; and finally, complex

trauma, which is "exposure to chronic trauma, generally by the child's primary caregivers, and

the impact of such exposure over time" (Plumb, Bush & Kersevich, 2016, p. 39). Complex

chronic trauma has significant long-lasting impacts on children and adolescents and can hinder

the ability of these children to develop resilience. The next sub-section examines the implications

severe chronic trauma has on youth.

Implications of Severe Chronic Trauma in Today's Youth

Severe chronic trauma presents the necessity for trauma-informed care in today's schools,

as chronic trauma is one element that leads to a student becoming at-risk for failure. Students

experiencing severe chronic trauma may exhibit signs of anxiety, aggressive play, and limited

engagement in playful activity, and problematic attachment patterns as key indicators that they

have experienced trauma and abuse. These children require "advocacy, support, and resources

for safety from both school professionals as well as from social service community providers"

(Haeseler, 2011, p. 489).

Sitzer and Stockwell (2015) identify "impaired empathic development, poor conflict

resolution strategies, and learning disabilities" (p. 70) as factors of family chronic trauma.

Victims of trauma are unable to gauge how to handle stressful situations due to an inability to

regulate how they are feeling inside. They have not had experiences where adults have helped

them to regulate their feelings, and so are unable to problem solve stressful situations (Sitzer &

Stockwell, 2015, p. 70). Children who have been victims of trauma also have a tendency to

catastrophize situations in that they have a "cognitive distortion and negative filtering"

(Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018, p. 8) where they only focus on the negative feedback they receive and

ignore the praise (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018, p. 8). As a result of their trauma, these children may

be unable to develop social skills appropriately and often feel isolated while at school. This has a

dramatic impact on self-esteem for these children (Sitzer & Stockwell, 2015, p. 70). Lukianoff

and Haidt (2018) recognize that according to cognitive behavioral therapists, when children learn to stop catastrophizing situations their depression and anxiety subsides (p. 8).

Children who are experiencing severe chronic trauma tend to be in a constant fight or flight state. This prolonged hyper aroused or hypo aroused state may cause the child's brain to place secondary importance on academics and behavior because it is doing its best just to survive (Plumb, Bush & Kersevich, 2016, p. 39). According to Plumb, Bush and Kersevich (2016), the more time the child spends in this state, the more difficult it is for him or her to learn (p. 39). One concern expressed by Plumb, Bush and Kersevich (2016) is that children and adults who have experienced at least one ACE in their life are more likely to "suffer from homelessness, poverty, heart disease, mental health deterioration, suicide, obesity, unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases...and substance abuse" (p. 41). The impacts of trauma on young people include high levels of depression and anxiety, which are examined in the next section.

Depression and Anxiety in Today's Youth

Modern-day society appears to have increased depression and anxiety among its members, and increasingly among youth in the 21st century (Piore, 2019). In fact, according to the American Psychological Association modern day youth are considered to have "the worst mental health of any generation...with 91 percent of young adults" saying that "they had felt physical or emotional symptoms of stress, such as depression and anxiety" (Piore, 2019). This is potentially due to several factors highlighted in the literature. These factors include (a) an increase in health problems; (b) changes in modern society as it focuses on extrinsic motivation rather than on intrinsic goals; (c) modernization within developed countries; (d) social isolation which includes smaller social circles and limited community support as people become more isolated from others due to geographic mobility; (e) lack of religious support due to a more

secular society; (f) a change in the outlook young people have for their future; (g) a change in gender roles, especially among women; (h) a lack of independence in young people due to a higher cost of living; (i) a change in the family structure; and (j) a change in focus from intrinsic to extrinsic motivations. Hidaka (2012) identifies this lack of social cohesion among modern-day society as a major component in increasing levels of depression and anxiety in society (p. 5). These disorders can significantly impair the ability of youth to be successful in life, thereby indicating a critical need for teaching young people resilience building skills. The following two sub-sections further explain these critical risk factors.

Depression

The first critical health risk factor for youth, depression, is related to both physical and mental health. Physical health includes such topics as obesity, a decline in overall health among modern societal members, and a lack of physical activity (Hidaka, 2012, p. 5). Depression is also linked to changes in modern society. Hidaka (2012) suggests that depression in young adults can be attributed to modern society shifting its focus away from intrinsic goals such as happiness, the development of community, and social relationships, towards "extrinsic motivations such as money, status and appearance" (p. 5).

Also related to the increasing levels of depression in society is a theory that modern-day society exhibits a toxic social environment "characterized by increasing competition, inequality, and social isolation" (Hidaka, 2012, p. 5). Hidaka (2012) also suggests that modernization could be a factor in increasing levels of depression within modern, developed nations (p. 4). Societies that place more emphasis on the individual, such as in the United States, also place more emphasis on personal achievement and may cause increased depression (Hidaka, 2012, p. 4). Physical and mental factors must be considered when developing an understanding of how to

treat depression in youth.

Anxiety

The second critical health risk factor for youth is anxiety. Hidaka (2012) notes that "anxiety in children and college students has increased almost one standard deviation from the 1950s to the 1990s" (p. 3). This can be attributed to the rise in geographic mobility in modern day society, which produces feelings of isolation and loneliness (Hidaka, 2012, p. 5). Welch (2017) indicates that "the United States has one of the highest rates of student mobility in the world" (p. 476) and that student mobility is "most prevalent among minority and low-income students in urban school districts" (p. 475), students who are often considered "at-risk" for school failure due to their particular set of circumstances, which include parents who have unstable or low-paying jobs and poor housing options for their families (Morsey & Rothstein, 2019). Moving frequently can cause students to miss school frequently (Welch, 2017). High rates of student mobility appear to be especially damaging to minority and low-income groups, and are linked to "lower test scores, increased grade retention and higher rates of school dropout" (Welch, 2017, p. 476). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, technology also appears to be increasing anxiety due to a breakdown in family communications and smaller social circles (Hidaka, 2012, p. 5).

The increase in anxiety and depression in today's youth as well as the existence of trauma in many young people's lives today has led to many children and adolescents being regarded as at risk for academic failure. The next section examines youth who are most at risk for failing in today's schools.

Youth at Risk

Youth in disadvantaged socioeconomic conditions or who come from families in crisis

are often victims of chronic trauma due to the many risk factors existing in their lives. These

youths are often identified as youth at risk. Perhaps the youth at-risk for whom there is the

greatest concern includes students who witness or experience domestic violence, physical,

emotional and sexual abuse and neglect in the home environment, as well as children of

alcoholics or drug-users.

Youth at-risk are young people who often have certain characteristics as a result of their

socioeconomic status coupled with their identification as members of a minority. According to

Gassama (2012) and Haeseler (2011), varied academic and background experiences often

characterize youth at-risk, including the existence of barriers that have the potential to negatively

impact their physical, social and emotional development. The effects of poverty, malnutrition,

homelessness, unemployment, exposure to inadequate educational experiences, mobility,

substance abuse, exposure to environmental toxins, dangerous neighborhoods with high crime

rates, low birth-weight, high rates of poverty, inadequate utilities, domestic violence, child abuse

and neglect, lead poisoning, unmediated television-watching and few if any social supports in the

home are risk factors associated with labeling students as "at-risk" (Haeseler, 2011, p. 490). In

addition, with regard to their schooling, these children tend to experience absenteeism, poor

grades, low math and reading scores, low self-image, inability to identify with others, and

recurring behavioral problems. They may be non-English speakers, have a lack of books in their

home, and often feel alienated or isolated from peers (Haeseler, 2011, p. 490). Youth at-risk

often work outside of school and one or more of their parents is generally absent from their home

in early childhood (Gassama, 2012, p. 6). They tend to move frequently, and some reside in

shelters or on the street (Gassama, 2012, p. 6). These frequent moves and unstable living

situations can have an emotional impact and can negatively impact social and cognitive

development (Gassama, 2012, p. 6). Multiple risk factors exist in the environment of youth at-risk. Each of these risk factors impacts the child's ability to succeed, though some children are better able to manage risk, as a result of having developed resilience.

Youth at-risk often experience many situations in their young lives which put them at risk for failure. Students who are exhibiting behavioral symptoms such as demonstrating aggressiveness, depression, violence, or drug addiction and academic symptoms such as falling behind in their reading level and/or language development and accruing multiple absences, generally begin to fail at school by not completing assignments, not studying for tests and not coming to school prepared to learn (Gassama, 2012, p. 4). Due to specific experiences that are likely to exist in their lives, such as the incidence of trauma, the development of depression and anxiety, and a negative school experience, youth at-risk are more likely to need extra support as they move through each developmental stage of their childhood. This is one reason that many schools in the 21st century include in their programming specific efforts that support the development of resilience in young people. The next section examines the nature of resilience in today's youth, including (a) the identification of resilience in children and adolescents, (b) the historical context of resilience research, and (c) the protective factors that support the development of resilience in young people.

The Nature of Resilience in 21st Century Youth

The importance of developing resilience in American youth has been a focus of both theoretical literature and research studies for many years but has more recently been receiving increased attention, due in part to the impacts of several environmental and societal stressors present for young people in the 21st century, as illuminated by the scholarship discussed earlier in this chapter. Gassama (2012) expresses the need for programs to support students who have

experienced severe or chronic trauma in developing resilience (p. 5). Capuzzi and Gross (2014)

establish the idea that within resilience literature, authors maintain a focus on the promise of

youth rather than the ways in which they are at risk (p. 43). Capuzzi and Gross (2014) indicate

that research related to "the family of phenomena referred to as resilience" (p. 43) focuses on

how students can build resilience. The following section introduces the concept of resilience and

(a) identifies what resilience traits look like in young people; (b) traces the direction resilience

research has taken in the last 50 years; and (c) describes protective factors which exist with

resilient children and adolescents.

Identifying Resilience

Resilience is defined by Capuzzi and Gross (2014) as the tools young people have inside

themselves for overcoming adversity and reaching for their dreams (p. 45). The concept of

resilience in youth and especially in youth at-risk is a departure from the traditional way of

looking at this group of young people. According to BethAnn Berliner and Bonnie Benard

(1995), most theorists and researchers attempt to determine what risk-factors exist for youth. A

diversity of views exists about the topic of resilience. Resilience focuses on capacities or

capabilities youth can summon, rather than how risk factors negatively impact these youth

(Capuzzi & Gross, 2014, p. 43). Rather than concentrating on trying to fill in the gaps left by a

less than desirable childhood, resilience programs aim to identify the best ways to promote

healthy social, emotional and physical growth in youth at-risk.

Advances in Understanding the Concept of Resilience

The concept of resilience, "along with assets, strengths and solutions, has become an

increasingly mainstream concept in recent years" (van Breda, 2011, p. 33). How people, and

especially children, develop resilience has been examined often over the past five decades. The

topic of resilience first started gaining prominence during the 1970s as a response to the

examination of schizophrenics and why certain patients with this particular mental disorder

seemed to exhibit competent behaviors in their work, home and family life before they were

diagnosed (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000, p. 544). In the 1970s, scholars focused on

"individual variations in response to adversity" (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000, p. 544), using

the children of schizophrenics as an example, as many of these children thrived despite the risk

factors that existed in their lives (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000, p. 544). Following these

early studies of resilience in mental patients, researchers expanded their identification of adverse

conditions to include not only mental illness in a child's parents, but also acknowledged that

community violence, urban poverty, abuse, catastrophic life events, illness, and poor

socioeconomic conditions as potentially harmful conditions in a child's ability to be resilient

(Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000, p. 544). Researchers focused heavily on the personal traits of

resilient children such as autonomy or self-esteem in this later examination of resilience.

Resilience research evolved into a delineation of "three sets of factors implicated in the

development of resilience: (1) attributes of the children themselves, (2) aspects of their families,

and (3) characteristics of their wider social environments" (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000, p.

544). Also, researchers shifted their focus from "examining underlying protective factors to

underlying protective processes" (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000, p. 544). Another important

change following the initial research around resilience was the development of an understanding

that resilience did not mean avoiding potentially harmful or risky situations, but rather how

people handled new and difficult situations as they arose (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000, p.

544). It was this evolved definition that provided the foundation for the resilience research

currently being conducted.

Current research around resilience is examined in the lens of being part of a greater

system. Masten (2018) explains that "resilience always had a pragmatic mission: to learn better

ways of preventing psychopathology and promoting healthy development among children at risk

for problems" (p. 926). As resilience research moves forward, its connection to multiple

interdependent systems is considered. Masten (2018) notes that individual lives as well as

complex multi-level systems must work together to produce resilience. The evolution of genetics

research is also considered to have an impact on our understanding of resilience as scientists

learn more about how genetic factors affect the ability of humans to overcome adversity (p. 924).

It is evident that resilience literature will continue to evolve as researchers begin to understand

more about how systems affect one another and as scientists uncover more about our emotional,

physical and mental responses to stress. This research study hopes to add to the research about

how resilience-building practices of school leaders can support our nation's youth in today's

school communities.

Intrinsic Protective Factors Within the Child Which Aid in the Development of Resilience

in Youth

Despite the many negative risk factors, many young people exhibit resilience in

overcoming the barriers that they encounter. This section examines the characteristics of

resilience in these children and adolescents.

Professionals within the fields of social work, teaching, prevention, counseling, and

youth development suggests that the power of resilience is an ability that can grow within all

humans and can be fostered when adversity is overcome, and when the basic human needs of a

child at-risk are restored (Capuzzi & Gross, 2014, p. 43). Researchers have identified several

intrinsic factors related to a resilient child's personality that contribute to their ability to be

resilient and overcome risks in their environment. These include (a) developing hope and having

an optimistic personality; (b) social competence; (c) resourcefulness; and (d) developing a sense

of purpose in their lives (Berliner & Bernar, 1995; Duggal, Sacks-Zimmerman, & Liberta, 2016).

Optimistic Personality and the Rekindling of Hope

Optimism is one trait that is inherent in the personality of many resilient youth. The

ability to develop hope supports children and adolescents in becoming resilient (Capuzzi &

Gross, 2014). Capuzzi and Gross (2014) suggest the idea of restoring hope as the first step in

resilience and recognize the need for establishing a balance between protective factors and

stressful events to achieve resilience (p. 46). When a child develops hope, they are more likely to

have a buffer towards negative and stressful life events (Duggal, Sacks-Zimmerman, & Liberta,

2016, p. 1). Additionally, restoring hope is an important part in the development of resilience

because those people who are able to be more optimistic tend to exhibit higher levels of

resilience (Duggal, Sacks-Zimmerman, & Liberta, 2016, p. 1). Hope acts as a protective factor

against life's negative events, suggesting that the key to resilience is the creation of "protective

factors that help youth survive risky environments" (Berliner & Benard, 1995, p. 3).

Social Competence

Resilient children tend to have social competence and can sustain healthy relationships with

peers, family, and superiors. They are able to participate in conversations with a sense of humor,

compassion and empathy (Berliner & Benard, 1995, p. 3). These children are able to

communicate well with others, care about others, and can think outside of their own situations.

Resourcefulness

Resilient children are resourceful. They can find multiple ways to examine and solve a difficult

situation and can think "critically, creatively and reflectively" (Berliner & Benard, 1995, p. 3).

These children can separate themselves from the risky behaviors of others and are able to operate with autonomy. They are able to think independently and solve problems, and therefore can somewhat control their environment.

Sense of Purpose

Finally, resilient children have a sense of purpose and are able to see a future life for themselves. They are determined to do what it takes to reach their goals (Berliner & Benard, 1995, p. 3). Not only do these children have many positive personality traits that help them to avoid risk, but they also tend to have some characteristics that exist within their family, school or community environments. These include caring and trusting relationships, positive high expectations with supports in place for achieving goals, and finally, meaningful opportunities to participate in family and community events (Berliner & Benard, 1995, p. 4). Each of these elements supports the development of a sense of purpose in life.

Youth at-risk are one population within schools that can experience school differently than their peers and may have significant trauma experiences in their lives that make it more difficult for them to be successful in school and later in life. Even youth at-risk are able to overcome trauma by developing resilience traits. Resilient children exhibit a variety of characteristics that can be fostered through several factors existing in their environment. Academic environments in particular appear to aid in the fostering of such resilience building traits within all students and especially so for youth at-risk. The next section discusses the importance of fostering resilience building practices in school communities.

The Importance of Resilience Building Practices in School Communities

In a nation where the number of children living in poverty was approximately 11.7% in 2020 (Forbes, 2020) there is a critical need for schools to become adept at helping youth at-risk

develop the knowledge and skills that may contribute to the formation of resilience. Schools cannot ignore this need, as they are often one of the external support systems that aid in the development of these skills (Smokowski, Reynolds, & Bezrucko, 2000, p. 427). Many researchers including Utley, Kozleski, Smith, & Draper (2002), Perez-Felkner (2015), Lamperes (1994), and Johnson (2008) have focused on the development of resilience as a way to support these children so that they are able to thrive in school and later in life. School environments that support social emotional learning have the potential to help cultivate resilience in all students. These programs focus on building social emotional and other skills that help children to overcome adversity in their lives. The following sub-sections examine how schools implement resilience building efforts within their communities.

Inclusion of Trauma-informed Care in Schools

Not only do programs successful in cultivating resilience help develop social and emotional skills in youth, including those affected by trauma, but they also include a component that utilizes trauma-informed care, a crucial group of supports for children experiencing severe chronic trauma that aid in the development of resilience. The high incidence of trauma in the United States, along with trauma-producing situations for youth at-risk such as substance abuse and domestic abuse in the home environment create this need for "trauma-informed care" (Plumb, Bush & Kersevich, 2016, p. 43) in the school environment of these children. Plumb, Bush and Kersevich (2016) claim that "democratizing" or making trauma-informed care available to all students, will help support these students with resources that allow them to be more successful academically (p. 43).

Masten and Coatsworth, as cited by Plumb, Bush and Kersevich (2016) describe the three factors that all resilient children have in common: (1) they have a strong parent-child relationship

or child-caregiver relationship; (2) good cognitive skills that support following rules and

academic success; and (3) the ability to "self-regulate" emotions and behaviors (p. 43). The

Complex Trauma Task Force recommends an intervention model they refer to as ARC

(attachment, self-regulation, competency) to help provide trauma-informed care that supports the

cultivation of resilience in trauma-affected youth (Plumb, Bush & Kersevich, 2016, p. 43).

Within this model, educators concentrate on building secure attachments, learning to self-

regulate behaviors and increasing skills across many areas as the best methods for building

resilience (Plumb, Bush & Kersevich, 2016, p. 43). Each of these supports is utilized in school

environments that are using the ARC intervention model. The next subsection examines the

protective factors existing within school environments that make building resilience in their

students a possibility.

Protective Factors in Academic Environments that Foster Resilience

The confluence of home, school and community in a student's life is imperative to the

development of a mentally, physically and emotionally healthy child (Haeseler, 2011, p. 487).

Benard (2005) recognizes that there is a misconception that some people have resilience qualities

while others do not (p. 9). She claims that "the innate self-righting tendencies and environmental

protective factors that account for resilience of young people facing adversity and challenge are

precisely the same supports and opportunities that nurture us all" (p. 10). However, certain

protective factors seem particularly important in the development of resilience for all youth and

especially so for youth at-risk.

A number of protective factors exist within school environments teaching youth at risk

and addressing their specific needs, such as the Rocketship Public Schools in Milwaukee, the

Bay Area of California, Washington D.C., and Nashville; Sisulu Walker Charter School in the

Harlem district of New York City, and the Centennial High School Discovery program in Colorado, among others. Four of these protective factors that appear in multiple places in the literature examined for this paper are (a) the impact of parental school involvement on the academic success and resilience of youth at-risk; (b) the importance of the teacher-student relationship; (c) the contributions of hands-on project-based learning; and (d) the impact of the school environment. The following section addresses each of these factors by examining them in an academic environment.

The Impact of Parental Involvement on Student Achievement and Resilience

According to Jeynes (2007), parental involvement is a critical factor in facilitating successful outcomes for youth at-risk (p. 82). Schools that successfully implement resilience-building skills for these students appear to focus on certain goals as they attempt to engage parents in a way that positively impacts their child's academic progress. Schools must recognize that parental involvement and supervision "is important for adolescent well-being, and some scholars suggest it is especially important for adolescents living in disadvantaged communities" (Burrington, 2015, p. 367). Within schools with resilience-building programs, parents are encouraged to participate in a variety of ways, as school leaders build a family-like atmosphere, such as at the Amigos Charter School (Fuller, 2002, p. 100). Within the Innovation Academy Charter School, for example, prospective parents can participate in unique Open House nights where they may be asked to engage in a variety of tasks that challenge their problem-solving and community membership skills (Fuller, 2002, p. 126).

Schools that are successful at involving the families of all students, including minority parents, appear to focus on certain goals: (a) engaging parents in a way that positively impacts their child's academic progress by recognizing the specific parenting practices of minority

families; (b) embracing multiculturalism to foster school connectedness; and (c) providing

supports for parents so they may attend school events. While these are not the only ways that

schools can aid parents, the literature in many cases highlights the importance of these supports

(Jeynes (2007), Jeynes (2010), Haeseler (2011), and LeMoine & Labelle (2014)).

Awareness of Parenting Practices in Minority Families and Families At-Risk.

"More than half of the students attending urban schools are members of minority groups"

(Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006, p. 561). As minority students have now become the majority in

urban schools, it is imperative that schools are sensitive to the specific cultural practices of

minority families residing within the school district.

Many youths considered at-risk for failure are from minority families or families that are

considered below the poverty line, or both. Youth at-risk have traditionally been stereotyped as

having uninvolved parents. In reality, parents of minority status or parents who fall below the

poverty line are less likely to be present for activities in the school, sometimes due to a

perception that they may be looked down upon or because they are embarrassed that they don't

have money to pay for items related to school activities, but they are not necessarily absent from

their child's academic life (Jeynes, 2010). Inherent in working with parents of students at-risk is

recognition that these parents may exhibit differences in the way they parent their children, as

opposed to the parenting practices of middle- and upper-class White parents (Jeynes, 2010).

The traditional view of parental involvement suggests that involved parents participate in

a certain set of behaviors such as helping with homework, attending sports events and attending

school events. Jeynes (2010) notes that parental involvement in households of minority students

is often underestimated, because though these parents may not always be checking homework

and schoolwork or attending school events, parents are often still spending a great deal of

meaningful time with their children (p. 755). Jeynes (2010) identifies parental love as the number one element of parental involvement (p. 755). Therefore, in minority households, parental love may not appear as an intense focus on academic performance.

To encourage a better understanding of parenting practices of the families in their schools, teachers from Rocketship schools visit families in their homes every fall. The Rocketship program explains that "by changing the dynamic from parent in a teacher's classroom to teacher in a parent's house we are able to develop much deeper ties with our parents that carries through the school year and beyond" (http://www.rocketshipschools.org). This understanding also provides teachers with insight into the parenting practices of families within the home environment (www.rocketshipschools.org), enabling them to have a better understanding of how the parents of minority students take part in their child's academic and home life.

Embracing Multiculturalism to Foster School Connectedness, Cultural Acceptance and Student Resilience. "Cultural background and ethnic identity are critical determinants of human attitudes, values and behaviors in all settings, including teaching and learning" (Utley et al., 2002, p. 201). Historically, urban schools such as the Sisulu-Walker Charter School in Harlem have faced seemingly "insurmountable barriers" (Bryan, 2005, p. 219) as they try to educate youth at-risk. These schools deal with sociocultural factors such as discrimination, racial and language barriers (Bryan, 2005, p. 219), along with the effects of poverty that can often lead to students feeling isolated in their school environment.

Schools that are successful at cultivating resilience in their students recognize the need for curriculum about and informed by multiculturalism. These schools can provide education that is "culturally sensitive to difference, is free from discrimination and prejudice, and promotes

educational equity" (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006, p. 561). These schools maintain high

expectations for all of their students while also providing particular supports for students of

different minority groups (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006, p. 562). "Parents and students from

varied cultural groups must be a permanent, desired, integral part of a curriculum that encourages

interaction, problem-solving and critical thinking skills through a multicultural perspective"

(Varela, 2008, p. 60).

Banatao (2011) highlights Theoharis' (2009) suggestion that increasing access to "a

climate of belonging" (p. 9) supports the development of resilience for minority students. "A

growing body of research shows school connectedness to be a powerful predictor of adolescent

health and development outcomes" (Banatao, 2011, p. 62). Susan Auerbach (2007) recognizes

that "parents—especially low-income and minority parents—are more likely to be involved in

education when schools invite their participation, provide multiple entry points for involvement,

value their perspectives, and reach out in culturally appropriate ways" (p. 699). One way to

foster this climate of belonging is to invite parents to be a part of the school culture. Not only can

teachers meet minority families in their homes, but at schools like the Rocketship schools,

teachers provide an open-door policy where parents are able to come in to visit their child's

classroom at any time (http://www.rocketshipschools.org). Parents are invited to "learn about the

methodologies being used to help their children succeed" as they are welcomed into the school

community (Varela, 2008, p. 60).

Multiculturalism supports a sense of belonging not only for minority parents, but also for

all students and other community members. Parents and members of the community can

participate in celebrating their ethnicity and giving students a sense of cultural pride by giving a

presentation about their culture, reading a cultural story to the class or demonstrating a cultural

dance, food or artform. For example, students at the Sisulu Walker School in Harlem are taught a curriculum that was developed to help the large numbers of African-American students at the school identify with their African-American culture. Local community members who had a vested interest in the children in the community were also involved in the development of the curriculum (Bounds & Walker, 2014, p. 73). Helping students from immigrant and nonimmigrant families gain a sense of belonging by connecting to their cultural heritage is a protective factor for all youth and especially for youth at-risk, as it has a more profound impact on the life course of children who grow up under adverse conditions than do specific risk factors or life events" (Benard, 1994, p. 9).

Providing Access to Resources. Haeseler (2011) suggests that there is a correlation between the level of parental involvement among low-income parents and the lack of resources for these parents (p. 489). With more resources available to them, low-income parents would be more likely to attend school events (Haeseler, 2011, p. 489). These resources can include, but are not limited to, access to community and health services, as well as caregiver supports such as transportation, childcare and parent education, and the provision of various options for communication between the school and the home.

Community and Health Services. Many students classified as youth at-risk in today's schools may require extra support in the form of counselors, community service programs, teachers, after-school counselors, parents, medical staff, mental health providers, and other out-of-school social service providers (Gassama (2012, Haeseler (2011), Plumb, Bush & Kersevich (2016) & Capuzzi & Gross (2014). Additionally, schools support families in finding community supports, including wraparound services, or services "that are community based, culturally relevant, strength based, family centered and individualized to meet the needs for students with

SED (severe emotional disturbances) (Yohannan, Carlson, Shepherd, & Batsche-McKenzie, 2017, p. 431).

The parents of youth at-risk may also require outside services for their own medical needs in order to best support their children. Haeseler (2011) recognized the need to provide services and classes for these families at-risk that included drug and alcohol prevention, domestic violence prevention, nutrition counseling, career counseling, and community outreach (p. 494). When they receive services, this group of parents is better equipped to emotionally and academically support their child because their own physical, mental and emotional needs are being addressed.

Family Supports. Schools support families in attending school events in several ways, including: by providing babysitting, offering more flexible schedules, providing transportation to and from school when planning school events, providing programs and inviting guest speakers to speak to parents about the importance of education in a child's life are all ways schools can support parental involvement (Haeseler, 2011, p. 494). By providing these supports to parents and caregivers of youth at-risk, schools can increase the likelihood that these parents will be involved in their child's education, an important protective factor.

Haeseler (2011) further advises that in order to ensure a better home-school connection, educators should provide multiple options for communication with parents or family caregivers who may not have phone or Internet access (p. 494). For example, at Sisulu-Walker School in New York City, parents are able to communicate via various social media formats, through email, and through the school website and blog (www.sisuluwalker.org). In addition, interpreters and copies of written communication in a parent's primary language should be available to non-English speaking parents or caregivers (Haeseler, 2011, p. 494).

Finally, Haesler (2011) and LeMoine and LaBelle (2014) stress that caregivers of all

students must be treated with respect and empathy in order to encourage their participation in

their child's school experience. Hitt and Tucker (2016) and Haeseler (2011) explain that

increasing family involvement in schools fosters academic growth for students, thereby helping

youth at-risk overcome the barriers in their lives. Educators who recognize the individual needs

of families and aid them in building their connections with the school and community by making

school functions and community resources more accessible address the necessity for these

children to have at least one adult family member who is part of their academic experience

(LeMoine & Labelle, 2014, p. 1).

Importance of the Teacher-Student Relationship

The teacher-student relationship is identified by many researchers as a key protective

factor for all youth and especially so for youth at-risk. Several researchers, including Johnson

(2008), Berliner and Benard (1995), Cardon, (2000), Capuzzi and Gross (2014), Tough (2008),

Bounds and Walker (2014), Perez-Felkner (2015), Frelin (2015), Lamperes (1994), Berlin et al.

(2007), and Brandt (1990), indicate that after a child's family, the teacher is one of the most

important figures in a youth at-risk's life and is one of the biggest influences on a student's

motivation and achievement in school. This relationship provides students with a reason to look

forward to going to school and helps them to build trust in their environment. The literature

points to its importance in many cases.

Berliner and Benard (1995) report that the existence of even one positive relationship in

the school, community or home of a youth can make a major difference in the resilience of that

child (p. 4). Perez-Felkner (2015) and Frelin (2015) describe how the social context, or the

quality and nature of the relationships a youth at-risk develops with teachers, other students and

school personnel is one of the most important factors outside the family in determining

educational outcomes for this student (p. 6). This claim is supported by evidence that students

who have reported "caring and supportive relationships with teachers may be more likely to

remain academically engaged in response to challenges experienced in school" (Perez-Felkner,

2015, p. 6).

The creation of a support network of both peers and adults helps students feel that they

are not alone and gives them someone to turn to when they need support (Berlin et al., 2007, p.

88). For example, in programs such as the Discovery Program, students are provided with a

network of adult mentors who are faculty members who help nurture participants as they

navigate adolescence, thereby creating a positive adult relationship in the student's life, one of

the protective factors identified in resilient youth.

According to Lamperes (1994) the ability to foster a nurturing, student-centered family-

like atmosphere where students operate on a first-name basis with their teachers is crucial in

helping to build resilience in youth who are at-risk for failure (p. 69). Offering students

individual attention and entry to advanced courses are other ways teachers in the Discovery

Program support their students. This helps students who have developed a "poisonous response

to all forms of authority" (Lamperes, 1994, p. 68) learn to build better relationships with adults

because they can predict what will happen in their environment.

Yet another school program that claims to foster positive student-teacher relationships is

the Sisulu Walker School. Teachers at Sisulu-Walker aim to "maintain a climate of mutual

respect and dignity, which will promote students' self-concept and promote confidence to learn"

(www.sisuluwalker.org, 2019). Teachers at the school strive to accomplish this task by giving

feedback often and consistently. According to their code of conduct, Sisulu Walker staff aim to

provide students this feedback using a culture of mutual respect, meaning that all students and

staff are expected to adhere to the rules and norms of the organization and are expected to be

recognize and be respectful of each other's differences, and responding to each other with mutual

care and respect (www.sisuluwalker.org, 2019).

Two recurring themes in the literature about the teacher's contribution to resilience

include the influence the teacher-student relationship has on development of risk management

skills and the ability of young people to build trust in adults in their lives.

Managing risk. The effects of the protective factors created by the school-family-

community connection are extensive. Bryan (2005) describes these protective factors as "risk-

reducing mechanisms" (p. 220). One such mechanism is the teacher-student relationship. The

teacher-student relationship provides an avenue to assess student progress for risk factors and to

take the necessary steps to avert failure (Gassama, 2012, pp. 3-4).

Youth at-risk by definition experience a variety of risk factors simultaneously, a fact that

makes the likelihood of risk factors having a negative impact on the ability of these students to

succeed at school greater (Gassama, 2012, p. 3). Teachers who support students in managing risk

rather than trying to avoid all risk in their lives aid in the development of resilience skills

(Johnson, 2008, p. 385). "By providing emotional support, modeling, and other forms of

scaffolding, teachers can help students use their strengths, skills and knowledge to develop and

learn" (Gassama, 2012, p. 7). Johnson (2008) specifically points to the everyday interactions that

occur between teacher and student as very influential in the child's capacity "to deal with

difficult issues" (p. 387). An example of risk management interactions between students and

teachers is evident in the Discovery Program at Centennial High School in Colorado. In this

program, students participate in activities called grounding activities that help them share with

their teachers and peers how they are feeling each day (p. 68). Students role-play ways to work

through difficult situations with their peers and teachers in a safe and supportive environment

(Lamperes, 1994, p. 68).

By reducing risk, children's "self-efficacy and self-esteem are enhanced" (Bryan, 2005,

p. 220). Not only that, but children are provided with "meaningful opportunities in their

environment" (Bryan, 2005, p. 220). An essential part of cultivating resilience in youth at-risk is

providing these children with a toolkit for dealing with risk in a variety of different environments

and at different developmental stages (Johnson, 2008, p. 386).

Building Trust. Resilient children are particularly adept at building trust and have had

the opportunity to develop a close bond with at least one caregiver in their lives (McMillan &

Reed, 1994, p. 4). As students learn they can trust an adult, they learn they are able to be

vulnerable with this adult and can look to them for support as they work through difficult

situations. Establishing vulnerability trust with youth at-risk is particularly important because

often these students have had very few people in their lives whom they can trust. By providing

youth at-risk with the appropriate supports, they begin to trust in their environment, an essential

factor in building resilience.

When youth begin to build trust in the adults in their school environment and especially

with their teacher, it gives them a reason to want to come to school (Frelin, 2015, p. 595). As the

student's teaching team helps the student begin to overcome conflict, the student is able to start

achieving commitment to school. Within Centennial's Discovery Program, students who have

had previously toxic school experiences begin to achieve this commitment by learning to work

through conflicts with their teachers and administrators, teaching these students that they can

look to an adult for advice and support to overcome these obstacles (Lamperes, 1994, p. 68).

Wright (1994) identifies bonding, or "the feeling of being connected to others—as the overarching protective factor in the development of healthy behavior" (p. 4). It can be assumed that when youth are able to bond with teachers and other school employees, they are able to start achieving commitment to school.

According to Frelin (2015, p. 589) and Capuzzi and Gross (2014, p. 45), teachers are able to instill hope, positive self-image and self-righting capabilities in students as they become an ally for the child. These teachers serve as the bridge between school, home and community for the child. When this team is able to be vulnerable with each other, and can share their ideas and values openly, trust is created (Lencioni, 2005, p. 14). Trust is a protective barrier for the child. Lencioni (2005) considers the most important ingredient to building trust to be courage (p. 18). Trusting in others takes a great deal of courage for children and adolescents who have experienced chronic trauma.

According to Lamperes (1994), Gassama (2012), Bryan (2005), Frelin (2015), Johnson (2008), McMillan and Reed (1994), Wright (1994), Capuzzi and Gross (2014), and Lencioni (2005), among others, the student-teacher relationship is one of the primary protective factors leading to resilience for children and adolescents. By helping all youth and especially youth at-risk manage risk and learn to build trust, teachers can provide students with an important ally and support system in their academic and personal lives. It is evident from the literature that critical to the education of all youth and especially so for those most at risk are experiences that help them see their own capacity for learning and achievement and discover pathways for achieving this success. Through intentional efforts that make it possible for students to build relationships, to trust and to manage risk in their school experiences, teachers increase their students' chances for success later in life.

Learning to Problem Solve Through Hands-on, Project-Based, and Conflict Resolution

Learning

In order to develop resilience, children who have experienced traumatic situations must build their problem-solving skills. Sitzer and Stockwell (2015) point out the importance of remembering that children and adolescents who have witnessed trauma "tend to communicate what has happened to them not in words but by responding to the world as a dangerous place" (p. 70). Rules and other rigid structures are interpreted as threats. Therefore, these youth must develop the ability to solve problems, and they need lots of practice to do this in safe environments that allow them to express how they are feeling without judgement. Because 90% of all students in the United States attend public schools, schools are one place that can provide interventions that help students who are victims of trauma develop resilience skills in a safe environment. (Plumb, Bush & Kersevich, 2016, p. 38).

Several researchers including Cardon (2000), Tough (2008), Bounds and Walker (2014), and Perez-Felkner (2015) examine the importance of hands-on, project-based learning within several learning environments. Hands-on learning focuses on encouraging students to pursue their interests through innovative projects that allow them to become immersed in the subject matter. These approaches appear to have significant positive implications especially for youth at-risk because the deep engagement, personal investment and peer interaction that accompanies project-based learning increase student agency, thus strengthening protective factors such as emotional well-being and social skills.

Hands-on project-based learning programs schools such as the Rocketship Public Schools, Sisulu-Walker Charter School, and Centennial High School's Discovery Program, among others, provide opportunities for students to develop problem-solving skills. By teaching

these students how to overcome conflict, they begin to build confidence that they are capable of overcoming adverse events in life and they are able to overcome problems as they work with others in their home, school and community environments. Programs like this support the growth of problem-solving skills and teach children new ways of thinking to prevent high risk behaviors (Shure, 2001, p. 4).

Shure (2001) identifies aggression and inability to cope with frustration as potential outcomes when students have not learned to problem solve (p. 3) and expresses the difficulty of students with few problem-solving skills to come up with alternative solutions to problems or difficulty in understanding the consequences to their actions (p. 4). Students who have never been guided in how to problem-solve in their home environment often struggle when they are expected to problem solve in school. The projected impact of this inability to problem-solve both intra-personal and interpersonal problems in childhood is that it can lead to negative behaviors later in life such as substance abuse and violence (Shure, 2001, p. 13).

Youth who are considered at-risk must learn new ways of thinking, so they can avoid participating in high-risk behaviors. Shure (2001) discusses the importance of teaching children how to think along with what to think (p. 4). The Sisulu-Walker Charter School in Harlem, for example, supports the idea of discovering new ways of thinking through project-based learning as demonstrated by its goal of providing "more opportunities for alternate modes of practice through games projects and experiments" (www.sisuluwalker.org). Another project-based school, the Rocketship Public Schools, allows for multiple opportunities for hands-on learning and independent work utilizing problem-solving skills in each of the daily classes students attend (http://www.rocketshipschools.org). Independent, hands-on learning projects appear to be one effective way to build the problem-solving skills identified by several researchers, including

Cardon (2000), Tough (2008), Bounds, Walker and Walker (2014), Perez-Felkner (2015) as necessary in cultivating resilience. Introducing young people to many different ways of thinking is an important step in teaching them how to operate in society.

Teachers in project-based learning programs spend significant amounts of time working with their students as they guide them through student-centered projects meant to promote mastery of basic skills, as well as the development of higher-order thinking skills (Darling-Hammond, Zielezinski, & Goldman, 2014, p. 5). Darling-Hammond, Zielezinski and Goldman (2014) claim that students learn more when they are able to create their own projects (p. 5). The authors describe this independent learning as one way students build "technological literacies" and skill development (Darling-Hammond, Zielezinski, & Goldman, 2014, p. 5).

Children need practice with problem-solving skills to decrease or avoid negative behaviors by coming up with positive solutions to difficult situations (Shure, 2001, p. 12). Project-based learning environments appear to be one type of school environment that provide children and adolescents a safe place for problem-solving and trying multiple solutions to a single problem.

Impact of the School Community

Perez-Felkner (2015) determines that how members of a school community react to students can affect students' resilience as they pursue a path to college (p. 4). Gassama (2012) explains that a lack of school and community supports are factors that could negatively impact the ability of teachers to successfully reach students with significant risk factors in their environment (p. 5), thereby making it more difficult for students to receive the necessary tools for cultivating resilience.

Belfield and Levin (2012) see providing adequate help especially to youth at-risk as a

way of decreasing their need for societal supports as adults. It is evident that schools must be

catalysts for finding ways to support students as a means for helping them develop resilience

skills, as many scholars and educators claim that resilience is an important part of what makes

children successful in school (Utley, Kozleski, Smith, & Draper, 2002; Perez-Felkner, 2015;

Lamperes, 1994; and Johnson, 2008). In its policies concerning safe schools and resilience, the

New York City Department of Education, for example, claims that "students do better when they

feel protected and supported in the classroom" (2019). It is clear that when schools are

adequately supporting their students, including their most at-risk students, it can have significant

positive implications.

The literature examined for this study identified several of the protective factors that

appear to exist in learning environments claiming to produce positive results for youth at-risk.

Based on the protective factors and learning environments described in this section, there is

evidence supporting the theory that the learning environment is an important factor contributing

to healthy youth. Linquanti (1992) notes that changing a child's environment plays a key role in

alleviating many of the risk factors in that child's life (p. 5). According to the research examined

for this paper, it can be determined that several factors in a child's academic environment foster

resilience despite potential risk factors: (a) positive and regular parental involvement; (b) the

student-teacher or mentor-teacher relationship; (c) hands-on project-based learning opportunities

where students can make real-world connections and can build problem-solving skills; and (d)

the impact of the school community (Shure, 2001; Jeynes, 2007; Jeynes, 2010; Burrington, 2015;

Haeseler, 2011; LeMoine and Labelle, 2014; Lamperes, 1994; Gassama, 2012; Bryan, 2005;

Frelin, 2015; Johnson, 2008; McMillan and Reed, 1994; Wright, 1994; Capuzzi and Gross, 2014;

and Lencioni, 2005; Sitzer and Stockwell, 2015; Plumb, Bush and Kersevich, 2016; Cardon,

2000; Tough, 2008; Bounds and Walker, 2014; Perez-Felkner, 2015; Darling-Hammond, Zielezinski and Goldman, 2014; Wright, 1994; Belfield and Levin, 2012; Weir, 2017; Masten, 2014; Luthar and Eisenberg (2017), Masten and Coatsworth, as cited by Plumb, Bush and Kersevich, 2016; Swaedener and Lubeck, 1995; Linquanti, 1995; and Kerstetter, 2016). These protective factors can be utilized by children and adolescents through participation in academic programs that build life-skills, foster positive relationships, develop character and promote academic progress. These factors appear to contribute to the academic and personal success of the student as they begin to make connections between their academic experience and their future plans.

The next section examines how portrayals and studies of charter schools reveal particular traits of the programming of these schools that are related to resilience building.

The Nature of Charter School Programming and Leadership

Finn, Manno and Wright (2017) indicate the rise in popularity of charter schools in the 21st century and explain that "chartering has not been a single experiment or the product of a single vision, theory or doctrine" (para 5). Supporters and opponents of charter schools often attribute their introduction in the United States to Albert Shanker, former president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), who shared his vision for publicly funded and independently operated schools in a speech given in 1988 (Cohen, 2017, p. 2). In actuality, charter schools were introduced to the United States long before 1988 by entrepreneurs who hoped to bring "choice, deregulation and so-called accountability" (Cohen, 2017, p. 2) to schools. Shanker, however, popularized the term "charter" and helped to put this type of school into the public's eye (Cohen, 2017, p. 2).

Charter schools vary in their purpose and motives. Some charters focus on creating innovative teaching techniques and curriculum around certain academic areas, such as: STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) charters, project-based charter schools, dual-language or language immersion schools, place-based schools, Montessori-based charter schools, and environmental science schools (CCSA, 2021). Charter schools also are developed for ideological reasons, such as to introduce or advance a market system of schooling, (Jacob, 2017). Charter schools have grown to include 7000 schools in 44 states educating 3 million children (Prothero, 2018, p. 1). These schools are recognized by many as a viable school choice option, and especially so for the disproportionate numbers of disadvantaged children they service in most states (Hill, 2006, p. 2). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015-16), many charter schools have over 75% of students who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals and 57% live in cities.

Charter School Design

Charter schools are defined by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as a public school that is "governed by a board of trustees and operates independently of any school committee" (2018). Charter schools have a fixed amount of time (generally between 3-5 years) allotted to them, during which they must prove they are successfully upholding the terms of their charter (Buckley & Schneider, 2009, p. 2). After their fixed term is up, the board granting the charter will review the school and determine whether they will renew this charter. The requirements of this renewal can vary greatly from state to state (Buckley & Schneider, 2009, p. 2). Buckley and Schneider (2009) claim that though these terms can vary, most organizations that approve charter schools generally agree that these schools are "expected to generate competition among schools, a competition in which poorly performing

schools disappear and good ones prosper" (p. 2). Along with creating competition, these schools

are designed to provide a choice option for parents who may not otherwise have this opportunity,

increase opportunities for learning and accessibility for all students, provide a system for

accountability for public education, encourage innovation in teaching, provide a different type of

professional opportunity for teachers and other educators, encourage the involvement of parents

and community in public schools, and finally, to leverage public education on a large scale

(Buckley & Schneider, 2009, p. 2).

Charter School Programming Around Resilience

A Stanford University study claims that charter high schools are doing a better job of

educating students of color than their public-school counterparts with similar demographics and

while "meeting the same curriculum, oversight, and financial standards as traditional public high

schools" (Fuller & Rees, 2017). This is especially important because students of color often

represent the majority of students in many charter schools where the population is made up of a

"disproportionate number of at-risk students" (Dorsey, 2017, p. 2). Resilience-building efforts

appear prominently in the descriptions many charter schools give of themselves on their websites

(see, for example, Rocketship, 2018; Sisulu-Walker School, 2018; Lowell Community Charter

Public School, 2018). Accordingly, many urban public charter school leaders have made the

teaching of resilience skills a component of their mission statements to address the academic,

social and emotional needs of the disproportionate numbers of students at risk in these schools

(National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2014).

Many charter school leaders have implemented instruction in their schools focused on

social competence as a part of their resilience-building efforts. In addition, Cannata, Thomas and

Thombre (2013) identify "building the scholarly habits, attitudes, and skills students need to

succeed in college, in their communities, and in life" (p. 6) as a common goal listed in the

mission statement of charter schools. Public charter school leaders, and especially charter school

leaders in poor urban areas, are tasked with teaching large groups of marginalized students,

including students who have not been successful in traditional school settings (National Alliance

for Public Charter Schools, 2014).

The next section discusses many of these factors, as well as the development and design

of charter schools, a school choice option that has grown to serve large numbers of students in

the past two decades. Developing resilience appears to be especially difficult for those youth at-

risk who represent a significant percentage of the charter school population in the urban areas

where many charter schools are established (McInerney & McKlindon, 2015, p. 2-3).

Researchers have established that within this population there is a high occurrence of

environmental and family conditions that impede their academic and personal success, including

the existence of barriers that have the potential to negatively impact their physical, social and

emotional development. (Berliner & Benard, 1995, Gassama, 2012, & Haeseler, 2011).

Successful charter school organizations often attribute their success to strong leadership

and a positive school culture (Cannata, Thomas & Thombre, 2013, p. 11). Scholars have

recognized that charter school leaders use a variety of methods to support their students in their

education as they strive to become successful, resilient adults. Charter schools are often

organized in different ways, and each charter school has its own leadership structure and defines

the roles of its leaders in its own way. Each charter school shares a common responsibility, as the

efforts and roles of charter school leaders must be considered as important factors in the

development of resilient students (Cannata, Thomas & Thombre, 2013, p. 11).

Program and Leadership Components Essential for the Development and/or

Implementation of Resilience Building Programming in Schools

  The expansive literature on school reform, including both research and policy statements, often addresses the need for effective leadership and its impact not only on the culture and operations of schools, but also on student achievement and success. (The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2018). Aykac and Msengi (2019) state that "the leaders of the school set the tone of the school culture and of daily interactions with parents and the community in a variety of ways" (p. 78). Effective leaders are able to find ways to implement curriculum that encourages all students to become invested in their learning, they recognize the individual needs of each of their followers and provide support to all of those they serve (Dugan, 2017, p. 184) by providing guidance for curriculum, helping to develop school policy and managing the systems and resources of the school so that all members of the organization feel supported (Hayes, Arafeh, & McDaniels, 2015, p. 87). Finally, school leaders must be accessible and visible so that staff members and students feel like they can approach the school leader with an issue or question at any time (Cotton, 2003, p. 14).

  Authors Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) identify two important aspects of school leadership. First, "leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school" (p. 7). Second, "leadership effects are usually largest where and when they are needed most" (p. 7)." Based on these claims, it can be assumed that effective leadership is critical for developing resilience in students in all schools but especially so for students in schools located in areas that are home to high numbers of students classified as at-risk for failure, such as the learning environments of many of our nation's charter schools. MacIntyre, Charbonneau, and O'Keefe (2013) recognize

the impact that leaders can have on the resilience of their followers, claiming that "leaders should

always be interested in the well-being of their subordinates" (p. 85).

Charter school leaders are a group of school leaders who oversee schools who claim to be

"quietly chipping away at the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged

students," mainly through their efforts at preparing students to persist in college and beyond

(Candal, 2016, p. 5). Charter school leaders implement resilience efforts in their school

communities in two ways: (a) reinforcing the positive resilience traits students possess by

helping them become agents of their own learning (Candal, 2016, p. 5); and (b) promoting the

mental, emotional and physical well-being of students through character education;

extracurricular activities and self-care practices (Swaby, 2018). The following section examines

each of these strategies used by charter school leaders to aid in the development of resilience in

their students.

Charter School Leaders Create Programming that Aid Students in Becoming Agents of Their Own Learning

Leaders of schools with a focus on resilience-building often place emphasis on

implementing programming that aids youth at-risk in developing agency so they can apply skills

they are learning in school to resolve conflicts within their home and community, thus helping

them to "define their own outcomes" (LeMoine & Labelle, 2014, p. 1), thus becoming

accountable for their own results. These leaders work to create a school culture that focuses on

teaching students to gain accountability for their own actions, supports them in building social

competence, providing them with strategies for overcoming conflicts, and prioritizes students

achieving commitment to themselves and others, all ways that appear to foster students

becoming agents in their own learning process. Leaders in schools focusing on resilience

building know that developing personal and social responsibility is recognized by many

researchers (LeMoine and Labelle, 2014; Wright, 1994; Kitano and Lewis, 2005; Cardon, 2000;

Tough, 2008; Bounds, Walker and Walker, 2014; and Perez-Felkner, 2015) as a protective factor

for all people, including youth at-risk. Student agency is believed to provide students with (a)

accountability; (b) social competence; (c) the ability to overcome conflict; (d) the development of

values and (e) a commitment to others and to oneself (LeMoine and Labelle, 2014; Wright,

1994; Kitano and Lewis, 2005; Cardon, 2000; Tough, 2008; Bounds, Walker and Walker, 2014;

and Perez-Felkner, 2015).

School Leaders Focused on Resilience Building Teach Students to Have

Accountability. Many school leaders place value on students being accountable for their own

actions. Accountability is an important milestone in the socioemotional growth of all children.

"Children must have the opportunity to contribute to their family, school and community"

(Wright, 1994, p. 4). This is especially important for students who may struggle with emotional

and family connection. Kitano and Lewis (2005) believe accountability to be one factor that

supports these youth at-risk in being more able to cope with events when they take control of

their lives and take on responsibility (p. 5).

Many resilience-building academic environments such as the Rocketship schools, Sisulu-

Walker, and Centennial's Discovery Program introduce increasing levels of responsibility as

children move through each grade. For example, in the Discovery Program, staff aid students in

developing accountability by providing regular reinforcement of previously learned behaviors

coupled with introduction of new approaches to addressing conflict and utilizing social skills, as

well as opportunities to role-play new skills in front of peers so they can receive feedback on

how they are doing (Lamperes, 1994, p. 68). This gradual building of social and problem-solving

skills aids students in understanding that eventually they will be able to "direct their own

success" (Lamperes, 1994, p. 68). These children begin to feel secure in the knowledge that they

can have control over their own lives, an important emotion for youth at-risk whose lives have

been filled with upheaval such as frequent moves and unpredictable occurrences (Kitano &

Lewis, 2005, p. 5).

  School Leaders Focused on Resilience Building Support Students in Developing

Social Competence. School leaders who implement resilience building practices in their schools

focus on developing social competence in their students. The need for social emotional learning

has been identified as a characteristic for all youth and especially for youth at-risk by researchers

including Cardon (2000), Tough (2008), Bounds, Walker and Walker (2014), and Perez-Felkner

(2015). This population must have additional supports to develop these skills. The Rocketship

schools, for example, provide lessons to build social and emotional skills, including persistence,

empathy, responsibility, and respect. Teaching students to become active members of their

school and community gives them opportunities to practice their social skills as they cultivate

new relationships with community members (http://www.rocketshipschools.org).

  School Leaders Focused on Resilience Building Support Programming in Their

Schools that Aid Students in Learning to Overcome Conflict. By definition, youth at-risk are

individuals who have conditions in their lives that have the potential to interfere with their social

and emotional development. Lamperes (1994) highlights the need for school leaders to ensure

that their programming is designed so that high-risk students are aware of what is expected of

them in their school, as well as what they should expect from others (p. 68). These students

require experiences where they can safely practice these skills, something that school leaders

must take into consideration when developing resilience-building practices in their schools.

Lamperes (1994) reports the Centennial High School Discovery Program facilitates students as

they role-play difficult social interactions and conflicts within a safe classroom environment to help them build the social skills needed to operate effectively in society (p. 69). Several key phrases are used within the Discovery Program, including "using adult mode, effective problem solving, and telling students to use positive attending skills" as they navigate their school day (Lamperes, 1994, p. 68). "The Discovery Program validates students' self-worth and helps them add positive social skills to their sparse tool bag" (Lamperes, 1994, p. 68).

School Leaders Focus on Building Resilience in Their Students by Making the Development of Values a Priority. In the case of the Rocketship schools, school leaders are committed to designing programs that focus on the whole child. They claim to support development of the "core values of persistence, empathy, responsibility and respect" (http://www.rocketshipschools.org). At each of the Rocketship schools, leaders consult with their stakeholders and with the endorsement of parents select a fifth core value. Some of the fifth values selected by Rocketship schools include gratitude, service, environmental stewardship, initiative, creative expression, self-efficacy, bravery, curiosity, grit, purpose and advocacy (http://www.rocketshipschools.org). Time is spent each year focusing on each of the five core values for that school. According to the information provided by their organization, Rocketship school leaders experience few if any difficulties with student discipline and they attribute that to the extensive work the schools do in building trust and developing character (http://www.rocketshipschools.org).

School Leaders Focused on Resilience Building Emphasize Their Students Having Commitment to Others and to Themselves. School leaders focused on resilience building recognize that a commitment to one's community teaches students about their power to impact their own life and the life of others. Charter schools are one type of school where school leaders

often place emphasis on the idea that "children can grow their social skills and build their

confidence within the tight-knit community around them" (Methods, 2017). At Sisulu-Walker

Charter School, school leaders and their staff strive "to instill the principles of public service and

commitment to community" (www.sisuluwalker.org). The school hopes that students will make

connections by seeing how what they are learning can apply to real life. Sisulu-Walker stresses

that "Participating in public service can increase our students' engagement in learning, bolster

their self-confidence and enhance their preparation for the world ahead"

(www.sisuluwalker.org). Sisulu-Walker school leaders place great value on teaching students

about trust, honesty, respect, fairness, integrity, responsible citizenship and compassion.

Community service is one of the many ways they try to instill these values in their students

(www.sisuluwalker.org).

     Not only do youth at-risk need practice with committing to others, but they also must

learn to develop commitment to themselves. The Discovery Program and its school leaders

involve students in building contracts for success, such as creating contracts for attending school

regularly and striving for good grades. Lamperes (1994) identifies the need for students to be

included in their own destiny as a gateway to success for youth at-risk (p. 68).

     Programs such as Rocketship schools, Sisulu-Walker, and Centennial's Discovery

Program, aim for participating youth to become physically and mentally healthy adults who are

able to make good decisions when faced with risky situations. Leaders of these programs and

programs like them aim to prepare students to go on to post-secondary schools and enter the

workforce as fully functioning adults who can work both alone and in teams.

Promoting Mental, Emotional and Physical Well-being of Students Through Character

Education and Restorative Justice Practices, Extracurricular Activities and Self-Care

Practices

According to many scholars, school leaders often place emphasis on such as commonly

accepted values as accountability, social competence, the ability to overcome conflict and

commitment to oneself and to others (Smagorinsky & Taxel (2005); Rubin (2015); Martinez

(2015). Many 21st Century schools are using such techniques as character education, self-care

practices and extra-curricular activities to reduce suspensions and other disciplinary actions and

as a way to connect with students. (Swaby, 2018). In an examination of several schools in Texas,

Swaby (2018) identifies the use of restorative justice practices and discusses the success of the

schools in reducing discipline issues in their schools, such as the Bammel Middle School, where

three-day out-of-school suspensions dropped from 94 suspensions to 47 suspensions in one year.

By equipping students with knowledge of restorative justice practices, educators are teaching

students to work through conflict, which is a resilience-building skill.

Character Education

In some instances, scholars do not use the term resilience to define the ability of students

to overcome adversity and trauma so that they may achieve success in life and become

contributing members of society. Instead, these scholars recognize that many school leaders

regard resilience-building efforts in their schools as integral to other efforts such as character

education or values education. Though some critics oppose character education due to its "fix the

kid" approach where students are expected to maintain the "status quo" (ASCD, 1996), the goals

of values/character education appear to align in many ways with what a resilient student is able

to do. This is perhaps because behaviors associated with the term resilience "are not simply part

of someone's personality but may be encouraged through personal/social development such as traits of character education" (Martinez, 2015, p. 4). McGeown, St Clair-Thompson, & Clough (2016) claim that "within education, increasing attention is being paid to non-cognitive attributes among children and adolescents, based on accumulating evidence of their importance as predictors of educational outcomes" (p. 96). Charter school leaders recognize that through implementing values/character education and sociocultural learning skills within their school's programming, such as within an advisory model or through restorative justice practices, they are increasing the chances that their students will develop resilience traits and that allow them to overcome obstacles in life (Martinez, 2015, p. 17). As mentioned earlier in Chapter Two, non-cognitive abilities including values and character education are recognized as an important component in developing students who are prepared for higher learning as well as the job market. Teaching students how to operate in society prepares them for dealing with life outside the walls of their school building. By finding their voice and being encouraged during their schooling years to work through conflicts and to learn how to work with others, students are able to "contribute meaningfully to society and to succeed in their public lives, workplaces, homes and other societal contexts" (Garcia, 2014).

Some authors such as Garcia (2014), have recognized that school leaders who are proponents of teaching sociocultural values through character education claim that it is an important component of teaching students to operate as good citizens in society. Jeynes (2009), for example, maintains that societal order requires character education in schools. Character education is thought to help students develop many of the character qualities that are highly valued within today's society and workforce, including courage, leadership, ethics, curiosity, mindfulness and resilience (Rubin, 2016, para 4). This is potentially due to Ginsburg's (2011)

claim that people with a strong character tend to revert back to their basic foundation of morals and beliefs when they are in crisis and that developing mental toughness can lead to resilience, and resilience aids people in being successful at overcoming adversity (McGeown, St Clair-Thomson, & Clough, 2016, p. 96). Smagorinsky and Taxel (2005) claim that character education focuses on the "rightness of certain values-such as respect, responsibility, honesty, caring and fairness" (p. 75). In an interview that Rubin (2016) conducted with global education leader Charles Fadel, Fadel expresses that to be successful in life, people must learn how to "behave and engage in the world" (para 2), which is a trait of resilient people.

Character education helps children and adolescents in their moral development and aids in the development of "encouraging purpose, problem-solving, social competence and autonomy especially when facing challenging times" (Martinez, 2015, p. 4). Character education involves teaching students to make wise choices in life (Rubin, 2016, para 1) and highlights the importance of developing traits such as empathy, patience, sensibility, cross-cultural awareness, sharing, interconnectedness, authenticity, self-awareness, self-actualization, happiness, equanimity, wisdom, social awareness, existentiality, tranquility, warmth, sympathy, gregariousness, and interdependence, among others (Rubin, 2016, para 3 & 4). These traits are important to develop because they teach people to become adults who can have a positive impact in their society (Rubin, 2016, para 1).

Implementing Restorative Justice Strategies

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in restorative justice by many educators (Davis, 2015). Charter school leaders are among those U.S. school leaders who have increasingly adopted restorative justice practices in their school's programming as a means for supporting a positive school culture Hawkins (2016) and Strauss, (2019). Fronius et al. (2019) indicate that

restorative justice practices are becoming more prevalent in U.S. school settings as leaders

recognize that these practices not only reduce suspensions and expulsions, but also reduce the

"disproportionate use of punishment with racial and ethnic minorities" (p. 10).

School leaders who use restorative justice practices in their schools explain that

restorative justice "often serves as an alternative to traditional discipline, particularly

exclusionary disciplinary actions such as suspension or expulsion (Fronius, Darling-Hammond,

Persson, Guckenburg, Hurley, & Petrosino, 2019, p.1)." Fronius et al. (2019) further explain that

the "zero tolerance policies" of the 1980s and 1990s have had a "negative impact" on students

and especially so on Black students and students with disabilities (p. 9) who are often a

considerable percentage of the population of charter schools. In fact, "researchers reviewing data

from Kentucky found that, after controlling for a range of other factors, suspensions explained

one-fifth of the Black-White achievement gap (Morris & Perry, 2016 as cited in Fronius et al.,

2019, p. 9). Restorative justice strategies work "toward the restoration of victims, empowering

them and responding to their needs as they see them" (Zehr, 2002, p. 2). Additionally, Zehr

(2002) identifies a key goal of restorative justice strategies as helping "offenders understand how

their actions have affected other people" and teaches them "to take responsibility for those

actions" (p. 2).

Charter school leaders are adopting restorative justice practices in a variety of ways,

including through advisory activities, as well as through restorative justice student groups.

Fronius et al. (2019) identify two primary ways that restorative practices are implemented by

school leaders in their schools: "practices include victim-offender mediation conferences; group

conferences; and various circles that can be classified as community-building, peace-making or

restorative" (p. 10). Charter school leaders use community-building circles to "help students and

staff deepen relationships and trust" (Fronius et al., 2019, p. 10), thereby increasing the chances

of students developing positive relationships with their teachers and other students, key

indicators of resilience. Peace-making circles "bring together parties who were involved in or

impacted by harmful actions" and involve a restorative action, such as volunteer or community

service work. Fronius et al. (2019) indicate that one challenge of adopting restorative practices is

the buy in from staff (p. 10) and recognize the role of the school leader as providing staff with

adequate training and promoting a culture where staff become invested in the restorative culture

of the school. It is clear that the literature around restorative justice indicates that it is one way

that leaders can increase resilience-building traits in their students.

Developing Identity and a Sense of Belonging Through Extracurricular Activities

Many researchers have identified the efforts of school leaders (including teacher leaders

and coaches) regarding the use of the arts, extracurriculars and sports in fostering resilience and

in some cases have shown that these opportunities and the techniques used in support of these

opportunities appear to have some success in supporting the development of resilience in

students (Kim, 2015; Darling-Hammond, Zielezinski, & Goldman, 2004; Berlin, Dworkin,

Eames, Menconi & Perkins, 2007). Kronholz (2012) recognizes that "research says there is a link

between after-school activities and graduating from high school, going to college and becoming

a responsible citizen (p. 5). Programs such as after school sports can teach hard work, teamwork,

sacrifice, leadership, and humility (Kronholz, 2012, p. 5). Some researchers claim that "there is a

cause-effect relationship between activities and academic success" (Kronholz, 2012, p. 5). It can

be assumed that based on these claims, charter school leaders often recognize the importance of

extracurricular activities as one way for students to develop resilience traits including a sense of

identity and a sense of belonging.

Self-care Practices

Charter school leaders may use such strategies as self-care to support students in building resilience. Self-care practices have five components, physical, mental, emotional, social support and spiritual support (Scott, 2021). The bodies of literature regarding the ways school leaders incorporate the implementation of stress management and self-care techniques within the school's programming, such as through yoga, guided meditation, instruction in self-care and by teaching breathing and mindfulness techniques have increasingly been recognized by many school leaders as potentially effective methods for reducing stress in people with a great deal of stress and adversity in their lives. Some researchers have recognized these techniques as being a coping mechanism for those with depression and anxiety, which are recognized as potential outcomes of students dealing with adverse childhood experiences (Fishbein, Miller, Herman-Stahl, Williams, Lavery, Markovitz & Johnson, 2016, p. 516).

Chapter Summary

Youth in the 21st century must navigate a complex and everchanging society. The literature overwhelmingly indicates the need for the development of resilience in youth as a key indicator for their success in school and beyond, and especially so for youth at-risk. The development of resilience traits involves the support of a student's home, community and school. The literature has demonstrated that several factors in a child's school environment support the development of resilience, and the literature also indicates that additional supports are often needed within schools to support youth who are at-risk for failure in order for them to develop resilience traits, due to many stressors as well as trauma in their lives. Additionally, the literature examined why these efforts are so important when teaching adolescents, a phase of development considered to be a critical time for supporting the development of resilience in youth (Masten,

2017). Through an examination of the literature around charter schools, one can surmise that due to the tendency of many charter schools to be located in poor, urban areas, and due to the claims of such authors as Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) regarding the effectiveness of leadership where it is needed most (p. 7), charter schools and charter school leaders have great potential to be instrumental in providing a quality educational experience where all students are able to develop resilience traits, not only privileged upper-class and middle-class students, but also in some of the nation's youth who are most at risk (Candal, 2016; Corbett, 2015). The literature indicated that the ways charter school leaders implement resilience efforts may look different depending on the school context as well as how they perceive resilience and the resilience efforts of their schools. Based on this review of the literature, it is reasonable to suggest that the role of charter school leaders in developing and implementing resilience programming in their schools is a key element in supporting their students in the development of resilience traits.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

The purpose of this research study is to understand the perspectives of charter school leaders regarding their schools' resilience building efforts with their students. The study was driven by the following three guiding research questions:

- Why do charter school leaders regard the cultivation of resilience in their students a school responsibility and how do they communicate this understanding to their school community, including parents, staff and students?

- How do charter school leaders facilitate curriculum, instruction, and programming that cultivates resilience in their students?

- What do charter school leaders report are the factors and conditions that inhibit and foster their efforts in improving resilience in their students?

This chapter explains (a) the role of the researcher; (b) a description of the settings and the participants; (c) the data collection instrumentation, including a description of the survey and interview protocol; (d) the steps taken and tools used in the data analysis process; (e) a description of the validity of the study; (f) a description of steps I took to address issues of trustworthiness; (g) the delimitations and the limitations of the study; and finally (h) a summary of the chapter.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher in this method was to recognize and avoid potential biases that could exist based on my own experiences as a Massachusetts charter school teacher at the middle school level for over thirteen years. I was cognizant that my own extensive experience in charter schools provided me with pre-existing knowledge about charter school programming, as well as

with the topic of resilience building within charter schools, and therefore I recognized that I needed to ensure that my ideas and opinions did not influence the analysis of the data or the findings of the research study. According to Yin (2009), "all of the preceding conditions (of a research study) will be negated if an investigator seeks only to use a case study to substantiate a preconceived position" (p. 72.)

Rationale for the Research Method

I adopted a qualitative approach to conduct the research study in order to develop an understanding of the perspectives charter school leaders hold regarding their resilience building efforts. More specifically, I used a case study method. Yin (2009) recommends using a case study method when you are conducting "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2009, location no. 638-650). The topic of student resilience is perhaps one of the leading concerns in contemporary education, and the perspectives of charter school leaders regarding the phenomenon of how students develop resilience within the real-life context of charter school programming was the focus of the research study, and this meets Yin's (2009) criterion for using a case study method (location no. 638-650.) Yin (2014) further explains that case studies are appropriate when "the relevant behaviors...cannot be manipulated" and describes one of the major sources of evidence for a case study as "interviews of the persons who may still be involved" (pg. 12) in the events or phenomena being studied. The study focused on the perspectives of charter school leaders that were revealed in these interviews and were portrayed through the two composite cases that are included in Chapter Four. No attempt was made to manipulate the perspectives of the study's participants, rather I focused on understanding and presenting these perspectives accurately.

Two different orientations about leaders' resilience building efforts emerged from the analysis of the data collected from the eight individual interviews, which were the primary data source in the research study. Because of the importance of clearly defining these two perspectives, I opted to use a multiple case study containing two cases, each based on one of these orientations. Yin (2009) suggests that "multiple-case designs may be preferred over single-case designs," because "the analytic benefits from having two or more cases may be substantial" (p. 60-61). Additionally, Yin (2009) explains that "analytic conclusions arising from two cases…is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust" (p. 5) than those coming from a single case.

Setting and Participants

I chose to focus the study on leaders employed by Massachusetts Commonwealth charter schools[3], as I am familiar with the particular set of conditions existing within these schools due to my employment within a Commonwealth charter school for the majority of my teaching career and because I am considering a career path in school administration. I focused primarily on middle and high school grades because these are the grades with which I am most familiar. Additionally, middle and high school students comprise the age group generally classified as adolescence, which is considered a critical time for students to develop resilience building skills (Quas, 2014.)

Charter school leaders were invited via email (Appendix A) to take the survey based on their identification as a charter school leader in a Massachusetts Commonwealth charter school. Leaders were chosen from a list of 68 charter schools listed on the website of the Massachusetts

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[3] In this case, Commonwealth charter school refers to a charter school that is "a public school that is governed by a board of trustees and operates independently of any school committee" (DESE, 2021) and does not need to have its charter approved by the local school committee or local teacher's union (DESE, 2021.)

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE.) Only those leaders whose contact

information was readily available on this website or on the publicly available websites for their

schools were included in the list of potential participants who received the survey invitation. The

invitation and link to the survey were sent to the work email of charter school leaders from these

schools who were listed on the aforementioned website(s) as: (a) deans, (b) principals, (c)

executive directors, (d) curriculum coordinators, (e) teacher leaders, and (f) heads of school.

Additionally, I contacted four of my professional colleagues to see if they would like to send the

survey to any of their professional contacts in an effort to gather a greater number of survey

participants, however this did not result in any additional participants. Eventually, 285 charter

school leaders listed on the DESE and school websites were invited to participate in the survey.

Survey Participants

The goal of the survey was to find participants willing to be interviewed who were

administrators or teacher leaders in charge of developing and/or planning the curriculum and

programming for their schools. Contact with the 285 charter school administrators who were

invited to participate in the survey yielded 46 charter school leaders who participated in the

survey. Of the 46 survey respondents, 28 were administrators in charge of planning the

curriculum and/or programming for their schools; 9 respondents were teacher leaders in charge

of planning the curriculum and/or programming for their schools; 6 were teacher leaders or

administrators not in charge of planning the curriculum and/or programming from their schools;

1 respondent was neither a teacher leader nor an administrator in charge of planning the

curriculum and/or programming for their school; and 2 survey respondents did not answer the

question to identify their role. This data can be viewed in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Survey Participant School Responsibilities

Answer	Number	Percent
Admin in charge of curriculum planning and/or programming	28	60.9
Teacher leaders in charge of curriculum and/or programming	9	19.6
Teacher leaders or administrators not in charge of curriculum and/or programming	6	13
Did not respond to the question	2	4.4
Neither an administrator or teacher leader in charge of curriculum planning and/or programming	1	2.1
Total	46	100

These data were useful when determining potential interview participants because the study

called for participants who had a role in planning resilience building efforts in their schools.

Survey respondents were not required to give any personal information or any information about

the school in which they worked and remained completely anonymous unless they decided to be

considered for the interview portion of the study. Those survey participants who agreed to be

considered for an interview were asked to provide either their email or phone number so they

could be contacted if I decided to invite them to participate in an interview.

Interview Participants

All survey respondents who agreed to participate in a follow-up interview and who met

the other delimitations of the study outlined in Chapter One were given an invitation via email to

schedule a one-hour interview with me. Ten of the 46 survey respondents met all of the

requirements of the research study which were outlined in Chapter One, and also agreed in

survey Question 12 to be contacted for a follow-up interview. Subsequently, eight of these 10

respondents agreed to schedule a follow-up interview with me. Two of the 10 respondents did

not reply to the email invitation requesting an interview. Eight Massachusetts charter school

leaders were interviewed in a three-month period. including three executive directors, two

principals, one dean, one teacher leader, and one participant who classified her role as "other."

Data Collection Procedures

Data in this case study were collected in two phases. Phase 1 consisted of a survey sent to

a group of 285 charter school leaders and Phase 2 consisted of follow-up interviews with 8

charter school leaders who met the criteria delineated in the survey and also agreed to participate

in an interview. The data collection was conducted over the course of five months, so that all

data collection methods remained as consistent as possible. I piloted both the survey (Appendix

B) and interview (Appendix C) protocols with colleagues to ensure that the instruments were

easily understood and elicited relevant information. The following outlines each of the two data

collection tools as well as the pilot of each tool and the distribution of each of the tools.

Survey

An online survey was developed during the summer and spring of 2019 with the intent of

obtaining a group of charter school leaders who value and implement curriculum and

programming that aims to support the development of resilience skills in their students, and who

were also willing to participate in an interview describing their perspectives of how their schools

approached resilience efforts with their students. The survey instrument (Appendix B) was

written in Microsoft Word and went through several drafts before being finalized and eventually

transferred to an online survey platform called Qualtrics. Qualtrics allowed me to easily add and edit questions. Qualtrics also formatted the results into percentages and tables for data analysis.

When the Qualtrics survey was ready, I conducted a pilot study in August of 2019. I sent the Qualtrics survey link to the work email (Appendix A) of four of my coworkers who serve as charter school administrators. The participants in the pilot study included an executive director, principal, and two deans who were my colleagues. The survey pilot took approximately 10-20 minutes for each administrator. The administrators were asked via email about their comfort level with the survey instrument and were asked for their feedback on any part of the survey, including the clarity of questions. Only one administrator requested clarification of one of the questions in the survey, but it was determined that the question could not be changed due to the delimitations in the research study. I determined from the positive feedback collected during the survey pilot that the survey was ready to be distributed to the list of potential survey participants. All data recorded from the survey pilot was collected within the Qualtrics survey software, while feedback on the survey itself was collected via email.

The survey sent to 285 potential participants contained approximately 11 multiple choice questions and 1 short answer question. Invitees were asked within the survey instrument whether they consented to taking part in the survey and were exited from the online survey immediately if they did not consent to taking the survey. Several questions of the survey elicited general information about the respondent to help to determine if survey participants met the specific criteria for participation in the follow-up interviews. Questions one through five collected basic demographic and professional information about the participants, such as asking the participant to identify their gender, ethnicity, role in their school, whether or not they were in charge of spearheading the creation, planning or implementing of curriculum for their schools, and how

they classified their school's setting. Question six asked participants how long they had served in a leadership position. Question seven asked how long they had been a leader in their current position. Question eight asked participants how long they had been an administrator or teacher leader in a charter school. Question nine asked participants if they included resilience-building efforts in their curriculum and programming. Question 10 asked participants to identify whether they thought resilience-building efforts were a priority for their school. Any participants who did not identify resilience-building efforts as a priority ended the survey at that point, as considering resilience building efforts a priority was a requirement for being considered for an interview. The next questions of the survey, therefore, were completed only by participants who reported earlier in the survey that they considered these efforts to be an important part of their role as a school leader. Question 11 was a short answer question that asked participants to describe what they regarded as the most important steps their school(s) had taken towards resilience-building. The final part of the survey, question 12, asked participants if they would like to be considered for a follow-up interview conducted by me. If they answered yes, survey participants were asked to give their preferred method of contact and their contact information. If they answered no, they were thanked for taking the survey and the survey ended at that point.

Survey Distribution

The survey distribution took place over a nine-week period between September 6, 2019 and November 6, 2019. The survey link was sent via email (Appendix A) to an initial group of 64 charter school leaders who were considered potential survey participants using data collected from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website and the websites of individual Commonwealth charter schools in Massachusetts. The email explained the purpose of the study, my role as a Lesley University doctoral student, and explained that the

confidentiality of the survey participants was ensured (Appendix A). Additionally, my own contact information, my senior advisor's contact information and the contact information of the Lesley University Institutional Review Board were provided in the email. After not meeting the goal of ten potential interview participants in the first few weeks of the survey, I determined that I needed to invite a larger group of charter school leaders to take the survey. I applied to the IRB to request permission to also contact colleagues within the charter school community who may have connections to charter school leaders who would be willing to participate in the survey. Unfortunately, this additional request yielded no additional survey participants. I sent the survey invitation to additional charter school leaders, once again using the list of charter schools on DESE's website, and then accessing the websites of each school. After expanding the number of potential survey participants, I ended up sending the survey invitation to a total of 285 charter school leaders in Eastern Massachusetts, and 46 participants eventually completed some portion of the survey by the end of the nine weeks the survey was open. After applying the study's delimitations to the 46 survey participants, the data from the remaining 10 survey participants were examined and it was determined that all 10 of these participants met the delimitations of the study and could be invited to participate in the interview portion of the study. After the 9-week period during which the survey was available to the participants, the survey results for each of the survey questions was recorded in a series of tables and charts within Qualtrics as well as on an Excel spreadsheet for later analysis. The document was saved in the Cloud and on my password-protected personal computer so it could be used for the analysis phase of the study, which is examined in Chapter Four.

Interview

The interview for the research study was developed to provide a deeper understanding of

how charter school leaders perceived their resilience efforts within their schools. While the

survey offered one short answer question asking participants what resilience practices currently

existed in their schools, the interview questions were designed to provide a more in-depth look at

how the participants viewed their resilience efforts with their students and how they

implemented resilience efforts within their schools. Interview questions were designed to address

the study's three research questions presented at the beginning of this chapter. An interview

protocol (Appendix C) was used to provide consistency in interview questions and length.

Because these interviews were designed to be short, focused interviews of an hour or less (Yin,

2009, p. 106), I asked questions in an open-ended manner but stayed focused by using a prepared

list of 14 questions (see Appendix C). According to Yin (2009), "the researcher should remain

unbiased during the interview process while still following their own line of inquiry" (p. 106).

Therefore, questions were designed to allow opportunities for the participant to elaborate on each

idea they shared and were formatted as open response questions. Each question aimed to identify

the unique perspectives of the interviewees regarding their resilience efforts and their perceptions

of how these efforts were hindered and supported within their schools. In order to develop the

questions that were asked in the interview process, it was important to conduct Yin's (2013) first

step in the research process, examining current literature on the topic of the study, charter school

leaders' perceptions of their resilience-building practices. By examining existing literature and

questions posed in other studies regarding resilience-building and resilience-building practices,

Yin's (2013) second step in the process, I attempted to construct interview questions so that they

were directed towards the study's research focus, the perceptions of charter school leaders

regarding their resilience-building efforts.

The interview was divided up into three different sections. Each section was designed to

address one of the three research questions for the study, which were presented at the beginning

of this chapter. The first four questions of the interview were aimed at collecting information

regarding how charter school leaders view the concept of resilience. The second part of the

interview, that is questions five, six, seven and eight, ask the participant to identify how

successful they feel their schools are at generating curriculum and programming around

resilience-building. Finally, the third part of the interview protocol asks participants to describe

how they work with teachers in terms of helping them to foster resilience in students. Appendix

D gives a more in-depth description of each section and question of the interview protocol.

Interview Pilot

I piloted the interview instrument with two of my coworkers. I chose these teachers due

to my confidence that I would receive honest feedback from them. The participants did not have

any suggestions for changes to the interview questions and informed me that they felt the

interview questions were clear. Each of the interviews for the pilot took approximately 45

minutes to 50 minutes. Although the interview pilot did not result in the need to change the

interview instrument, it did help me feel more comfortable with the interview process and

provided me with practice at approaching the interviews in the role of the researcher rather than

the conversational partner.

Contacting the Participants

Within two to three weeks after taking the survey, each of the 10 survey participants who

met all of the research study's delimitations, identified resilience as a priority in their schools and

who indicated their willingness to be considered for a follow-up interview by answering

favorably to question 12 within the survey were contacted by me to participate in a follow-up

one-hour interview. All 10 interview participants were contacted via the email address they had

indicated in the survey as their preferred contact method. Interview participants were reminded

in this email of the purpose of the study and of the format of the interview (Appendix C). All of

those who were invited to participate in the interview were assured of the confidentiality of their

information and were asked to sign a consent form attached to the email which outlined their

rights as an interviewee (Appendix D). I also explained that participants could participate in an

interview in their preferred format, either via phone call, an in-person interview, or through a

video conference call. Participants agreed upon a time and date for their interview through a

series of email exchanges with me. The interview participants signed their consent forms prior to

their interviews.

Eight charter school leaders responded favorably to the request to be interviewed and

each scheduled a date and time to be interviewed. One participant met in person at his school

during after school hours, and the others preferred to conduct a telephone interview either during

the school day or during after school hours. The interviews were held during the period from

November 26, 2019 to January 8, 2020. An analysis of the data obtained from the survey and

interview subjects is available within Chapter Four of the research study.

Interview Process and Management of Data

Each of the interview sessions began with me reviewing the signed consent form with

each participant. Then, I read a brief introduction to the interview for each interviewee that

reminded them that the interview would be recorded, and that they would be provided a

transcript of the recording of their interview so that they could check it for accuracy and to

ensure that I did not misrepresent their responses in the interview in any way. Interviews were

recorded using the voice recorder feature on my iPhone as well as the voice recorder feature on

my computer. This provided me with a voice recording of each interview to ensure accuracy in

the transcripts. Each of these interview recordings was immediately uploaded to a password

protected file on my Google Documents. I kept track of time during the interviews by using the

stopwatch feature on my phone.

Transcription of Interviews

All transcriptions of the voice recordings of the interviews were transcribed manually by

me. This process was completed one to two weeks after each interview was conducted. After

completing the transcripts of each interview, the researcher provided the interview subjects with

a copy of their transcript and gave them the opportunity to clarify or revise anything that the

interviewer wrote in their transcript to ensure that their words were not transcribed incorrectly or

that their responses were not misrepresented in any way.

Data Analysis Procedures

After collecting the data from the survey and interview, the researcher determined how

she would organize the data for analysis. The data from the survey were mostly personal and

professional descriptive data gathered from the survey participants, and the interview data were

completely qualitative data gathered from each of the eight interviews. The researcher coded the

one open-ended question in the survey as well as all of the interview data in order to better

understand the information that was collected from each. The researcher's procedures for

analyzing the survey and interview data are explained below.

Survey Analysis Procedures

The data collected from the surveys was organized in an Excel spreadsheet, where responses from each participant were collected for each of the research questions. I then organized the demographic data according to the survey respondents' answers to the survey questions, such as what was listed for their race or gender; what they considered to be their years of experience in their profession and school as well as in their current school role. These data were organized in a series of tables within an Excel spreadsheet. Most of the survey data was straightforward descriptive demographic data, which did not require further examination. The only exception to this was within survey question 11, which asked survey participants to reveal their thoughts regarding the most important steps their school has taken regarding fostering resilience. Question four of the interview asked participants to further explain their answers survey question 11. The interview participants responses to survey Question 11 were included in the interview analysis.

Interview Analysis Procedures

After meeting with each of the eight charter school leaders to conduct their interviews, I transcribed all interview data by hand. Transcripts were sent to each of the charter school leaders to review to ensure accuracy in their interviews. Only in one case did one of the leaders ask for some minor changes to his transcript. These changes were made accordingly. After transcribing the data collected, I listened to each interview again and began to take notes on each interview transcript. These notes included certain phrases or terms the researcher used to identify resilience, as well as notations regarding the interview participant's approach to their resilience efforts. After initially reviewing the transcripts of each interview while listening to the interview recordings, I used a variety of methods to analyze the data to search for themes. First, the data

was coded using the computer software Nvivo. This software allowed me to upload the interview

transcripts and then to search for specific words or themes within the data, such as terms used for

describing resilience, curriculum models used for implementing resilience building methods, and

how the participant integrated resilience building into their daily programming. I then looked for

common themes across the interviews according to these words and themes. Next, I went

through each interview and highlighted data within the interview and wrote notes about the

answers to each interview question in a margin on the side of the document. This enabled me to

not only look for themes within each individual interview, but also for themes existing in

multiple interviews. I then assembled the data visually within concept maps in order to cluster

the data and look for common themes. This exercise helped me to systematically organize the

data in a manner which helped me to recognize that the perspectives of the interviewees tended

to fall into one of two orientations towards their resilience efforts, and enabled me to group data

shared by each participant in a manner that showed that interviewees often shared perspectives

that did not align with only one of these two orientations, but in many cases, individual

participants had ideas aligning with both orientations, which was how I decided to develop a

multiple case study based on the specific orientation rather than on an individual participant. In

order to maintain the anonymity of each interview participant, I assigned each participant a letter,

and each interview participant was then referred to in Chapter Four by that letter and were called

Leader A, Leader B etc. This naming convention was used throughout Chapter Four with the

exception of the case narratives.

After creating annotated versions of each interview and creating codes within the Nvivo

data, I developed two concept maps (Appendix F) that showed specific challenges and what

makes them inclined to move towards resilience building from two related orientations that need

to be looked at separately to see the reasoning behind them (question 12) as well as what

supported resilience building within the leaders' schools (question 13). As the data were

organized, two ways of identifying these orientations emerged regarding how these charter

school leaders explained and portrayed their approaches to resilience building in their schools.

These orientations are presented and analyzed in Chapter Four. I added nodes onto the two

concept maps that showed how each perspective viewed resilience, and identified curriculum

methods, professional development options and school programming related to resilience

building based on that perspective and displayed obstacles and supports towards resilience

building that leaders with this perspective had identified in their interviews.

After recording all of this data on the concept maps (Appendix F), I began to develop a

composite of each orientation of how leaders spoke about or approached resilience building

within their schools. Eventually, I added specific quotes from the interviews to support each of

these criteria and categorized each orientation according to how it answered each of the three

research questions that provided the foundation for the research study. This document provided

a reference for writing the case study vignettes. After examining how each of the leaders

answered the research questions, it was evident that, while some of the leaders aligned more

closely with one of the orientations of how to approach resilience efforts within their school's

programming than the other, it was not as obvious with other leaders, and many leaders shared

ideas and views of both orientations. Therefore, I eventually decided to develop a multiple case

study and to use composite cases based on the two orientations of how to approach resilience

building that were evident in the data from all of the leaders rather than basing the cases on

specific people. After determining that the two cases would be based on these two separate

orientations, the data were examined again to find common themes within each orientation. This

was done in several steps. First, the survey data were analyzed to determine what charter school

leaders viewed as the most important resilience building practices in their schools. Next, several

statements were written that represented each of these orientations, using the data that were

collected from the interviews. Finally, key ideas for each of the cases were identified. This

process was necessary to determine common themes within the data for each of the two cases

and was an integral part of developing the cases. These cases were then presented in Chapter

Four in brief case study vignettes to orient the reader to the orientations that make up each case.

Validity of the Study

Within qualitative data, it is much easier to insert one's own biases and viewpoints when

analyzing and interpreting data. My familiarity with charter school environments makes it

possible for me to unintentionally influence my conclusions as I analyzed the data collected from

the research study (Maxwell, 2010, As mentioned earlier in the dissertation, Yin (2009) warns

that all data is negated if a researcher is attempting to "substantiate a preconceived position" (p.

72). Joseph Maxwell (2010) identifies validity as a "straightforward, commonsense way to refer

to the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other

sort of account" (p. 280). Several steps were taken right from the very beginning of the

dissertation process to ensure the validity of the results of the research study. I did a close

examination of the research around resilience and around charter schools as a viable option for

youth at-risk, one of the groups most in need of resilience building practices in their schools.

There was some research around what charter schools did to support the building of resilience in

their schools, but there existed very limited research about the perceptions of charter school

leaders regarding the resilience-building practices in their schools. However, a great deal of

literature existed around the nature of charter schools, resilience theory, and the intersection of

the two ideas. After incorporating existing knowledge by examining a great deal of literature

about resilience and charter schools, I came up with a list of questions related to the practice of

implementing resilience-building curriculum within schools and the perceptions of charter school

leaders surrounding these practices. I made an attempt to use clear and concise language within

the interview protocol so that interview participants understood what was being asked of them in

each interview question, and so the participants would not feel like they were required to know

highly technical information about the field.

Maxwell (2013) explains that a key concept of validity is the "validity threat, a way you

might be wrong" (p. 123). He recognizes that in quantitative research, researchers rarely have a

basis for comparison, and need to control for validity threats after the research has begun

(Maxwell, 2013, p. 123). One way I attempted to prevent a validity threat, in this case a

misinterpretation of the responses, was to record all interviews conducted for the research study

using a voice memo feature on my smartphone device. The recordings of the eight interviews

provided an accurate depiction of what was said during the interview. Notes were also taken by

me during each interview. A verbatim interview transcript was provided to each interview

participant, and participants were given an opportunity to change any of their responses. Once all

transcripts were typed, participants were given a typed copy of their transcript to ensure that all

reasonable efforts were made to best capture what they said in their interviews and that they were

not misrepresented in any way within the interview transcript. Only slight changes were required

to one of the transcripts that was sent during this phase of the study.

Another threat to validity during the interview process was researcher bias, which is the

subjectivity of the researcher regarding their tendency to select data from the research that fits a

theory or preconception they have regarding their topic (Maxwell, 2013, p. 124). I attempted to

deal with bias by collecting a range of responses and examining the data in a variety of ways. In

total, I received 46 survey results and eight interviews were conducted. Baker and Edwards

(2012) point out that "it is the quality of the analysis and the dignity, care and time taken to

analyze interviews" rather than the quantity of interviews, that is valued in qualitative research.

Maxwell (2013) identifies the importance of "triangulation—collecting information from a

diverse range of individuals and settings using a variety of methods" (p. 128) as one way to

reduce bias and provides a "better assessment of the generality of the explanations one develops"

(p. 128). Interview participants represented diverse backgrounds and came from several types of

charter schools located in both urban and rural districts. Additionally, participants were leaders

in schools representing a range of socioeconomic areas. Finally, participants worked in schools

with a variety of grade level configurations. Interviews were conducted both in-person and via

phone calls. The data was organized in several different ways as well, including through charts,

notes, and through concept maps (Appendix F) Each of these factors helped create triangulation

and thereby aided in reducing bias. Along with triangulation, I also collected rich data from the

study that helped to provide a "full and revealing" picture of the orientations of charter school

leaders regarding how leaders views resilience efforts in their schools. Part of rich data is to

provide evidence of descriptive notetaking, something that was shown through the manual

verbatim transcription of interviews completed by me. Due to the efforts I took to reduce bias,

eight interviews appeared to be a sufficient number to create a valid case study. A range of

responses was received from the eight participants that enabled me to create a multiple case

study that included two separate composite cases. The two composite cases provided a

description of the two prominent orientations that leaders had towards their schools' resilience

efforts, rather than a description of each leader's individual views on resilience. By identifying

these orientations rather than trying to develop a case around a single leader, I was able to

provide a more collective description of how leaders viewed resilience efforts in their schools

that was based on multiple sources of data.

Research Ethics

I protected all participants in the study and fairly represented all data collected to the best

of my ability. I ensured that all participants were aware of the purpose of the study and that each

participant was given multiple opportunities during the study to withdraw their participation at

any point in time. It was stressed in the survey that the survey was completely voluntary and that

participants could end the survey at any time after starting the survey. All participants of the

survey and interview were informed in writing of the goals of the research study and what their

rights were as participants. All participants were given my personal phone number and email and

were told to contact me with any questions or concerns they had regarding any part of the study.

The survey did not ask participants to identify themselves in any way unless they wanted to be

considered for participation in a follow-up interview. Those participants who did not wish to be

considered for participation in the interview phase of the study remained completely anonymous.

Those who did wish to be considered for participation in the interview had the option of

providing their email or phone number as their preferred contact method.

Every effort was made to keep all data collected in the survey and interview of the

research study confidential and secure. No identifying information (names of school, name of

leader, organization name, or school district) are included in the dissertation. All interview

participants were required to sign a consent form (Appendix D). The first step in each interview

was to review the consent form with each participant. Participants in the interview were

reminded that interviews would be recorded, and that I would additionally be taking notes on

their answers to interview questions. Participants were also told that a transcription of their

interview would be given to them and that they would have the opportunity to remove anything

from their transcript that they didn't agree with or that the researcher had misunderstood as they

were explaining it. All information collected from the study was kept confidential and was kept

on my password-protected personal computer until the dissertation's final approval. I will keep

all survey and interview data for five years after the final dissertation approval. At the end of the

five years, all data will be deleted from my computer. The data will also be backed-up to the

Cloud and will be deleted from the Cloud after the five-year time period is over. Additionally, all

participants were given the contact information of the (IRB) committee at Lesley University for

any questions or concerns about the study before it was conducted.

Delimitations

The purpose of this research study was to find out the perceptions and attitudes of charter

school leaders regarding their resilience building efforts for students within their school's

programming. This study was completed with a small number of participants with the purpose of

gathering information for a doctoral dissertation. Therefore, the study involved several

delimitations, as outlined in Chapter One. This section describes how these delimitations were

applied first within the survey phase of the study and then within the interview phase of the

study.

Survey Delimitations

Several questions were included on the survey to identify which of the participants in the

survey would meet all of the study's delimitations. Before beginning the survey, invitees were

asked whether they agreed to participate in the survey. Any person who answered no to this

question would have been directed automatically to the end of the survey. After eliminating all

people who did not wish to take the survey, the study's delimitations were applied to all invitees who were willing to take the survey in order to determine who would be invited to participate in a follow-up interview.

The first delimitation, "the participants for the survey and the interview were delimited to only include charter school leaders serving in charter schools in Massachusetts," was met before beginning the survey during the survey participant selection process. The participants were chosen by utilizing a list of charter school leaders obtained from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) website, as well as the websites of each of the Commonwealth charter schools listed by DESE on the aforementioned list. Survey Question Five helped to delimit the participants to only those leaders who worked with middle and/or high school, though some leaders additionally worked with elementary school students.

The second delimitation, "the study will be focused only on the thoughts and perspectives of charter school leaders regarding their efforts at fostering resilience in students through their planning, implementation and monitoring of resilience-based curriculum, not on perspectives about other job responsibilities of these leaders" was addressed by question 10 on the survey, which asks participants if they consider resilience efforts to be a priority in their schools. Participants who did not consider resilience-building efforts to be a priority in their schools were removed from consideration for the interview. Next, the filters helped to eliminate any participants who were not involved, at least from their own perspective, in spearheading the curriculum and/or programming within their schools (question four) and any survey participants who had not been in their role for one full school year (question seven) would not be considered for the interview portion of the research study. Finally, the final question in the survey (question 12) asked participants whether they would be willing to be considered for a follow-up interview.

This question was the final question used to delimit the participants and provided a small group of participants who had met all of the delimitations required to be considered for a follow-up interview. These delimitations reduced the number of people considered for the interview from the 46 survey participants down to a group of 10 potential interview participants.

Interview Delimitations

Only Massachusetts Commonwealth middle and high school charter school leaders who self-identified as participating in the spearheading, facilitating and/or overseeing of curriculum for their schools and who additionally identified resilience-building practices as a priority in their own practice were considered as participants for the interview phase of the research study. These leaders were asked within the survey if they would like to be considered for participation in a one-hour interview. I contacted all charter school leaders who fit the criteria for the interview phase of the study by email within two weeks of them taking the survey.

Limitations

Two major limitations were involved in this research study and should be considered when reading the findings of the study in Chapter Four. The first limitation is that the charter school leaders involved in the study were self-reporting and I did not seek perspectives on the same matters from other members of their school or district. The second limitation recognizes that though every effort was made to distribute the survey only to middle and high school charter school leaders, some of the participants that answered the survey were also leaders at the elementary school level due to the way their schools were organized.

Chapter Summary

The survey and interview protocols led to the development of a multiple case study that examined the perspectives of charter school leaders regarding their resilience building efforts in

their schools. The study focused on three research questions that helped to frame the research, as

well as aided in the development of the survey and interview protocols. Through the study, a

significant amount of perspective was gained regarding how charter school leaders understand

resilience, the efforts they have made towards implementing resilience practices in their schools,

and finally, what hinders and supports the efforts of charter school leaders as they attempt to

implement resilience building practices in their schools. The data analysis and case study

vignettes that were developed as a result of the data collected in this research study are examined

in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the explanations charter school leaders have regarding their resilience-building efforts and their perceptions of how those efforts are operating in their schools. To achieve this goal, the study was guided by the following three research questions.

- Why do charter school leaders regard the cultivation of resilience in their students a school responsibility and how do they communicate this understanding to their school community, including parents, staff and students?

- How do charter school leaders facilitate curriculum, instruction, and programming that cultivate resilience in their students?

- What do charter school leaders report are the factors and conditions that inhibit and foster their efforts in improving resilience in their students?"

Chapter four presents the data analyses, themes, development of cases, cases and findings.

Within this study, survey responses were collected over approximately eight weeks and interviews were conducted over approximately seven weeks. Both survey responses and interviews produced an array of data relevant to this inquiry. Survey questions were designed to provide demographic data as well as collect initial impressions of participants' thoughts on their resilience building efforts. Each of the interview questions was designed to help answer one or more of the three research questions. The survey responses and interview transcripts provided me with the data used to develop the cases which serve as the basis for answering the study's three research questions.

This chapter is organized in the following manner: introduction, a profile of the survey participants using the demographic data from the survey, the application of the study's delimitations to the survey responses, profiles of the interview participants, the presentation and analysis of the data from the interviews, the analysis of the data for the first case, followed by the first case, the analysis of the data for the second case, followed by the second case, and finally, the chapter summary and findings.

<div align="center">**Participants**</div>

The survey responses were analyzed to gather demographic data about each survey participant as well as their general thoughts on the topic of resilience building and its importance in their schools. In particular, the survey data were analyzed to determine which respondents met the study's delimitations and were also willing to be interviewed. The following is a synopsis of the survey process and analysis.

Survey Participants

Forty-six charter school leaders completed or partially completed the survey over the course of eight weeks. The participants included charter school executive directors, deans, principals, teacher leaders, heads of school and those who listed their role as *other*.

While many of the questions in the survey addressed demographics and were used to determine whether survey respondents met the delimitations of the study, question thirteen, the only open-ended question, asked respondents what they felt were the most important steps their schools took to foster resilience (see Appendix B). Responses provided the researcher with a preliminary snapshot of how respondents perceived resilience efforts in their schools and also informed the more elaborate thematic analysis derived primarily from the interview data.

The following section introduces survey participants' demographic information, career experience and administrative role descriptors of the survey participants.

Profile of Survey Participants. The demographic data for survey participants were organized into several tables. These tables, as well as a brief explanation of each demographic category are included below. Table 1 shows that 31 survey respondents, or 67.4%, identified as female, 14 or 30.4% of the survey respondents identified themselves as male, and 1 survey respondent, or 2.2%, preferred not to answer this question.

Table 2

Gender (Survey Groupings)

Answer	Number	Percent
Female	31	67.4
Male	14	30.4
Gender non-conforming and/or transgender	0	0
Prefer Not to Answer	1	2.2
Total	46	100

Note. The data is displayed in the order in which it appears within Question two on the survey.

Table 2 shows that 34 participants, or 73.9% of the survey participants classified themselves as White, 8 participants, or 17.4% classified themselves as Black, 3 participants, or 6.5% classified themselves as Hispanic or Latinx, and 1 participant, or 2.2% classified themselves as "other."

Table 3

Ethnicity (Survey Groupings)

Race	Number	Percent
White	31	73.9
Black or African American	8	17.4
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0	0
Asian	0	0
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0
Hispanic or Latinx	2	6.5
Other	1	2.2
Prefer not to answer	0	0
Total	46	100

Note. The data is displayed in the order in which it appears within Question three on the survey.

It is reasonable to expect that charter school leadership roles are not defined consistently from school to school. Because "leading a charter school is different from leading a conventional district-run public school" (NAPCS, 2008, p. 7), the leaders of charter schools can often be given different titles depending on the school. These can include, but are not limited to, the titles of dean, executive director, principal, vice principal, assistant dean, teacher leader, curriculum coordinator, and many others, as seen by the data collected from survey participants. Table 3 displays the current roles reported by survey participants.

Table 4

Roles in Current School (Survey Groupings)

Role	Number	Percent
Dean	10	21.7
Executive Director	8	17.4
Principal	10	21.7
Teacher Leader	10	21.7
Other	7	15.2
Total	45	100

Note. The data is displayed in the order in which it appears within question four on the survey.

These categories, and the respondents who identified in each of the categories as shown in Table 4 included an "administrator in charge of spearheading and/or overseeing curriculum for their school," "a teacher leader in charge of spearheading and/or overseeing curriculum for their school"; "a teacher leader or administrator who is not in charge of spearheading and/or overseeing curriculum for their school"; and "not a teacher leader or administrator and not in charge of overseeing curriculum for the school."

Among respondents in the survey, more than 80% of participants had a positional designation as a program or curricular leader. Data regarding the responsibilities of participants within their schools can be viewed in Table 4 below.

Table 5

Responsibilities Within the School

Responsibility	Number	Percent
Administrator in Charge of Spearheading Curriculum	28	60.9
Teacher Leader in Charge of Spearheading Curriculum	9	19.6
Teacher Leader/Administrator Not in Charge of Spearheading Curriculum	6	13.0
Neither Administration or Teacher Leader in Charge of Spearheading Curriculum	1	2.2
Total	**44**	**100**

Note. The data is displayed in the order in which it appears within question five on the survey.

Applying Study Delimitations to the Survey Participants. During the survey phase, delimitations were applied to the survey responses from each of the 46 participants to determine which survey respondents would meet all of the study's delimitations and become eligible for an interview to inform the construction of the case study. After completion of this process, a smaller group of 10 potential interviewees emerged. This section describes the delimiting process that resulted in the 10 potential interviewees.

The first two delimitations were satisfied before invitations were sent to potential

participants. Only Massachusetts Commonwealth charter school leaders were invited. The

remaining delimitations required that participants be an administrator or teacher leader in charge

of spearheading, facilitating and/or overseeing the curriculum of their school (question five); that

the charter school leader worked in a middle or high school or some configuration including

either middle school, high school, or both (question six); that the administrator or teacher leader

had to have been in their current role for at least one full school year (question eight); and that

the charter school leader considered resilience to be a priority within their school (question

eleven). Finally, survey respondents were asked whether they would be willing to be interviewed

for the second phase of the study (question fourteen) and if they would provide contact

information so that they could be contacted for an interview (question sixteen).

After determining that 28 administrators and 9 teacher leaders who took the survey held

responsibilities for spearheading, facilitating and/or overseeing the curriculum for their schools,

a total of 37 charter school leaders remained as potential interview participants. Of those

remaining 37 respondents, however, only 10 provided contact information and expressed a

willingness to be considered for the interview phase of the study.

All 10 potential interviewees worked in either middle school or high school or some

configuration including middle school, high school or both. Of these potential interviewees, 9 out

of 10 had been in their role for at least one full school year. It is notable, however, that one of

those leaders (Leader F) was in her role for less than one year, but as Leader F was a member of

the founding team for her school, I determined that her familiarity with the climate and culture of

her school was adequate enough to make an exception to this delimitation and to include her in

the list of potential interviewees. All ten potential interviewees met the criteria for the

delimitation that they "identified resilience as an important component of their school

programming" (question eleven). After applying the delimitations to the potential interviewees'

survey responses, it was determined that all ten potential interviewees would be contacted to

invite them to participate in an interview.

After reaching out to these ten participants via email to invite them to participate in an

interview, only eight participants eventually responded to the invitation. The eight participants

who did respond agreed to be interviewed and became the focus for the interview phase of the

study. Each of the leaders who were interviewed are identified as Leader A, Leader B etc.

through the remainder of this dissertation. The interview phase is explained below.

Interview Participants

Interviews were conducted with eight charter school leaders over a period of seven

weeks. This section begins by providing a profile of the eight interview participants.

The leaders interviewed for this study included three men and five women. Among the

participants, five leaders self-identified as White, two as Black, and one as Hispanic or Latinx.

The leaders included three executive directors, one dean, two principals, one teacher leader, and

one person who self-identified as a department lead.

The leaders represented a range of experience levels. Five of the eight interviewees have

10 or more years of experience in both a charter school setting and working in their current

schools. Three of the eight leaders have 3 to 7 years of experience, all of which are in a charter

school setting.

Of the eight interview participants, Leader F was in her current role for less than one

year, Leader C was in her role for 1 year, Leader A has been in his role for 2 years, Leaders E

and H have been in their roles for 1 year, Leader H has been in her role for 1 year, Leader D has

been in his current role for 4 years, Leader B has been in her role for five years, and 1

participant, Leader G, was in his current role for 8 years.

The eight interview participants include two leaders who are employed in a high school,

two leaders who are employed in middle/junior high, one leader who is employed in both

elementary and middle school, one leader who is employed in K-8, and one leader who is

employed in both middle and high school. The demographic data for the interview participants

can be seen in Table 5.

Table 6

Interview Participant Demographics

Name	Gender	Race	School Role	School Type	Years in Role	Year as a Charter School Leader	Experience levels of leaders
Leader A	Male	White	Executive Director	Other/ ES/MS	2	10	10
Leader B	Female	Hispanic and/or Latinx	Dean	HS	5	10	10
Leader C	Female	Black	Principal	MS/Jr.HS	1	5	5
Leader D	Male	White	Executive Director	MS/Jr.HS	14	16	17
Leader E	Female	Black	Other	Other MS/HS	1	1	7
Leader F	Female	White	Executive Director	K-8	>1	11	15
Leader G	Male	White	Teacher Leader	HS	8	10	10
Leader H	Female	White	Principal	HS	1	3	9

Interview Data Analysis and Cases

The eight interviews with charter school leaders served as the primary source of data for the research study. These interviews provided insights into the perceptions of charter school leaders regarding their schools' resilience building efforts. Present throughout the interview data were statements, expressions, and stories that revealed two prominent themes. The themes represent two lines of reasoning participants used to explain the purpose for resilience building and to portray the actions they have taken to foster resilience building. Within this analysis and within Chapter five, these two themes will be discussed as two orientations of interview participants regarding how they approach their resilience building efforts. Each of the individual interview participants did not distinctly align with one of these two orientations, but rather expressed views that aligned at various times with both, although in some instances the leader tended to align more closely with one of the orientations. The following section analyzes the collected data and presents the two distinct orientations derived from the data, organized according to the sub themes present within each orientation. Each thematic analysis is followed by a composite case.

Orientation #1: Resilience Means Empowerment for Social and Academic Learning

Data collected during the interview phase of the research study revealed that this theme encompasses the orientation that resilience is a form of empowerment that enables students to recognize their ability to have ownership of their learning. In multiple ways participants maintained that resilience involved programs and lessons aimed at fostering problem-solving, efficacy and life skills aids that empower them as learners. Interview participants recognized that resilience programs empower students by promoting independence, positioning them as

problem-solvers, encouraging them to confront difficult tasks, allowing them to learn through

successive attempts, and by providing programming that students relate to.

Empower By Promoting Independence

This subsection identifies how leaders describe their efforts to support the development

of independence and student agency, which "empowers students to influence their own path to

mastery" (https://www.renaissance.com/edwords/student-agency/, 2020). Interview participants

identified that the goal of these efforts is to empower their students to explore their own interests

and to work through challenges independently, but with teacher guidance if they have questions

or are unsure of how to move forward. Three of the eight leaders, Leaders A, C, and F detailed

the importance of guiding students as they learned to recognize and understand their own

abilities to influence their academic and social experiences.

Leader A explains, "We believe (in the Montessori approach) that kids have natural

curiosity, they want to learn, so we provide those opportunities and then we get out of the way."

Leader A describes teachers acting as guides who are supporting students as they work through

tasks, which he indicates provides students with an

> experience that really is designed around kids learning independently, kids following
> their natural curiosity, and kids having this…perseverance approach, as opposed to
> worksheets.

Leader C describes how students are empowered to become independent thinkers,

asserting that

> I'm not sure what it's like before they come here, but when they are here, they have to be
> 100% accountable for all their actions, and it's their job, we don't just dictate to them, we
> ask them 'well what do you think should happen?' If something went wrong or
> something went great, what do you think the next step should be?

Leader F professes that empowering students to make decisions in their own learning

fosters independence and is a key goal of the resilience building efforts in her school. Leader F

illustrates this concept when she states, "the concept of Montessori is freedom with

responsibility, and so we are always working towards creating students who are independent."

She explains that developing independence gives students "the ability to drive their education."

Leaders A, C and F clearly recognize the importance of empowering their students to develop

independence and deliver this message to students through the resilience building efforts within

their schools.

Empower By Positioning Students as Problem Solvers.

Five of the eight interviewees indicated that students developed resilience by problem

solving difficult tasks. Leader F explains these efforts as "building, flexing our brain muscles and

figuring out how to do work, and when we run into a challenge or problem, what we're going to

do about that," thereby challenging students and giving them leeway to solve problems. Leader E

described resilience-based lessons as those lessons that require students to problem solve the

answers to questions that don't "necessarily have a yes or no answer, but it's asking them to think

through the process in which they got to that answer, and they are completing a task that requires

either discussion or group work." Leader E describes positioning students as problem-solvers

when stating a lesson is ideal for resilience building if:

> the curriculum in a unit is designed that allows for the process to take place, so that there
> is depth over breadth, and…structures are in place for the school so that people who are
> creating the curriculum can actually create that depth, so that you can hit all those
> standards that are aligned with skills...creating the experience for students where they are
> not just reading and writing, but experiencing in...deep-diving with their whole
> selves...they can reflect on the process that they took to get to master the skills...a quality
> curriculum is really thinking about the process, not just the end product, but also the steps
> or the procedure to get there.

Leaders F and A emphasize problem-solving as part of their adherence to the Montessori

philosophy, which espouses the idea that students are empowered when they have the freedom to

problem solve tasks independently with their teachers acting as guides. Leaders A, E, and F

maintain that by working through challenges to find solutions, students are empowered because

they develop the tools required to overcome difficult challenges in the future. Each of these

leaders consider this an integral part of developing resilience in a child and that guiding children

rather than directing them through the process of solving problems empowers them by showing

them, they can influence their own outcomes.

Empower By Helping Students Confront Complex Tasks Using Hands-on Strategizing

Three of the eight leaders, Leaders F, A and C, recognized how students are empowered

through the use of hands-on strategizing while grappling with complex problems. Leader F

acknowledged the resilience her students develop through hands-on tasks and their increased

ability to solve problems when faced with real challenges as a result. In particular, her

explanation emphasizes the way that staff function as role models for students and demonstrate

their own development of problem-solving skills acquired through their professional learning,

which they then share with their students

> I think something that's been really interesting this year for us is sort of modeling what
> we want to happen with students and with teachers, so we are all in the same situation:
> we're all learning, we're all building, flexing our brain muscles and figuring out how to
> do work, and when we run into a challenge or problem, what we're going to do about
> that.

She explains that this work has carried over to students, who have demonstrated hands-on

strategizing when developing their own extra-curricular clubs in contrast to students joining

previously established or adult-driven programs such as Destination Imagination

> So, for example, we created a program last year with students in our middle school. It's
> called Project Group and prior to that we had been creating these projects group for kids
> based on things like Model United Nations, Destination Imagination. It was sort of more
> pre-canned programs. And we would give children the opportunity to select which one
> they wanted to be involved in and for the whole year we would do that work.

Leader A has attended Learning and the Brain conferences where the focus was on using certain

types of hands-on strategizing, and through this has developed an understanding

> that there are certain types of learning that have experiences that have different
> dimensions that will actually create long-term learning, as opposed to short-term learning
> or cramming something in there long enough that it can be retained for a test, but not
> really retained for meaningful application later on.

Leader C recognized that it was important for her students to have agency in their own learning

and provided this by offering them the ability to choose how they would give back to their

community

> I think it's just in their nature...I'm not sure what it's like before they come here, but
> when they are here they have to be 100% accountable for all their actions, and it's their
> job, we don't just dictate to them, we ask them "well what do you think should happen?"
> If something went wrong or something went great, what do you think the next step should
> be? A group of students that were receiving detention, we made them do their own
> service project, we asked them "well what do you want to do?" They went to the church
> next door, because if you take away from the community then you have to give it back
> not just let it shut you down, so you have to give back, you can push through it. They
> went to the church next door and to the church building, and talked to the head of the
> pastoral organization, and they got all of these coats donated and they actually take them
> on the train in the morning and give them out to homeless people before we left for
> Christmas break. And this was their own thought, we weren't dictating to them.

Leaders A, C and F recognize that it is through these opportunities to apply problem-solving to

real world practical applications that students develop an understanding of how to steer their own

activities and influence their own outcomes.

Empower By Students Learning from Successive Attempts

The following sub-theme contends that building resilience requires empowering students

to be at ease with attempting a challenging task multiple times. Six of the eight interviewees

describe lessons that give students the opportunity to make mistakes, where the expectation is

that they may not do it right the first time, but through multiple attempts they will learn how to

overcome the challenge presented in the task. Leader A explained that "our pedagogy and

curriculum are designed to produce experiences of failure on a regular basis followed by

opportunities for self-correction thus fostering perseverance, resilience, awareness of self-

regulation." Leader A explains that "very rarely does a child do it right the first time" and

therefore his school offers them the:

> type of learning experience where the child has that feeling of "I am frustrated, I am
> confused, I am anxious, why can't I get this," that whole visceral experience, and then as
> they persevere or gain new knowledge that allows them to figure it out, that feeling of
> "oh, I've got this," so that the next time, they are familiar with that feeling.

 Leader E explains that "where kids build their confidence is in their practice." Leader E

expresses that it is through the multiple attempts of a task that students begin to achieve mastery

of the task, while also increasing their confidence in their ability to overcome obstacles, thereby

aiding in the development of resilience skills. Leader D explains that students becoming

comfortable with the process of overcoming obstacles and mistakes would

> look like a math curriculum that emphasized the beauty of mistakes and what we can
> learn from every mistake. That would be the writing curriculum that would call out the
> emotional struggle that writers go through to get thoughts into a coherent narrative or
> essay. That would look like historical characters showing all aspects of their identity, so
> not just the hero who moves forward but the whole journey of the hero from the exposure
> to failure, to retreat, to facing, confronting whatever he either internally or externally did
> to move forward, so emphasizing that aspect as well.

Leader G supports this idea when describing resilience building lessons as those "things that

encourage students to participate or engage, knowing that they may fail at the task, but that that

failure is part of the process when that failure helps generate growth." Leader A further

buttresses this idea when stating that students in his school will

> for the most part have that feeling that the norm is that sometimes you do things and you
> don't do it right, so you keep working on it. Isn't that the way you are supposed to do it?
> And if at some point you really don't know it, then your teacher helps you or one of your
> classmates helps you…whether they (students) identify it as frustration or confusion,
> dissatisfaction, anxiety, whatever, they can identify that feeling and know, 'I can sit with
> this, and that I can plug along, or I need to take a break until the feeling passes.'

According to Leader A, students must go through this process so that "they can start to develop a comfort level with that experience so that they know when they meet an obstacle and are not successful, they know the feeling of what it is to b successful. If that isn't built into a learning experience for a child, then you are not really teaching them resilience." Leader A reinforces this idea by explaining how his students ran a coffee business and made breakfast for the staff in the school and identifies how he taught his students to learn from the mistakes they made through those experiences. He recalled how he spoke to them:

> I want you to write down what went well and what did not go well, and then if you are going to try and do a lunch thing, try to translate it to that, because things are not going to go the way you plan and I want you to learn from that. It is ok to fail if you are going to learn from it.

Leader C recognized this need to teach students to sit with their mistakes and to use them as a learning step in working towards the mastery of a task. She believes resilience lessons

> have a visionary component…resiliency for my specific group of students is something that is a tangible achievement, that is what makes something resilient for them. That they know, this could be hard, but I know if I take these specific steps then I will rise above the magnitude of how much it pains me to do this thing…I think the component has to teach them to have metacognition, and understanding why they are learning something.

Leader C explains that through the process of attempting tasks multiple times to overcome obstacles, students develop efficacy and life skills, and explains that "it teaches them how to overcome anything in any capacity." Leader E emphasizes that acknowledgement and feedback are essential to the process

> I actually think that children understand resilience really well...not because of a letter grade, but because of the process…I think those conversations and…public praise and public recognition needs to happen a lot more so kids can feel good and can feel recognized not just for the end product but actually the process in which they got there. To me it's kind of another version of effort and it's really actually acknowledging that effort matters and you can get precise about giving feedback on effort, and feedback on that effort is not just like the one time.

Leader E contends that not being afraid to repeat a task until proficiency is attained is what builds resilience. Prevalent among the data was the empowerment of students through attempting tasks multiple times and recognizing that they could be comfortable with the knowledge that through these multiple attempts they learn how to monitor and advance their own learning.

Identity Formation as a Type of Resilience Building and Empowerment

Seven of the eight interview participants identified resilience as arising partially from the ability of students to make connections within the curriculum to the experiences they have in their own lives outside of school. These leaders assumed that presenting students with curriculum that had relevance to their (students') lives was one way that students could relate to the material and understand how to apply it in practical settings. Interview participants expressed academic learning was more relevant when schools implemented a culturally responsive curriculum, introduced role models that students could relate to, and when students were presented with opportunities to explore topics that they demonstrated an interest in. Additionally, participants examined the contrast between using practical applications to assess student progress and using standardized testing to assess student progress.

Seven out of eight interviewees described the diverse populations they worked with and identified the importance of making connections to their students' culture. Many of the leaders highlighted culturally and racially relevant curriculum as important factors in resilience for their students. Leader E explains that in order to develop resilience in students, schools should begin by "acknowledging that traditional American schooling may not be exactly facilitating the kind of learning that we want our students, who are predominantly Black and Brown, to experience." Similarly, Leader H insists that for a lesson to build resilience it "needs to start from students' experience" and that "there will be a bit of a tension if they don't see something relevant to their

life or their experience." Leader B offered this illustration of how culturally relevant curriculum

is enacted in her school:

> So, interwoven into all of our curriculum are lessons that connect to the student's lives, they have to be, it's mandatory for a social justice school. So, it's lessons that will connect to their lives and then dialogue around how that connection is, and then dialogue around what role do they play in even taking any action. So, when you say what lessons, I would actually say it is incorporated into all of our lessons, into all of our subjects, this practice, to dialogue and connect to the students, because dialogue also involves a lot of respect, and sharing, and building community, and building stories, and learning about each other, so it's incorporated in all of our stuff.

Leader C described using

> curriculum that was culturally responsive…I think it provides a level of resiliency. I think they (students) are able to attach themselves to the curriculum and work through it as a citizen of the curriculum, it is active for them to understand. To breathe it, to live it, once again, the metacognition, once again making sure that is in the curriculum.

> Leader E further elaborates on the idea of being responsive to the experiences of students

by relating a lesson on government and law to how students are treated when someone breaks a

rule

> some of the lessons that stick out are really some foundational lessons, from the day that I handed out to my students mini-Constitutions and we had to actually really deeply unpack what is the wording here, and what does that mean? Let's think about examples that we have experienced, that we have seen, and what do we think about school policy…if there was an incident? I think those are the kind of lessons to me that really reflect resilience.

> Two of the interview participants, Leaders C and D, identified challenges faced by many

of their Black and Brown students as they graduated to higher education. These two leaders

specifically discussed higher education as something that may not have been experienced by the

family members of many of their students. These leaders recognized that they could help to make

the college experience relevant to their students by using a similar organizational structure as

HBCUs (historically Black colleges and universities.) Leaders C and D describe introducing

their students to HBCU schools as a way to provide a context for them of a higher education

experience, as many minority students don't even recognize that they have the ability to attend

college because their own family members have not ever attended higher education schools.

Leader C explains

> we do a leadership and life skills program every second and fourth Friday for the first
> half of the day. These are gender specific, based on Spelman and Morehouse, which are
> gender specific HBCU colleges, and all they do is work on leadership, overcoming
> things, college readiness, they have open forums about things that perpetually set them
> back, you know, how are we going to use our leadership to overcome these things? It's
> big on inspiration and making sure when the students leave here, they are leadership
> ready and I think leadership and resiliency go hand in hand.

Leader D noted that in some of the work that they did at his school that was focused on preparing

students for the HBCU college experience, courses were being developed specifically for Black

students. Leader D described how his school is "developing this course whose design is to teach

students they are capable of attending college and to foster a spirit of excellence in students

particularly Black students." He explains that the course:

> is designed to look at Black excellence, throughout history, the history, heritage and
> tradition of Blacks and Black leaders, and it culminates in a Civil Rights Learning Tour
> in the Spring where they go for a week…they go over to Birmingham and they are going
> to see Civil Rights sites, they are going to see historically Black colleges and universities.
> They will see some of our alumni who are there. Part of this is that students are not only
> writing about their own empowerment or the barriers, but they are also fundraising, we as
> a school are fundraising heavily to subsidize this, but one of them is working heavily with
> our development director and they have a plan wherein they are learning how to build
> relationships with other people and how to seek others to invest in their program and
> them. And so, part of this is empowering them too, and…they read about positive
> psychology…for example, they read about neuroscience in the brain. And so…the
> teacher, she has sort of integrated the history of not only Black intellectuals and
> leadership, but also the science of the brain and how it works and how you can overcome
> barriers and deal with failure etc.

By providing exposure to this higher education experience that is specifically geared towards

Black students, Leaders C and D hope their Black students will be able to apply this experience

to their own journey to higher education. Additionally, these interview participants hope to offer

students a goal for which they can strive by providing relatable role models who have had this

experience.

As indicated by Leaders C and D, having role models who are relatable to their own lives

is extremely important for students. Leader C believes that when her school can successfully

deliver the message of the importance of resilience to students by using such role models,

students will begin to recognize how they are personally "going to use their situation to

overcome and to mirror themselves as leaders." In other words, using these role models provides

students with someone to whom they can look up to and to whom they can work towards

emulating. Interviewees presented role models to students using various sources of media,

including music, movies, guest speakers, and TED Talks that focused on the lives of prominent

Black and Latinx people who had overcome the obstacles in their lives to pave a path of success

for themselves, and leaders also recognized that they could develop resilience in students by

introducing them to modern day and historical figures to whom they could relate and emulate.

Leader B explains:

> The school watched this film called "Zoned In." It was based on this young gentleman
> who they followed from 11th grade all the way from him going to Brown University. He
> was from the Bronx. He was involved in gang activity, his whole family was drug
> dealers, very similar social environment that our students were used to, and so they
> followed this young gentleman from 11th grade. So, we watched the film...and after the
> film, the kids would do some journaling about it...there is a lot of dialogue going on in
> our school based on our Paulo Freire practices, and I'm not sure if you are familiar with
> the banking system, instead of just inputting information, we like them to critically think
> about information and dialogue about it connected to their lives…so, how does this film
> connect to your life? And it was really around a lot of race and class issues, especially
> around class issues...this young man in the video, Daniel…his experience going
> throughout, and how did he navigate resources, college, language and all of that, and
> academic language. So, then we have those discussions, then we come together as a
> group, and then we have circles, and then we talk about "how would you navigate,
> coming from a low-income environment, going into college, which is a middle to upper
> class culture, what skills do you think you need, based on what you heard from Daniel's
> experience, to go forward when you go into college?...I actually did this with my class
> and I did it with the whole school because I saw how beneficial it was in my classroom,

because the kids would connect in such a way that when they would journal, there were students who were involved in the streets so much that were writing about how "if he can do it, I can do it". And what the impact was of his experience to them, and how it changed their way of thinking about what they are capable of doing, and what it even means to go through that. And so, Daniel also had a kid at 15, there were a lot of connections that they were connecting with, and so then they wanted to write him a letter, so I found him on Facebook, they wrote him a letter, and now he is coming to us in January to talk to the whole school.

In addition to role models in popular culture or news media, interview participants indicated the importance of educators within their schools who serve as role models for students. By hiring educators of color, Black and Latinx students as well as other students of color, are able to recognize the obstacles their own teachers and administrators have overcome to become successful and educated, and they begin to see this path is possible for themselves. Leader B shared her own experiences with her students of growing up in inner-city poverty to show them that they can also overcome the obstacles in their own lives. She demonstrates the importance of using practical applications of learning to connect with students through both media and her own experiences. Leader B recalled how she spoke with students after they viewed the film about Daniel, "So, how does this film connect to your life? And it was really around a lot of race and class issues, especially around class issues." Leader B compares her own experience to the film about Daniel and discusses these experiences of overcoming poverty as a motivating tool for students. She recognized the value for students in seeing someone like themselves and who they also know who has overcome the odds, as it provided them with an example of someone who has succeeded, and students can see what they could attain in the future if they overcame challenges and worked towards a goal. Leader B believes that this helps students make connections to their own possibilities for getting out of poverty. Additionally, by Leader B sharing her own experiences of overcoming poverty, students were able to connect with her and were able to see the potential they could have of removing themselves from poverty. Leaders A and F indicated

the importance of connecting their students to the curriculum by allowing them to explore their

interests by problem-solving something they personally valued or were interested in

understanding better, thereby increasing the efficacy of their students. Leader F explains how

students should have opportunities to explore what they are interested in when she describes how

here students were focused on the

> Greta Tuneberg thing...climate change is very important to a number of our students and
> they decided, "hey we want to do something about this" and so they asked if they could
> put together...an environmental coalition of students to go around, educate other students
> and then participate in a local climate strike. And so, for me, you know if I were a young
> child continuously hearing about the impact of the climate crisis, and not seeing much
> done, I think I would feel sad and resigned and frustrated and yet seeing our students
> really think about okay I'm only one small person but what can I do? Here's how I can
> impact my community.

Participants also recognized the importance of role-playing stressful experiences such as

preparing students for the inevitable standardized testing they would experience in their

academic learning, while also teaching students that learning that is done to take a test is not

always applicable in practical situations. Leader C explains that her school's regular curriculum

differs from standardized testing: "the curriculum that we present is culturally responsive….it is

active for them to understand." She compares this to the MCAS, which she describes as "very

rigid, very non-culturally responsive to the students that we serve." Leader C describes the

MCAS Shutdown that her school participates in, where her students learn about the process of

taking standardized tests. She explains that her students not only learn how to take standardized

tests, but she also shows the students how the standardized test compares to the learning style

that they are using in the classroom. She explains that by giving the students this practical

application of how to take the test, it "is helping them to be resilient against the test, and we

think it helps them to thrive," while providing them with an understanding of how the learning

for a standardized test is often much different than the organic learning that is often used to explore things we want to explore and learn more about. Leader C indicates that as students begin to see the practical implication of being a good test taker, they can also understand that this is not always the best type of learning for practical real-world situations.

Leaders A, B, C, D, E, F and H recognized the importance of making curriculum relevant to the lives of their students as integral in their resilience building efforts. Through the provision of practical experiences both in and out of the classroom, culturally responsive curriculum, relatable role models, and through teaching students to handle inevitable situations where the way they learn may only be applicable to the task at-hand, while at other times it is important to explore new ways of learning, these leaders perceive that students will begin to develop resilience skills.

This orientation of resilience building recognizes that students who are developing resilience may attempt a lesson knowing that they will not always achieve success in the first attempt at a task and assumes that developing resilience is partially about developing a level of comfort in having to attempt a task multiple times, as learning from mistakes is part of the process of learning to be proficient in a task. In other words, students become empowered through the process of recognizing that they have a central role in their own learning, and that they will make several mistakes along the way, which they can use as opportunities for growth. The following case aligns with the orientation of resilience building wherein students develop resilience by becoming empowered as they recognize their own independence and their ability to guide their own learning, through using hands-on strategizing to solve problems; by having students learn through successive attempts and being persistent in overcoming obstacles; and through the development of their own identity.

Joseph's Case: Resilience Building is Integral to Instruction That Strives for Academic and Personal Empowerment

Joseph is a white, middle-aged man with over ten years of experience in his current role as a Massachusetts charter school executive director for a K-8 charter school. Joseph's school is in a small city in northeastern Massachusetts with a population around 60,000 people. The poverty rate in this working-class city is around 13%, and the median property value is close to $300,000. The median household income in this city is around $67,000. The city's population is approximately 73% White, 20% Latinx, 4% Black, and 3% multi-racial, non-Latinx. Approximately 97% of the people in this city have health care coverage. The city has two two-year colleges, one of them religious-based. The city has approximately 8,000 students attending 19 public and private/religious schools in grades Pre-K to 12. The city has one major public high school, one vocational technical school, and 10 elementary and middle schools, including Joseph's charter school, which is grades K-8. The average elementary or middle school size in this city is 365 students. The race demographics for all of the schools in the city include 4.4% Black students, 1.7% Asian students, 36.9% Latinx students, 3% of students who are multi-racial non-Latinx or Black, and 54.5% White students. In 2019, 45.5% of students were classified as economically disadvantaged. 22.9% of students have disabilities, and 59.7% of students are considered high needs students. In 2019, 81.3% of teachers in the city were considered experienced teachers, 92.9% were licensed in the subject they taught, and 98.9% were licensed teachers. Joseph's charter school has approximately 300 students, which is slightly smaller than the average elementary or middle school in the city. His school has a teacher to student ratio of 14 to 1. Twenty percent of his students receive free or reduced lunch. About half of Joseph's

students scored Proficient in reading in state testing, while less than one third scored Proficient in math.

Many of Joseph's students have begun to design their own ideas for after school clubs and activities. Joseph explains that the intent of this hands-on strategizing is to "make sure that everything is coming to life for them and that they can feel it, they know it, they understand it and they emphasize it." Through brainstorming and implementing their own ideas for clubs, students recognize their ability to guide their own learning. In addition, Joseph reports the teachers in his school have begun to create their own professional development sessions based on their interests, indicating the clubs designed by students as their inspiration for this change.

While Joseph's school has many supports in place for students, he acknowledges that many students are still struggling and believes there is always room for improvement in all areas of the school's curriculum, staffing and student progress. Although many of his students are facing or have faced challenges such as learning disabilities, physical disabilities, poverty, trauma, or other factors that may impede their learning, his tendency as an educator is to speak of resilience as a condition that enables powerful learning. An innate belief that resilience develops when students are empowered to approach schooling as independent problem-solvers and that resilience building requires a multi-faceted knowledge of how students are empowered through their learning process provides the foundation for his approach to resilience-building. When he expresses his beliefs on learning and teaching, he sometimes invokes the name of the renowned Italian educator, Maria Montessori's, approach to learning, believing that sometimes learning involves attempting tasks multiple times, and that through successive attempts, students will learn to be comfortable with overcoming obstacles. References to "hands-on" strategies and mastery through problem solving are common when he speaks about his school and his students.

Through this process, students are empowered as they begin to develop their own identities and they begin to realize what they are capable of doing on their own. Underlying Joseph's administrative decisions and guidance to faculty and staff is the belief that in their path towards resilience, students must have these opportunities within their school experience to learn from trial and error, so that they are prepared to meet life's challenges. This in turn leads to students feeling empowered as they develop independence and leadership skills, become problem solvers, and learn how to overcome obstacles, and develop their own identities. In his role as a school leader supporting students and faculty, Joseph implements many practices that foster the development of student empowerment by stressing individual initiative and student leadership, promoting student-centered and problem-solving pedagogy, nurturing student identity, and coaching faculty.

Empowerment By Building Independence and Leadership Skills

Joseph views the school setting as a place that must present students with a wide variety of challenges, presented at age and developmentally appropriate levels in the child's educational experience. He describes resilience building settings as those which promote independence in students and explains "it's really about providing students with options...and the ability to drive their education." Joseph identifies one of the goals of his school as "always working towards creating students who are independent...by giving students agency of choice and freedom." Joseph describes how his school promotes independence in students by having "open forums about things that perpetually set them back." He explains how students are taught to figure out how "are we going to use our leadership to overcome these obstacles," and maintains that "when the students leave here, they are leadership ready, and I think leadership and resiliency go hand in hand." Whether it be empowering them to overcome conflict in their communities or having

the ability to tackle challenges such as starting a business by creating a plan and documenting the

positive and negative of this venture, Joseph is adamant that promoting independence in his

students is a key component in their ability to develop resilience and leadership skills.

Empowerment By Becoming Problem Solvers and Learning to Overcome Obstacles

Because he wants opportunities for students to work through real problems that they

cannot encounter in a textbook, Joseph promotes teaching practices that involve students in

developing ideas, plans and hypotheses they can test through experimentation. He compares this

to the Montessori teaching philosophy and explains that "part of the hallmark of Montessori is

that we believe that kids have natural curiosity, they want to learn, so we provide those

opportunities and then we get out of the way." In this reasoning, learning that involves

experimentation and problem solving develops resilience and thereby fits his description of a

quality educational experience as

> any program that exists that has significant dimensions into it where children are going to
> make mistakes and fail, and they won't ever be able to be successful the first time,
> partially because they have to learn how to master it, partially because as they are
> developing fine motor skills or intellectual capacity, they are just not likely to do it well,
> satisfactorily for the first time.

At times, Joseph describes this as teaching students that they can "sit with this feeling" of

learning through trial and error. He hastens to add that he knows personally what it is like to fail

at something the first time, working hard at it, and overcoming it. Successive attempts helped

him begin to feel more and more comfortable with stressful experiences.

> Sometimes I will try something and it won't work, I won't get it, I won't understand it, I
> will fail miserably, it will go horribly wrong, or I will get it half-way, and then I will get
> frustrated like crazy and I will believe I can't ever do it, and so whatever variation of that,
> the resilience part is that experience that occurs when a child either says the next day, the
> next week, the next month I figured it out, I got some help, I learned how to do it.

Joseph provides an anecdote of a time when he and his teachers worked with students as they developed ideas that they had for an in-school business, describing how he supported them in developing a business plan, and then helped them to see all angles of their plan, including both negative and positive aspects of the plan. He describes how he instructed these students to learn from this exercise "I really want you to pay attention to what works and what doesn't work. Have fun and everything but see how it goes." Through this process, students began to understand how the decisions they made in the moment would affect later decisions and presented them with opportunities for correcting what didn't work well in their initial attempt, and that they may need to try, make mistakes and then revise their business plan to reflect what they have learned. By attempting tasks multiple times, he believes they will eventually become proficient in the task and understands this is an important part of schooling. This ethos is incorporated into the programming and curriculum in his school. He notices that as students are "developing fine motor skills or intellectual capacity they are just not likely to do it well, satisfactorily for the first time." He states that resilience building requires multiple attempts because it is figuring out for each child in the school

> Ok, they did that very easily, that doesn't mean they mastered it, they actually need to go to the next level to where they start to struggle, that's where I can tell they are really learning it. So... really finding that low to moderate amount of stress or struggle for a child, where they have to figure it out, think about it...ideally they are thinking that they know something about this, "what do I know, what is this new stuff, where is there a connection, where is there a pattern, how do I build off what I have up here to figure this out" is what you are really trying to create in the learning for every lesson, where a child has that moment where they are trying to build off what they already know.

His desire to notice where students start to struggle motivates him to search for lessons that have "the right amount of challenge," which he explains as those where students need to develop strategies to find a solution.   But, in his experience, the right lesson "is different depending on who they are, their age, the subject, some things are easier for them, some things are not, so

always trying to figure out for this child" what types of hands-on lessons will give them the right amount of challenge.

Joseph identifies the skills of problem-solving, interpersonal communication and leadership as important components in building efficacy and resilience. Joseph acknowledges that many of his students have faced trauma but believes that most people in life will have faced at least some form of trauma by the time they reach adulthood and believes that teaching students how to problem solve aids them in developing the skills needed to overcome obstacles and heal from traumatic experiences, while also providing them with a sense of empowerment. Joseph explains that teaching students how to problem-solve and take action when they are oppressed helps them to break free of this oppression. He offered an example of when his students confronted a blatant incident of racism, where instead of being "held back" by the experience, students used it as an opportunity to teach others about the dangers of racism. He explained that their empowerment as problem solvers and risk takers helped them see this as an opportunity "to take back our power in the situation...the students wanted to speak to this, and it actually made national news what happened." He explains that the students went to the annual Massachusetts convention for charter schools and spoke about the "actual experience and how it impacted them to be greater" as they learned that they could overcome something that oppressed them. He describes these efforts by stating "we're all learning, we're all building, flexing our brain muscles and figuring out how to do work, and when we run into a challenge or problem, what we're going to do about that?" Joseph recognizes this need for students to encounter conflict and challenges so that they can learn about and trust in their own ability to overcome these challenges as they problem-solve solutions.

Empowerment Through Identity Formation

Joseph acknowledges that identity formation is fundamental in the empowerment of students. His concern for identity formation is apparent in several ways. First, he stresses the importance that academic work stem from students' own interests. Lessons and assignments based on problems that are applicable to their school, home or community help them see the relevance of academic knowledge and skills to their own lives. The second way Joseph expresses the importance of student identity has to do with how students see themselves in relationship to teachers. His vision of impactful learning includes students regarding their teachers as "guides" who are "supporting" them as they work through their academic tasks. Finally, Joseph insists that students understanding their cultural heritage is crucial for their identity formation, and that educators need to be "really focused on building relationships and supporting kids, supporting parents, and supporting teachers" by becoming more culturally competent so they can facilitate this understanding. He recognizes the need for educators to be more culturally proficient and believes that all schools should be prioritizing this cultural competency in their educators. Through this training, he believes teachers are better able to implement culturally relevant programming for their students. To that end, Joseph provides this cultural diversity training for staff and students and says participation in that training has helped him recognize his own biases and limitations in teaching about race and has enabled him to better support students by teaching them about historical and modern-day people with whom they can relate. Joseph believes that by making these connections and providing students with relatable curriculum that portrays historical figures and events, as well as modern-day role models "they are able to visualize themselves in the shoes of the person." This may involve using music videos or stories about cultural figures who have grown up in difficult conditions, or it may include using reenactments

of historical events in order to understand what really happened during a time in history. By

helping students to see aspects of their own lives in the curriculum, Joseph and his staff have had

success with students being better able to identify with historical and modern-day figures. He

describes students as starting to recognize their own power in overcoming obstacles and

achieving such challenges as starting a school business or speaking in front of a group of

educators about racism or planning a speech for politicians on why an unfair law should change

because they could see someone who looked like them or came from a background similar to

their own who was able to achieve success and overcome similar obstacles.

As students start to recognize their own capacity for success, Joseph explains that they

start to see a future path for themselves. For example, Joseph encourages students to recognize

that they have the ability to attend higher education by teaching them about different types of

college experiences, such as a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) experience, to

teach students about different types of opportunities that they may wish to explore, rather than

just a typical state university. By providing students with such opportunities, Joseph believes

they will discover their own power and understand that they have the potential to achieve their

goals.

Leader's Role in Supporting Student Empowerment

Joseph views his role in supporting student empowerment as that of training teachers and

other staff in his school to act as guides in a student's learning process. In meetings with his

teachers, Joseph promotes that they must learn to take a step back and let children try something

new, make a mistake, learn what it feels like to make a mistake, and then learn how to overcome

and move on from that mistake, so that "they can start to develop a comfort level with that

experience so that they know when they meet an obstacle and are not successful, they know the

feeling of what it is to be successful." By supporting his teachers to plan lessons with an "emphasis on low to moderate stress in an activity," he believes students will "develop deeper learning" but encourages teachers to avoid making lessons overly stressful to a point where a student's "cortisol kicks in" and they "start becoming anxious."

Joseph hires a diverse staff in his school and works with teachers who represent many different backgrounds. He believes in the importance of a diverse staff because he understands the need for acknowledging "that Black and Brown students" have a different school experience than their White peers. In other words, Joseph recognizes that students and especially minority students, need someone to whom they can relate. He has consequently asked staff for aid in supporting students as issues of race arise, as he, as a White male, does not always feel he is the authority on these topics of racism, and asks for support from teachers who have experienced incidences of racism. Through this experience, Joseph understands that "how we as adult teachers can facilitate learning that is grounded in the fact that our kids are coming to the school with accents, and we want to leverage those accents in meaningful ways that honor the ways they bring in their unique perspective so that learning is not just about, "I'm going to teach you all that you lack" but actually how are we going to teach them about how to succeed and "put the onus on us to create experiences that get us out of their way so they can actually enjoy learning."

Although Joseph works with his staff as they encounter obstacles in their attempts at implementing resilience efforts within the school, he still encounters problems such as "teachers not trusting the particular pedagogical approach." Joseph often ensures his teachers that results will not always be immediate, and that sometimes they may not see results for a whole year. He encourages teachers to have faith in the approach he asks them to take but acknowledges that it can be discouraging for a teacher that is not seeing immediate results. In some pedagogical

methods, such as the Waldorf approach, he explains, "by the time students are in 8th grade, they

will have sling-shotted past students in the traditional schools, but in 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades, that

can look really slow moving." He explains that teachers have

> fear that teaching only looks like giving instruction and giving information, and that
> teaching is not this much bigger thing. So, fear of the Department of Education police,
> fear that as teachers they have to be teaching all the time or they are not serving. And
> that comes from a good place, I am not giving instruction then I am not serving children
> well.

To support his teachers in guiding children, Joseph has his staff attend many professional

development programs/seminars, including those around Montessori-based beliefs and growth-

mindset, as well as incorporating ideas from Learning in the Brain conferences and the

Kaleidoscope program in Massachusetts (DESE, 2020), which incorporates authors Mehta and

Fine's "three primary attributes of mastery, identity and creativity" and asks students to think in

deeper ways (DESE, 2020).

Overall, Joseph is a firm believer that part of the job of educators is to empower students

to learn to overcome the many challenges they will face in life. Joseph ensures that his teachers

are available and well-trained to guide students through the process of learning by overcoming

challenges. Through his work with each of the stakeholders in the school community, Joseph

works to ensure that they understand the value of the school's mission. Joseph does this partially

by providing a common language and a common vision in the school around what it means to

support students, so they become resilient learners.

Orientation #2: Schools Require Intentional Resilience Building Efforts to Help Mitigate

the Effects of Adverse Experiences on Their Students' Development.

The second major theme derived from the data entails the reasoning by charter school

leaders that resilience building is needed because many students have or have had adverse

experiences in their lives, and schools need intentional efforts that take into account the

particular difficulties arising from these adverse experiences. While all eight interview

participants recognized the existence of trauma in many of their students' lives, several

participants explained that they undertook their resilience building efforts with the understanding

that not only were many if not all of their students struggling with a variety of ACEs (adverse

childhood experiences), but many of these students also needed support in overcoming trauma

that is a consequence of those experiences. The following subsections present three assertions

that were evident in the participants' explanations of resilience building when expressed from

this orientation.

Students Need Strategies for Managing Conflicts.

Many leaders identified the need for their students to be given strategies for managing

conflicts, as students facing trauma often have poor problem-solving skills and often have a great

deal of conflict later in their lives, as suggested by Leader A when referring to the struggles

students have with conflict and any kind of stress in their lives as they move beyond their high

school years:

> We get these kids out of high school and they are filled with anxiety and half of them
> can't handle any of the stress in college; they aren't capable of really studying and they
> aren't prepared for anything and they are all depressed and have mental health issues.

Four of the eight participants, Leaders B, C, D and H, communicated specific strategies that they

implemented in their schools to educate students in how to better manage conflict. Leader B, for

example, reports that she and her staff strive to create a school culture focused on "trauma

sensitivity and building a sensitive environment for trauma." She explains the need for trauma

sensitivity, "we assume that every kid walking through that door has trauma or has experienced

some sort of trauma." Leader B explained that often her students needed a lot of support beyond

academics and recognized that in order to develop resilience, many students would need time to

adjust to teachers and the routine of school before they would be ready to even begin to focus on

their academics. She explained that often these students struggled with conflict resolution,

especially as they first started at the school, explaining that "not many students are even thinking

about that (academics), they are more so thinking about survival, daily survival, to be honest

with you…the majority of them." Leader B identifies one cause of poor conflict resolution skills

as "the gang violence, the heavy gang violence, and when you start talking about the health

reasons and the disparities" as indicative of "a really unique population at risk." Leader C

describes the conflict experienced by her students related to culture and race:

> My school had an incident with some racism on a field trip and so what the teachers did
> was when they arrived back to school they started thinking about telling the students
> stories about past leaders that had to be resilient in in similar situations, and instead of the
> students seeing it as ok this is so bad this happened to me, I'm crippled by it, it took the
> story from the content of how am I like these people that I am reading about, that I'm
> researching, how am I like these people, and how did they use the racism, you know, the
> discrimination, to overcome, and how are they personally going to use their situation to
> overcome to mirror themselves as leaders.

In response to trauma and/or traumatic events present in their school communities, as

well as to provide their students with tools to deal with trauma and conflict in their personal

lives, Leaders B and H described their efforts towards healing their communities and restoring

safety through the use of restorative justice circles in their schools. Leader B stated restorative

"circles are incorporated in all kinds of things. There are three ways we incorporate circles.

Community-building, conflict and check-ins." Leader D explains that circles were introduced

into his school to make students feel safe so that "every single student has a path through this

school and that we create adolescence as it is meant to be, a time to try lots of different things,

make lots of mistakes, and learn from your mistakes." Leader H described the use of restorative

justice practices as a tool that is learned and used not only for community building, conflicts, and

check-ins during daily advisory sessions in her school, but are also implemented as a tool for

bigger issues that arise within the school community.

Leaders B and H describe how the restorative justice groups in their schools mediate the

conflicts and negative interactions that occur in the school, and that through these groups, and

with the guidance of staff members, students learn to work through conflicts by communicating

with each other in restorative justice circles. Leader B explains that the skills that students are

developing in restorative justice circles are helping students manage conflict even in family and

gang-related conflicts. Leader D similarly highlights his work with the Circles program in his

school and emphasizes how the social justice work being done is both "institutionally important"

and important to the health of the school community. Leaders B, C, D and H indicated the

importance of conflict resolution programming in their schools as a means for supporting

students who have been affected by adverse experiences as they learn how to deal with conflict

effectively.

Students With Adverse Experiences Require Intentional Efforts Towards Caring, Connecting and Relating from Adaptable and Unflappable Educators

Interview participants in many instances indicated the critical need for education

professionals who work with students facing adversity to structure their professional practice in

such a manner to cater to the specific needs of these students. These educators, though often state

mandated to teach specific curriculum, recognized the importance of their connection to their

students in terms of the ability of students to develop resilience, and saw this as more important

than adhering to a rigid curriculum. Leader A highlighted experiences that were not supportive

of the specific needs of students who have experienced ACEs:

> the principal could come around at any given day and state 'October fifth and it's 9:47
> and you should be on this page and this paragraph' and she said to the point where in the

> spring of that year they realized outside their window, it was a suburban school district and a beautiful property...there was a mother bunny who had baby bunnies under a bush or something like that, she was going to take her students outside to go look and the principal saw her coming out of the classroom and again it was like midmorning or something, "Where are you going?, Well we are going to go look at the bunnies; "no you're not, nope...we have the test coming up in April, we have to stay on task, after the test, you can do whatever you want, which was like the last week of April and the month of June. "I don't care what you do after that, but right now you need to be in your classroom."

Interview participants indicated that this strict adherence to state mandated curriculum was not always the best approach for students facing adversity, as voiced by Leader A:

> If you already have the issues of not having good employment or food insecurity, or housing is too expensive or you have addiction in your family or mental health issues in your family, it shouldn't be compounded by going to school and having stress, teachers that…are told "here is your curriculum, make sure they are ready for the test, don't deviate from this."

Instead of focusing on strict adherence to a specific curriculum when educating students who have extreme adversity in their lives, interviewees stressed school staff developing strong relationships with students and teaching them resilience skills as key indicators for determining the resilience in these students. Leader B described the importance of making these students feel safe when they come to school, and explained that in August, as students are being matched with teachers, they are purposely matched with teachers with whom they have a good relationship, in an effort to provide them with a trusted adult. Leader A explains that he seeks educators who can connect well with students and with whom students can relate, and that when he hires staff, he looks to

> find the right kind of person to be in the school, and I really think that all schools should be aiming for that...I am really trying to have teachers who are more light-hearted, joyful and they really do delight in a child being successful, and they really are compassionate when they see a child struggling.

Leader A creates staff positions with the idea that "this person is here to build relationships with kids."

Many of the participants indicated that one way that they connect to their students is by participating in the activities that students are interested in, or through talking with students about their interests, and suggest that these interests and activities become venues for exploring new ways to bond with students. Leader A explains

> teachers have been able to say, "yeah we have seen a difference...yeah it's weird, I'm the one who has snack with her and before I wouldn't know what to talk to her about and now we have like fun little conversations," and "so and so has lunch with her, and they talk about dinosaurs and it's really engaging, and we found out that she knows a lot." So, we are opening the eyes for the teachers, and kind of creating a different kind of support for those children, and it has allowed them to become resilient in a way.

Interviewees recognized the importance of educators being able to connect with their students. Leader B identified the power of students being able to relate to their teachers and states "it is so critical that they see themselves in their teachers and in their staff," explaining that it helps students to be resilient when they are able to see themselves in their teachers. Leader E recognizes the importance of teachers connecting to students, mentoring them, and empowering them

> I think that it's important not to underestimate the power of mentorship in speaking to people in a way that speaks to them as emotionally intelligent people. And acknowledging that this work is really all encompassing. It's not just the intellectual work, it's not just the professional work, it's not just the curriculum, but it's also because you go into teaching for the most part because you want to empower others; you want to have an impact on other people.

Interview participants recognized this ability of educators to relate and mentor students as a support in helping students to develop conflict resolution skills, an important part of developing resilience. Leaders B and H explain that one way they mentor students is when conducting restorative justice circles. Educators not only teach students about how to resolve conflict through these circles, as explained by Leader H when stating that her staff does "restorative work

with peer mediators," but additionally teach students to run them as well. By providing this

opportunity for leadership, Leaders B and H hope to empower their students.

Interviewees explained that by mentoring students to learn how to solve problems and

overcome obstacles, they can begin to manage adverse experiences in their lives as they develop

resilience. Leader C identifies the importance of educators empowering students with adverse

experiences to recognize their unique challenges and learning styles as something that makes

them special rather than as something that is a disadvantage. She identifies this type of

empowerment as integral to the development of resilience in her students:

> something specific that my school does is that normally if a student is labeled with an IEP
> or a 504, we actually changed the name of our program from SPED to Exceptional,
> Exceptional Ed…. so the students, instead of seeing something that in other schools was
> thought to be a disadvantage or something that they had to overcome, exceptionality is
> something that is great, it empowers them to be their best selves, almost like a
> superpower…so students aren't ashamed to have a case manager or extra support or
> tutoring, or modifications...they kind of see it as heroic instead of disadvantaged.

Leaders A, B, E and H recognized that by educators relating to and connecting with students, and

through sharing their own stories of overcoming conflict, students began to develop an

understanding of conflict resolution, and become empowered to manage conflict and overcome

obstacles. Interview participants overwhelmingly recognized this connection with educators as

integral to the development of resilience in their students, especially for students with adverse

experiences in their lives.

Building Resilience in Students Involves Recognition by Schools That Their Care For Students Requires Them To Also Have An Influence/Impact On Their Lives Outside of School

Many of the interviewees described how they supported the development of resilience in

students by recognizing that the impact schools have on their students must extend beyond the

walls of the classroom and involves supporting students in all areas of their lives. The interview

participants explain that this is accomplished in several ways. The two ways that were most often identified by participants as supporting students in developing resilience were when the school supported a student's family in better managing conflict and when school staff "showed up" for students by attending events or other activities that were important to the student.

Three of the eight leaders specifically expressed the importance of educators providing support to students' families to help them deal with managing conflict in their families and in their personal lives, so that they can better support their children in these situations. Leader A explains that he is "always thinking about family systems and community systems and how people exist in a healthy way or don't exist in a healthy way." He expresses the need for educators to support families and recognizes this as an important part of a child's education process. Leader H details that she personally supports families through "direct conversations with our families" regarding supporting their child. Leader A believes that supporting families in crisis also supports the development of resilience in the child. Leader B includes families as part of the school's team that supports students in building resilience. Leader B describes how she supports students to be resilient by facilitating conflict resolution and management with students and their parents using restorative circles. She believes that she aids students in having more positive family experiences by providing families with tools for improved conflict management in their daily lives. Sometimes this involves parents and educators working together to deal with discipline issues related to a child. Leader B explains that one of the issues facing students and their families that can impede the development of resilience in children is how they deal with these discipline issues. She acknowledges that the support from educators in mediating discipline issues can have a positive impact on parents working effectively with their children to resolve these issues

So, what is interesting is there is a challenge there. But it is a challenge that still can be overcome. It is all in the way that you approach it and you speak about it, I give them (parents) examples of the success we have had with it (restorative circles.) I might have parents that come in that have acted a little off the wall...and I have done circles with (these) parents …and we have those conversations…what does respect look like outside of school on the street, how do you get it out there, and how do you get it in here, and in places and in institutions like this. So those are conversations and that's a challenge, that cultural shift of how you deal with discipline.

By educators facilitating restorative justice circles that include parents and students working together, Leader B explains that the communication between the parent and the child improves, so they are better able to overcome conflict in their family life. Leader A also expressed the importance of educators supporting families in developing solid relationships with their children, as he recognized the damage that could be caused when students don't develop close ties with the adults in their lives:

In my own research and TED talks I was listening to, and people doing research on addiction and substance abuse, so many individuals that don't have solid relationships with adults and family members. When you are feeling anxiety and depression and stress, substance abuse and addiction are a natural path.

The evidence presented by Leaders A, B, and H emphasizes the importance of schools supporting families so that they are better able to support their children, thereby enabling children to have a better chance at developing resilience.

Leader B explains the importance of students seeing the adults in their lives showing up for them and participating in their school activities. She explains that when an educator advocates for them in a discipline meeting, or when an educator attends an extracurricular event for a student, it helps the child to understand that they are important. Leader B recognizes that being an educator really involves "having the foundation of love and passion for what you are doing" and that this includes taking an interest in the lives of your students. Leader C explains that showing up for students encourages them to recognize how important they are to her

> I am probably the kid's number one cheerleader in school and outside of school, one of the things I do…It can be a little scary sometimes to take it outside this building, but if you are involved in ANYTHING extra-curricular outside this building, I show up for that. Yeah, I show up for them.

Additionally, Leader C regularly does things outside of the classroom that let her students know how important they are to her and explains that "they really are my family." She has provided coats and other necessities for students and has at times treated her students to "extras" such as a salon day. She explains

> One time I brought the people that do nails, hair and brought them to the school for the girls. That can be hard for Black and Brown girls, if they feel like "ok, I'm not presentable, then they won't come to school, if I give them the resources, they will come to school. I want to make them comfortable with being exactly who they are by loving on them...I think this helps to show resiliency.

Leader A recognizes that sometimes becoming involved in a child's life means understanding them and getting to know them, and that sometimes this needs to occur before it is even possible for the student to work on academics. He emphasizes the importance of the relationship with students

> I know that this is not easy, and I know that we are asking you to do something that really is not feeling like it is in any way related to teaching and that we are asking you figure out ways to shake a child's hand, or have lunch with them, or have a sense of humor with them. I am asking you to go through this, to trust that you will get to the other side.

Leader A also explains that one of the toughest parts of developing relationships with students is "your role is to build a relationship with the child, find a way and on the days that you can't love this child, you have to love him even more."

The following section portrays the case of Janet, who personifies the idea that the intentional efforts of leaders and schools help to mitigate the effects of trauma on children who have or are currently experiencing ACEs.

Janet's Case: Resilience Building Requires Intentional Efforts to Confront and Address the Effects of Students' Adverse Experiences

The second case is based on Janet, an Executive Director at a charter school in one of the most impoverished inner cities of Massachusetts. A veteran educator who entered education after earning a degree from an Ivy League college, Janet has been with her school since its founding ten years ago. Janet identifies as mixed-race.

Janet's school is in a city consisting of a population of almost 40,000 people living in approximately 15,000 households where almost 48% of the population speaks a language other than English in the home. Thirty percent of the population is aged 0-18 years old. Approximately 53.9% of the population is Latinx, 41.3% of the population is White non-Latinx, 4.5% of the population is Black, and a little less than 1% of the population is Asian. Slightly over 5% of the population was born in a country other than the United States of America. The median home value in this city is approximately $195,000. Only about 40.7% of homes are owner occupied. About 21% of the population over the age of 25 have their bachelor's degree, while almost 80% of the population over the age of 25 have a high school diploma. Slightly less than 86% of the population has a computer, and of those, only 73% have a broadband Internet connection. The median household income in 2019 was only about $40,000. Slightly over 29% of the population lives in poverty. The per capita income in 2019 was only $29,000. The 12 public schools in the city house a population of approximately 5350 in grades Pre-K to 12. Additionally, the city has two charter schools, one is an elementary and middle school serving grades K-8 (700 students) and a high school (270 students) serving grades 9-12, for a total of 970 students. Within the public school population, 80.6% of students are classified as Latinx, 14.1% are White, 3.1% of the population is Black, .7% are Asian, and about 1.5% are Native American or multi-race, non

Latinx. Within Janet's school, 90% are Latinx, 6% are White, 4% are Black, and .4% are

classified as a Hawaiian native or Pacific Islander. The city's public schools and Janet's school

are all below the state average in MCAS scores in all areas. Janet's school has scores that are

similar to those in the public schools in the city. The staff in the charter school where Janet

works is made up of 35 teachers. There is an 8 to 1 ratio of staff to students in her school. .

Resilience Building Requires Intentional Efforts in Response to Students' ACEs

The significant challenges connected to poverty in Janet's school community contribute

to factors that often result in a prevalence of trauma and ACEs (adverse childhood experiences)

for many of its students. Janet explains that trauma and ACEs present formidable challenges to

and impede the resilience of particular students, and therefore, concentrated efforts specifically

directed at these students are critical components in the design and conduct of schooling and

instruction, especially so in the efforts of how educators care about, relate to, and connect with

their students. As she grasps and confronts the many challenges faced by students in her school,

Janet is inspired by a number of educational theorists and thought leaders who have written

about educating students who have been imperiled by injustices and harm. In particular, she

maintains that the ideas of Paulo Freire align with her mission of creating an ethos within the

school of respect, acceptance, and understanding through the use of restorative justice. Although

many issues are faced by the students in her school, including high rates of asthma, racial and

gang tensions, students facing poverty and drugs in their homes, as well as other ACEs related to

living in disadvantaged areas, Janet maintains a very positive outlook on the culture of the

school. In addition to the academic curriculum, she includes restorative justice techniques and

social emotional lessons, often in an advisory setting, and alternative healing practices to support

students affected by trauma. In the 21st century, she insists, the work of teaching cannot be

bounded by the walls of the classroom or the school. She recognizes that students need strategies

for managing conflicts, require specific efforts to help them connect with their teachers and

administrators, and need educators whom they can relate to and who support them and take an

interest in their lives both inside and outside of the classroom. She understands that teachers

must make intentional efforts to know their students and to become a trusted person in their

lives.

Orienting Principle: Restorative Justice

The orienting principle that defines Janet's school are the principles of the restorative

justice technique, which focuses on handling conflict and trauma in the school community. Janet

identifies her school as a restorative justice school and believes "that every kid walking through

that door has trauma or has experienced some sort of trauma" and needs strategies for

overcoming this trauma. She explains that in her school "there is a lot of talk around restorative

work and how to get positive behavior" from students, but that it is an uphill battle because

"even getting culturally acclimated to some of the strategies and skills" related to conflict

resolution can prove overwhelming to some students. Janet explains that "in a trauma-wired

brain… it can look like no impulse control… no focus." Additionally, Janet describes the

importance of recognizing triggers within her students:

> these triggers…it could be noises, it could be smells, it could be a number of things. So,
> we have to recognize and know how does trauma affect the brain in giving them
> information in classrooms, do they need brain breaks?

She explains that the Restorative Justice technique is used in conflict resolution in her school and

students are trained to use the five restorative conflict questions which are "what happened, how

did it impact you, and others, what do we still need now to move on, and what can we do to

make it right?" Janet explains how the Restorative Justice techniques are mainly student-

facilitated with teacher guidance and explains how she supports a group of young people who are

trained to implement these Restorative Justice circles within the school

> Any kind of conflict, or anything that we feel the community needs to heal from, we will have school-wide…with the restorative work…because we have a social justice committee as well, and the structure is more students than adults and community members...we have a group of those students as well who…work with me to develop peer-mentoring, and conflict within peers, and when there are students that don't really want to talk to the adults and have the adult handle the problem, they get trained.

One way that her school provides conflict resolution training is through teaching these

Restorative Justice techniques as well as other social emotional lessons in daily advisories. Janet

herself works with an Advisory each day in her school. Students have shared with her that they

have been able to work through family, relationship and even gang-related incidences using

restorative justice strategies. They are learning about how to problem-solve and overcome

difficulties without quitting or having to use violence and are beginning to make connections to

how they can use these strategies and apply them to their personal lives.

Providing a Healing Culture

Janet approaches her job as an administrator with the understanding that she expects each

student who walks through the door of the school to need some support in the development of

resilience and in overcoming ACEs before they are fully ready for academic learning. Janet sums

up her views on the role of teachers and administrators in the school as "having the foundation of

trauma-sensitivity in your environment, having the foundation of love, and passion for what you

are doing…that is foremost to be really honest with you." Janet is a progressive thinker in her

approach to education in that she is not opposed to providing students with tools to overcome

trauma such as through alternative healing or self-care methods. She explains that it is not

uncommon for students to be greeted in the morning with classical music when they walk

through the doors. She describes how using self-care strategies can help students

> I put lavender on every desk, and every teacher has lavender, every teacher, and the kids know, when they have anxiety, they will come right up to the teacher and say, Miss, I need some lavender, and it's given, aromatherapy, energy work, all of that, is at their disposal, I think, when you look at all of the different pieces, you can't take away any of them.

She describes giving students time to take a break and to remove themselves from a stressful situation for a few minutes before coming back to it. "We give them five-minute brain breaks. Whoever wants a five-minute brain break, they get a five-minute brain break. We have the five-minute brain break passes." Janet talks about the importance of using such alternative healing methods as guided meditation, energy work, chakras, and yoga with students. Through the use of self-care methods and alternative healing practices, Janet sees positive results in students as they learn how to overcome conflict and manage stress and anxiety.

Outreach to Students and Families

Janet understands that one goal of schools is to provide students with an environment to grow in a healthy and safe way. She promotes the idea that teachers today must be more than just the person who is delivering a lesson to their students. Janet explains that educators in schools must strive to reach out to students in order to develop positive relationships with them so that students will trust them and be able to ask for help as needed. Janet also understands that modern educators must recognize the need to have a positive impact on the outside lives of their students. Therefore, she states that their way of connecting with students must address the unique needs and interests of each student. Janet often sees her students as her own kids and will treat them as such by attending their sporting events or even helping them to do their hair. She realizes that for many students of color, "not having their hair done may be quite stressful and can cause them to skip school." Janet has literally given students her own coat when they don't have one. She helps them to take care of many of their basic needs. She is a regular attendee at student extra-

curricular events and is her "students' biggest cheerleader" whether it is a chess match or a

football game. In addition to providing students with tools they can use to resolve conflicts in

their lives, Janet also sees the connection to the families of students as an integral part of the

success of the students. She makes sure that she meets with families on a regular basis and works

with families and students to ensure that families have the support they need to best support their

children at home. Janet is an active participant in all of the work done to support the students and

families in her school.

Resilience Building Requires Adult Faculty and Staff with the Perspective, Dispositions and Skills That are Well Suited to the Student Population and That Foster Connections to Students

Janet underscores the importance of a trusted adult, and especially of an educator, in the

lives of her students. She explains that efforts are made to connect students with teachers with

whom they have a connection even before the school year begins

> At orientation, we literally go through a matching of teachers with students, "who do you
> have a good relationship with, pull our students up on a list, okay, if you have a good
> relationship with somebody, put your name next to that person. We do the same thing
> with the students. So immediately, we know, who is connected to who, who do we go to,
> especially myself in restorative work, because then we can include one of those teachers
> that they have matched with.

Janet states that by building positive relationships with their teachers, students begin to trust in

their environment, something that is difficult for students who have experienced trauma. She

identifies what she looks for when hiring teachers to work in her school

> I certainly think that part of my approach is trying to find the right kind of person to be in
> the school...I am really trying to have teachers who are more light-hearted, joyful and
> they really do delight in a child being successful, and they really are compassionate when
> they see a child struggling.

Janet describes that an important part of educating her teachers to best support students affected by trauma is to provide adequate training that helps to make her teachers feel confident in what they are doing. She believes that this will in turn make her students more comfortable and relaxed in the classroom "I really want teachers to be confident in themselves…so that they can have an expectation in their classroom that all their students can be confident."

Having a very diverse staff is one condition that Janet believes makes it easier for her students to relate to their teachers. She believes that it is very important for students to be able to relate to and see themselves in their teachers. Before becoming a charter school leader, Janet grew up in a large inner city herself, though not in Massachusetts. As a young mixed-race African-American and Hispanic child growing up in a low-income, inner city neighborhood, she experienced a number of ongoing ACEs as well as some specific traumatic events that made it difficult for her to succeed. Through her positive experiences with her teachers and administrators growing up into her own neighborhood schools, Janet learned the importance of educators in supporting students and especially minority students, in adverse situations, in overcoming these traumas. Janet developed this understanding of how to reach out to and rely on people who had the ability to help her grow and learn. partially during her own childhood. She describes resilience in her own experience:

> how I would name resilience is basically facing your fears, against all odds, first of all, the foundation of being against all odds. For myself, growing up in the inner city in the '60s, having parents from two different races, and then with my own lived experiences of that, and then looking back and seeing…who were my mentors, and what worked for me as far as building my own resilience.

She describes herself as having "a very mirrored lifestyle of the students that we serve, culturally, and socially" and believes this helps her to understand and serve her students very well. She also recognizes the need to provide cultural diversity training for all of her staff, so

they are more aware of the experiences faced by many of their minority students, as evidenced in

the following anecdote:

> Knowing yourself and your students. Knowing how you have been socialized to think about a population that you serve. To me that is the most important…we had white privileged lunch meetings…we had all the teachers who are white, they would have lunch, and there was one teacher, one staff member, who was amazing with race and class intersections and as a white male he would facilitate these discussions around sifting through your own socialization about the population that you serve. And really being honest about it. And truthful about it. And then, offering strategies around how to change the way you are thinking about it because it comes up, we are only human, we all have been socialized with these ideas and these stereotypes. So, let's talk about it, let's stick to it and find ways that we can combat those innate things that come up in us that are sometimes unconscious, that we are not aware of.

Janet provides ample professional development opportunities for her staff to learn about

restorative justice techniques, trauma-informed schools, and other programs that support students

facing trauma. of staff celebrating the strengths of students as a means for connecting with them.

An analysis of the data collected for this research study produced two distinct orientations

of how the interview participants approached resilience building. This led to the creation of a

multiple case study with two cases. Each case was portrayed through a case study vignette within

the chapter. The first case recognized the tendency of charter school educators to believe that

resilience building is integral to instruction that leads to students developing academic and

personal empowerment. The second case indicates that resilience building requires intentional

efforts to confront and address the effects of students' adverse experiences. While the eight

interview participants in some instances aligned more with one perspective than the other, it was

clear that most of the interview participants shared ideas from both orientations. Therefore, the

two cases developed as part of the research study are based on the two distinct orientations outlined

in the chapter, rather than on an individual interview participant. The two case study examples

were presented in order to examine them for themes that existed within the data for each case,

including resilience building is integral to instruction that strives for academic and personal empowerment and resilience building requires intentional efforts by staff in response to students' ACEs.

Chapter Findings and Chapter Conclusion

Within this chapter, the reader was presented with the data related to the two different orientations interviewees shared regarding their resilience building practices. These orientations were presented in two different cases. The two cases helped to answer the study's three research questions and resulted in the following five findings:

Finding 1:

Across all interview participants' remarks about making resilience building a priority, two orientations became evident. The first orientation is that resilience building is needed to empower students to feel in control of their own learning. The second orientation is that resilience building is needed to reduce the effects of trauma.

The first orientation assumes that resilience building is integral to instruction that strives for academic and personal empowerment. This includes (a) empowering students to become independent and develop leadership skills; (b) empowering students to become problem solvers so they can overcome obstacles; (c) empowering students by helping them to develop their own identity; and (d) empowering students by training teachers to act as their guides in the learning process.

The second orientation assumes that schools require intentional resilience building efforts to help mitigate the effects of adverse experiences on their students' development. Leaders implement these efforts (a) through the use of restorative justice techniques: (b) by providing a healing culture through self-care practices: (c) through outreach to families: and (d) by providing

staff who have the disposition and skills necessary to adequately support students struggling with

the effects of ACEs.

Finding 2

The data support that interview participants explained their understanding of student

empowerment as one or more of the following: fostering their independence, positioning them as

problem-solvers, encouraging them to confront difficult tasks, teaching them that they can

succeed at a difficult task through successive attempts, and by giving their students strategies for

overcoming the effects of the significant trauma many of them have faced.

Finding 3

Interview participants suggest that a foundation for resilience building within a school is

designing and selecting school programming that is culturally relevant and culturally supportive

to their students' lives so that their students know that the school recognizes their culture, and so

their schools and community incorporate their cultural background.

Finding 4

Interview participants considered implementing school programming that is highly

engaging to be a key element of resilience building because it gives students a voice and

demonstrates to students that their academic work has real-world consequences and can have an

impact on their communities.

Finding 5

Participants described several aspects of the societal climate in their schools that inhibited

and supported their efforts in improving resilience for their students. They reported three factors

which inhibited their efforts in improving resilience building: discrimination and racism inhibit

resilience, trauma inhibits resilience building, and a lack of teacher buy-in inhibits resilience

building. Participants report that the intentional efforts of educators is one major way that participants support resilience.

The next chapter discusses each of the five findings of the study according to which research question they help to answer, examines the implications this research will have in the field of education and especially so in the area of resilience practices, and examines future studies that could be conducted related to the findings in this research study.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, FUTURE RESEARCH

IMPLICATIONS AND FINAL REFLECTIONS

Introduction

Chapter Five includes three sections. First, a summary of purpose, background and

design of the study is presented. Second, a discussion of the study's five key findings is

presented, organized according to which of the study's three research questions they address.

Following each finding are the implications for school leaders and future scholarly research.

Next, several recommendations are given to aid school leaders in recognizing how to support the

implementation of resilience-building efforts in their schools. The final section of the chapter

includes a reflection of the research study and the doctoral process.

Summary

This study sought to identify the perceptions of charter school leaders regarding their

resilience efforts in their schools. An examination of the growing body of literature around

resilience, charter schools, youth at risk, and the intersection of these topics confirmed the

importance of resilience-building efforts in today's schools, and most especially so for those

schools servicing high percentages of students considered at risk for failure.

The study was developed because of my own interest and experiences regarding the topic

of resilience and charter schools, including my experience as a charter school teacher for most of

my teaching career; questions arising from a review of the literature regarding resilience, charter

schools, and school leadership; and my own interest in learning more about how leaders regard

and encourage resilience building efforts within schools, and specifically within charter schools.

My own experiences have indicated that there is much discussion about resilience building

within charter schools. However, I have noticed that charter school teachers and charter school

leaders ascribe multiple meanings to the term resilience, and there are many inconsistencies within schools in the actions being taken to build student resilience. The complexity surrounding the term resilience and how it is addressed by school leaders makes this an important topic to explore. The various ways charter school leaders identify resilience is leading to a multitude of ways in which they address resilience building within their schools. This study focused specifically on the meanings charter school leaders who participated in this study have for resilience building and the actions they are taking as they address resilience-building due to their heightened awareness of the need for resilience building in their schools.

Chapter One's purpose was to introduce the topic of resilience and to establish that because of the many challenges facing students who tend to make up the population of charter schools, resilience building is very much on the minds of charter school leaders. This is important because charter school leaders have a critical responsibility to develop resilience-based programs within their schools to foster important life skills, as many of the students within charter schools, and especially in urban charter schools, are classified as at-risk (Marshall, 2017, p. 1). Additionally, Chapter One provided an overview of the dissertation and introduced the three research questions

- Why do charter school leaders regard the cultivation of resilience in their students a school responsibility and how do they communicate this understanding to their school community, including parents, staff and students?

- How do charter school leaders facilitate curriculum, instruction, and programming that cultivates resilience in their students?

- What do charter school leaders report are the factors and conditions that inhibit and foster their efforts in improving resilience in their students?

The delimitations of the study sought to focus the study specifically on school leaders who have a direct role in implementation or monitoring of curriculum who have more than two years of experience working in a middle school or high school Commonwealth charter school in Massachusetts.

Chapter Two presented a review of literature addressing the topics of resilience, charter schools, school leadership, and youth at-risk. A prevalent topic examined within the literature review is the importance of social and emotional learning as building blocks for resilience building and for improved life outcomes. Montrallo (2014) recognized these outcomes as "success in school, college entry and completion and later earnings" (p. 3). The research of Fallon (2010) and Finn, Manno, and Vanourek (2001) examined how the qualities often associated with charter schools make them ideal for resilience building, including their focus on social competence, social emotional learning, and in their freedom to design their own curriculum. Authors such as Hughes and Smith (2020) indicate that specific societal conditions impact the ability of students to develop resilience skills. Chapter Two recognized that societal stressors present today's students with a less certain future than past generations and identified some of these stressors, including: increased exposure to violence and concern for safety among Generation Z[4]; concerns for the state of our global environment and climate change; overuse of drugs and alcohol; gender and race discrimination; decreased privacy and increased access to harmful material due to being a generation of digital natives; and increased financial instability (Hughes & Smith, 2020). Several authors, including: Sitzer and Stockwell (2015); Lukianoff and Haidt, (2018); and Plumb, Bush and Kersevich, (2016) highlighted the prevalence and impact of trauma on students in recent years. Capuzzi and Gross (2014) and Berliner and Benard (1995)

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[1] Generation Z= Those children and adolescents who are born between the years 1995 to 2015.

recognized the importance of building resilience in these students. The research, particularly by

Hidaka (2012), also identified many of the risk factors for students who struggle to develop

resilience. In an effort to develop an understanding of how children develop resilience, literature

by Berliner and Bernard, (1995) and Duggal, Sacks-Zimmerman, and Liberta (2016) was

examined to help identify both the intrinsic protective factors within a child and the protective

factors within schools that support resilience building. Finally, the chapter discusses the nature of

charter school programming and reviews descriptions of the programming and design of selected

charter schools.

Chapter Three introduced the design, setting and participants of the study and explained

the methodological principles represented by Yin (2009, 2014) that were utilized for conducting

this qualitative multiple composite case study. Chapter Three also described the rationale for the

study and my role as the researcher, which included becoming knowledgeable in the case study

method, recognizing the personal biases that exist and identifying steps taken to reduce the

impact of these biases. This chapter also helped to orient the reader to the interview and data

collection and analysis processes and procedures.

Chapter Four presented the data collected from the online survey, which was used to

identify potential participants for interviews, and an analysis of the data collected in eight in-

person interviews conducted for the study. The data analysis resulted in the presentation of two

cases. Chapter Four concluded with a presentation of the five findings of the study that emerged

from the data and case analysis. Each finding holds implications for educational leaders and for

scholarship. The next section discusses the findings and their implications.

Discussion of Findings and Implications

This section discusses the findings and their implications. The discussion is organized according to the three research questions that guided the study.

First Research Question

The study's first research question is "Why do charter school leaders regard the cultivation of resilience in their students a school responsibility and how do they communicate this understanding to their school community, including parents, staff, and students?" An analysis of the data resulted in two findings relevant to why the charter school leader participants of this study believe the cultivation of resilience in their students is a school responsibility and how they communicated this understanding to their school community.

Finding #1*: *Across all interview participants' remarks about making resilience building a priority, two orientations became evident. The first orientation is that resilience building is needed to empower students to feel in control of their own learning. The second orientation is that resilience building is needed to reduce the effects of trauma.

Participants approached resilience building with two orientations: resilience building is needed to empower students to feel in control of their own learning and resilience building is needed to reduce the effects of trauma. It is important to note that participants did not always align with just one of the two orientations, but rather, many of the participants had some tendencies towards both orientations, although some of the participants tended to lean more towards one orientation than the other. It is for this reason that the two cases are composite portrayals of each orientation, rather than a depiction of two distinct participants within the study.

First Orientation. The leader represented in Joseph's case illustrated the orientation of

participants who approached resilience building with the knowledge that students needed

opportunities to make mistakes and attempt tasks multiple times to understand that sometimes

they might fail the first time they attempt a task but if they kept working at the task, eventually

they would overcome the obstacle or solve the problem. Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker (2000)

highlighted the underlying protective processes that supported student resilience, and they

understood that resilience was not the avoidance of difficult situations but rather the ability to

overcome these situations and move forward. Many participants discussed resilience in a similar

way and explained that students develop confidence as they problem-solve new situations, and

especially when their teachers guide them through multi-step problems. As Masten (2018)

indicated in his research, many participants adhered to the concept that many systems needed to

work together to develop resilience in students. Participants shared similar beliefs as Berliner and

Bernard (1995), Duggal, Sacks-Zimmerman, and Liberta (2016) when stating that

resourcefulness is a key indicator of student resilience, a key idea in the first orientation of

participants.

   Second Orientation. The leader represented in Janet's case finds direction from the

second orientation held by several of the participants who shared practices in their schools that

match with Gassama's (2012) belief that intentional steps needed to be taken in schools to help

students overcome trauma. For example, in Janet's case, efforts in her school are focused on

supporting students as they learn to use conflict resolution strategies, including restorative justice

circles as resources for managing conflicts. Additionally, Janet's case signifies the importance of

providing students with a healing culture that incorporates self-care, and alternative healing

methods such as guided meditation, energy work, chakras, and yoga. The actions taken by

leaders with ideas in alignment with Janet's case adhere to Gassama's (2012) assertion that it is a

school's responsibility to provide a supportive climate that aids in the development of resilience in students, and especially so in schools where a large percentage of the school population has faced significant trauma in their lives, as mentioned in the scholarship of Duggal, Sacks-Zimmerman, and Liberta (2016). This awareness was indicated when leaders identified the need for schools to be cognizant that giving students hope and support as they adjusted to school was an important first step in developing resilience. Janet's case identifies several of the steps leaders took to achieve this goal, including: (a) implementing restorative practices into the school-programming; (b) providing students and staff with self-care practices; and (c) instilling a positive school culture.

Implications for School Leaders. One understanding that was gained from the study was that the work of school leaders regarding their resilience building practices is multi-faceted: not only do school leaders need to recognize the need to empower students for them to become resilient, but they also must recognize that most students in schools today have faced some type of trauma in their lives. Several participants shared the importance of restorative work in developing a school climate that supports students impacted by trauma. This need has become especially evident as school leaders begin to understand how to support their students who have been impacted by the interrupted and restructured schooling that has occurred due to the global Covid 19 pandemic. Janet's case focuses on some of the many steps school leaders take to develop this type of school climate, including facilitating restorative justice circles to handle discipline issues, and self-care, yoga, meditation, and other alternative healing methods to support students dealing with high levels of anxiety.

Not only did school leaders share how they support their students by modeling and teaching restorative practices, but Janet's case also focused on the importance of involvement in

students' out-of-school lives and "showing up" for students outside of the classroom.

Additionally, as indicated in Janet's case, connection to families in an integral part of the

experience of helping students build resilience. Supporting families so they can be present and

involved in the school community helps parents better support their children. Therefore,

exposure to some of the ways school leaders can involve families in their children's school

experience may better prepare other leaders to develop a school culture that supports families

and invites them to come and share parts of their own culture with their child's class, which in

turn helps support the resilience of their child.

Regarding the first orientation of interview participants towards their resilience-building

efforts, school leaders aligning with Joseph's case recognize that students may need multiple

opportunities to develop new skills or to overcome obstacles. Therefore, these leaders may be

more informed about the benefits of centering their school's professional development around

training teachers to implement strategies that guide students in their learning as they work

through new obstacles, rather than merely directing them toward correct answers. These school

leaders tend to focus their professional development offerings on programs that cultivate self-

awareness and metacognitive understanding, drawing inspiration from pedagogical beliefs such

as those derived from Maria Montessori or Dweck's (DESE, 2020) growth-mindset theory or

from such authors as Mehta and Fine (DESE 2020), who recognize "three primary attributes of

mastery, identity and creativity" that ask students to think in deeper ways (DESE, 2020).

This study implies the importance of educators prioritizing the provision of challenging,

yet age and ability level appropriate tasks within their school programming. Joseph's case

describes how school leaders can develop many opportunities within their curriculum for

students to be presented with challenges that they must overcome, thereby supporting their

development of problem-solving strategies, important skills needed for resilience building. By being informed of the potential benefits of this type of curriculum, leaders have more resources to work with teachers to develop grading systems for assessing students that center on the progress students are making during the process of learning rather than on grading only the results of their learning.

Finally, based on the study's cases, one implication is that the supportive environment and personalism in teaching do not appear spontaneously or only with good intentions. In fact, all the interviewees in the study recognized the need for educators to have ongoing professional development so schools are better able to support their students and staff in creating these interpersonal connections within this restorative environment. Janet's case specifically indicates that staff members will need training in restorative justice practices and in developing trauma-informed schools and other programs that support students facing trauma.

Implications for Scholarship. The leader in Janet's case believes that schools and educators can support students in mitigating the effects of trauma. Johnson (2008), Berliner and Benard (1995), Cardon, (2000), Capuzzi and Gross (2014), Tough (2008), Bounds, Walker and Walker (2014), Perez-Felkner (2015), Frelin (2015), Lamperes (1994), Berlin et al. (2007), and Brandt (1990), indicate that after a child's family, the teacher is one of the most important figures in a youth at-risk's life and is one of the biggest influences on a student's motivation and achievement in school. Janet's case portrays a charter school leader who wants the school to mitigate the effects of trauma in the lives of students. In recent years, schools are reporting an increase in students who are experiencing high levels of depression and anxiety, which are often the outcomes of trauma (Hidaka, 2012). The conditions of students' lives amid the throes of the pandemic may be an occasion for such study.

Although the data collection for this study occurred before the onset of the COVID pandemic, the circumstances of the pandemic provide a more obvious illustration of how events outside of a child's or family's control can have a traumatic impact on them and become an urgent concern for school leaders. Many students and their families are struggling to overcome the physical, emotional, psychological, and financial trauma they have suffered due to the Covid 19 pandemic. The pandemic appears to be one factor creating a negative impact for many students in their ability to develop resilience skills (Office of Civil Rights, 2021). In fact, according to the Office of Civil Rights' report (2021) on education in the pandemic, "Nearly all students have experienced some challenges to their mental health and well-being during the pandemic and many have lost access to school-based services and supports, with early research showing disparities based on race, ethnicity, LGBTQ+ identity, and other factors."

This widespread trauma has made it difficult for schools to support the many students who are struggling with mental health issues after an extended period of interrupted and remote schooling (Office of Civil Rights, 2021). Students have required additional supports to transition back to traditional schooling, though for many, schooling continues to be interrupted due to illness and quarantining. The long-term effects of students' ability to develop resilience after the trauma they and their families have experienced due to the pandemic is not yet known. This raises many questions, including how to support students in developing resilience while managing increased levels of social anxiety, family stressors and the overall "pandemic fatigue" being experienced by many people during this international health crisis. The data and research indicate that access to a trusted educational staff member is an important factor in determining school success (Johnson (2008), Berliner and Benard (1995), Cardon, (2000), Capuzzi and Gross (2014), Tough (2008), Bounds, Walker and Walker (2014), Perez-Felkner (2015), Frelin (2015),

Lamperes (1994), Berlin et al. (2007), and Brandt (1990)). Case and phenomenological studies could reveal the ways that school leaders have adapted their practices to address the outcomes of the trauma from the pandemic among staff and students as they navigate this unprecedented time in schools. Additionally, studies could be conducted to determine the impact of these efforts on student resilience.

Evident within the research was recognition by school leaders that parental involvement in schools was a key indicator of the success of students, as well as an element of effective schools (Auerbach, 2007). Both Joseph's and Janet's cases point to the importance school leaders place on parent involvement. The leader in Joseph's case adheres to the idea that schools should be working towards building relationships with parents and should be recognizing that by involving parents in the school in different ways, they are helping students to make connections with their own cultural heritage and background, which Joseph insists is crucial for students' identity formation. Additionally, Joseph maintains parent engagement and identity formation support are fundamental in the empowerment of students, and that as students start to recognize their own background and make connections to other people with whom they identify that have been successful, they begin to recognize their own capacity for success, and can see a future path for themselves. When students can see this path, it encourages them to be persistent and to have ownership of their own learning process, which are key elements in developing resilience, according to the first orientation of participants.

The leader in Janet's case believes that school leaders should understand the different ways they can involve all parents regularly in the school to support student resilience by mitigating the effects of trauma. This leader also suggests that the ways parents in poverty situations approach school involvement may be different, and less obvious, partly due to

disparities that may exist between how school leaders envision the parent involvement of

minority and poor urban students versus those of White and middle-class students. Janet's case

supports the research that claims that schools tend to marginalize parents of color and poor

parents, whose involvement tends to happen "behind the scenes in ways that go unrecognized by

schools" (Auerbach, 2007, p. 700). Janet believes that school leaders must make intentional

efforts to involve all parents, including those who may not have an easy time becoming involved

in the school community due to other stressors in their lives. Auerbach (2007) recognized that

there is a lack of scholarship about the school leaders' role in facilitating such parent

involvement. Additional studies could be conducted to learn about the role of school leaders in

facilitating support of families within the context of their school community. Studies could be

conducted in both schools in middle-class neighborhoods as well as schools located in lower

socioeconomic areas to provide a diverse collection of accounts of the experiences of school

leaders regarding their efforts towards supporting the families in their communities. Several

types of study would be appropriate to begin to examine the best practices of school leaders in

supporting families. A multiple case study could be conducted among school leaders in

communities with diverse socioeconomic settings to reveal the experiences and practices of

school leaders in encouraging parent involvement within each type of setting. Through surveys

and interviews, the experience of school leaders in these school settings could help to reveal

some of the types of support provided by school leaders.

Finding #2 The data support that interview participants explained their understanding of

student empowerment as one or more of the following: fostering their independence,

positioning them as problem-solvers, encouraging them to confront difficult tasks, teaching

them that they can succeed at a difficult task through successive attempts, and by giving their

students strategies for overcoming the effects of the significant trauma many of them have faced.

The leader represented in Joseph's case values the impact of student empowerment in developing resilience. This case highlighted the benefits for students when they have opportunities to be independent with some guidance from teachers when they approached academic tasks and other school-related responsibilities. Joseph adheres to the idea that by allowing children to work through obstacles by attempting tasks multiple times, students begin developing problem-solving skills. Joseph highlights conflict resolution strategies as one option utilized by schools for supporting the growth of independence in a students' academic, personal, and social life.

Empowerment in Academic Life. Participants identified the importance of developing resilience as part of having a successful academic life. In alignment with the scholarship examined for the study, participants reported that they expect that students will become empowered in their learning and exhibit growth as human beings when resilience building skills are incorporated into the curriculum and programming of their schools, as the hope is that they are better able to develop their own solutions and paths to mastery. (https://www.renaissance.com/edwords/student-agency/, 2020). Joseph's case depicted a school leader who valued having students drive their own learning, with teachers acting as guides. By providing this independence for students to grow and learn and experience the value of learning from mistakes, most participants aligning with the leader represented in Joseph's case expected that students then begin to understand that they can overcome obstacles in their lives, as noted also by Cardon (2000), Tough (2008), Bounds, Walker and Walker (2014), and Perez-Felkner (2015). This personal empowerment allows them to see that they can overcome something that

they previously thought was impossible, thereby giving them courage and building confidence.

Joseph recognizes that creating student agency helps students develop the leadership trait of

being aware that they can tackle difficult tasks in life. It is this trait that allows students to

overcome hardships independently. The data revealed that when students work through

challenging tasks, it is important for teachers to act as guides to help them move forward, as

some students are not always ready to completely drive their own learning. As students develop

agency in their learning, they will begin to see a practical purpose for their learning and how it

applies to learning complex tasks, such as knowing how to solve a math problem by applying

strategies, comprehending a complicated textbook, or understanding an abstract science concept.

  Empowerment in Personal and Social Life. Joseph's case describes the transference of

independence learned from working through challenges in the safety of the school setting as a

catalyst for students to begin solving problems in other arenas of their lives. This case explains

that by having opportunities within the school setting to learn how to problem solve, adolescents

are better able to manage real-life skills such as how to address conflicts in their community,

such as arguments with family and friends, and how to take ownership of their mistakes, such as

working to repair relationships that have been damaged. One interviewee shared an example of

how the restorative justice strategies they used in the school setting gave them the problem-

solving skills needed to positively solve a relationship conflict within their personal life.

Additionally, another interviewee described how teaching students to problem-solve at school

helped them confront an incident of racism they experienced within their community. Their

ability to problem-solve equipped them with the tools needed to create a positive and proactive

response to the incident. Finally, one interviewee described how students were given agency to

decide how to repent for a harm done to another person. Each of these situations allowed

students to transfer their knowledge of problem-solving to a personal and/or social situation.

Implications for School Leaders. Joseph's case and the data analysis highlighted many

of the varied and complex ways school leaders envision and promote student empowerment. For

example, Joseph's case outlines the benefits of allowing students to design and implement extra-

curricular activities that address their specific interests, suggesting that allowing students to

invest in the creation of activities brings learning to life for them as they can see they are able to

guide their own learning. Joseph's case highlights the tendency of educators to speak of

resilience as a condition that enables powerful learning and suggests that when students have

opportunities to become independent problem-solvers, they are more likely to become resilient.

Therefore, Joseph's case as well as the data highlights participants' assumptions that students

should have many opportunities to participate in activities that allow them to learn through

multiple attempts to perform a task, and participants maintained that when they have these

opportunities, students are more likely to develop resilience skills. Additionally, the data

suggests that leaders believe that this type of curriculum is more likely to occur for students

when school leaders have provided teachers with professional development opportunities that

facilitate their learning in how to be guides for students as they are working through difficult

tasks.

Second Research Question

The study's second research question is "How do charter school leaders facilitate

curriculum, instruction, and programming that cultivates resilience in their students?" An

analysis of the cases and supporting data resulted in two findings relevant to participants'

thoughts regarding how they facilitate curriculum, instruction and programming that cultivates resilience in their students.

Finding #3 Interview participants suggest that a foundation for resilience building within a school is designing and selecting school programming that is culturally relevant and culturally supportive to their students' lives so that their students know that the school recognizes their culture, and so their schools and community incorporate their cultural background.

Jeynes (2007), Jeynes (2010), Haeseler (2011), and LeMoine and Labelle (2014)), recognized the importance of supporting a student's family and culture as key factors in students developing resilience. Janet's and Joseph's cases highlighted participants' recognition of the need for schools to value and appreciate the specific cultural needs and identities of their students and their families, realizing that accessing school programming can be difficult for many minority students and families who do not speak English as a first language, or who may not see aspects of their own lives in the curriculum. Janet, the leader in the second case, outlined a variety of ways that schools can attempt to make connections with minority students' families with the intention of providing a welcoming climate where all students and families feel that their individual cultures are recognized and appreciated.

According to Janet, one way to recognize and appreciate the culture of students in schools is to ensure that all families can access important school programming information. Haeseler (2011) suggests that there is a correlation between the level of parental involvement among low-income and minority parents and the ability of these parents to access school resources (p. 489) such as information about school events, school policies, curriculum, and grading information. Language barriers that exist in many minority families who do not speak

English make accessing these school resources difficult. With more resources available to them, low-income minority parents would be more likely to attend school events (Haeseler, 2011, p. 489) and would be able to better monitor their child's grades and support them in their assignments. Janet's case explains that by making documents such as school newsletters or report cards available in several different languages and providing parents with interpreters for phone calls or meetings, minority parents are more likely to stay in touch with what is going on at their child's school.

Participants recognized the importance of parents being involved in their child's schooling and expressed the need for their schools to promote a partnership where students, parents, and schools worked together to support the child's education. The literature supports this assertion of participants in several places (Jensen (2007, Burrington (2015), Jeynes (2007), Jeynes (2010), Haeseler (2011), and LeMoine & Labelle (2014)). Participants understood that when parents participate in school community boards, volunteer for field trips, or come to school to present to their child's class about their culture, they are strengthening the bond between parents and the school, thereby providing the child with another protective barrier that helps them overcome adversity. Participants explained that they can help parents to feel more comfortable participating in the school community by being sensitive to the many cultural attitudes that parents may have regarding schooling. Janet's case, therefore, reflects the reasoning of many participants that when parents are invited into the classroom, it increases the parent's participation in their child's life, enriches the school community, and creates bonds between parents and the school, all factors involved in helping a child develop resilience. Janet's case explains that when schools make connections with parents, it enables not only the recognition of the students' culture, but it also enriches the school community.

Another important way schools attempt to foster cultural awareness is by recognizing that students may have specific needs based on their culture. The desire to cultivate that awareness was highly evident in Janet's case. Janet's case signifies the importance of "showing up" for Black and Brown female students. The leader portrayed in this case recognizes that this population of girls often shows great pride in their appearance and observes that if Black and Brown girls don't feel presentable, they may not show up for school, suggesting that these girls are more likely to attend school when they are provided with resources such as access to hair care and clothing, so they feel their best and are not ashamed of their appearance. The data revealed the participants' assumptions that sometimes becoming involved in a child's life means understanding them and recognizing their connection to their culture and that sometimes this needs to occur before it is even possible for the student to begin working on academics.

The leader described in Joseph's case believes that teaching students about their cultural heritage is integral to their identity formation. This case described the tendency of leaders with this orientation to prioritize the implementation of culturally accurate and relevant curricula that depicts historical figures from minority groups, with the goal of helping students to connect with these prominent individuals specifically and their heritage more generally. Many participants emphasized their use of programs modeled after HBCUs, where modern and historical figures from minority groups were recognized as role models. They explained that relatable role models inspire their students' confidence in their own capacity for success.

Joseph's case emphasizes the value participants placed on implementing cultural diversity training as a method for supporting school staff to develop recognition of their own biases and limitations so they can effectively teach and speak about race. Participants acknowledge that understanding these biases and limitations is a key factor in enabling them to

better value and support what makes their students different and to better celebrate those

differences in the classroom.

Finally, Janet's and Joseph's cases both portray leaders who attest that relationship

building between students and staff is perhaps the most important factor in fostering student

resilience and is a precursor to learning. Both orientations suggest that when students feel

understood and recognized by a trusted educator, they feel cared about and accepted at school

and therefore, will be more likely to develop resilience traits. They emphasized the value of

encouraging school staff members to bond with their students by taking an interest in their

extracurricular activities. Finally, another way participants foster relationship-building among

staff and students is to hire minority teachers to become relatable role models whose culture and

experiences are aligned with those of their minority students. Both the participants of this study

and analyses from other researchers emphasize the importance of students developing positive

relationships with an educator as a vital component to their success at school because when they

relate to their teachers, students are better able to recognize their own potential to succeed.

Implications for School Leaders. The leader in Joseph's case maintains that

fundamental to the identity formation and empowerment of students is helping them see their

school environment as a place where they can connect with and explore their culture. This leader

considers this an essential step in developing persistence in academic work.

Participants recommended helping students make connections to their culture by helping

their families become part of the school community. They suggest providing copies of school

communication in different languages, providing all families with a designated school

professional who can aid them in supporting their child's schooling, inviting parents into their

child's classroom to share aspects of their cultural background with the class, and to make it

easier for parents to attend school events by providing supports such as childcare and

transportation to and from the event.

Joseph's case indicates the belief of many of the participants that schools should design

and implement curricula that represents the culture and history of all backgrounds, as this helps

students see the relevance of historical and modern events to their own lives. Joseph emphasized

the need to introduce curricula that examine role models with whom students can relate, which

helps them connect to their own cultural identity and background. Joseph also highlights the

value participants place on providing cultural diversity training for both their staff and students

with the goal of enhancing their cultural competence and understanding of their own biases and

limitations, so they are better able to create a culture of acceptance of all races and ethnicities

within the school environment. Participants suggest hiring a diverse staff with whom students

can relate so they can make connections to their teachers and can see their own capacity for

success. Additionally, they recommend developing affinity groups to give all students and staff a

voice regarding issues of race, gender equality, and cultural awareness.

***Finding #4 Interview participants considered implementing school programming that is highly
engaging to be a key element of resilience building because it gives students a voice and
demonstrates to students that their academic work has real-world consequences and can have
an impact on their communities***

Participants indicated the importance of providing a curriculum that aligned with

students' ability to recognize their capacity to have an impact on situations that they encounter in

their own lives. They explain that students are more likely to see how they can apply their

learning outside of the classroom if they have a personal investment in what they are learning.

Implications for School Leaders. Participants recommended that schools create lessons and assignments based on problems applicable to a student's school, home, or community experience to help them see the relevance of academic knowledge and skills to their own lives. They explain that one way that school leaders can provide opportunities for students to make connections to their school, and the greater community is to engage their students in service-learning projects. Participants suggest connecting students with volunteer sites that are related to the student's own interests. For example, students involved in dance might choose to volunteer to teach a dance class for younger children, or a person interested in becoming a teacher might volunteer to tutor other students. They recognize that supporting student outreach is important because the data suggests that when students participate in activities that foster their interest or help them to see a connection to their own world, they are developing resilience skills.

The data suggest that among these experienced school leaders were individuals who cultivated and wanted others in their schools to cultivate the ability to turn negative incidents that have happened in the greater or school community into learning experiences for students, recognizing that this helps their students understand how to create positive change in their world. When students recognize that they can overcome obstacles and have an impact on their own outcomes in life, they are more likely to develop resilience because they can see a path forward in life despite life's challenges. Participants recommended the use of restorative strategies to help students work through negative incidents. They suggest that when students have a process for creating solutions, it enables them to see that they can make amends when they have damaged their community, or they can recover from harm that someone has inflicted on them. Participants emphasized that school leaders should provide teachers with professional development around

restorative strategies to train them on how to support students in making positive change using

these strategies.

The study provides insight for school leaders into the advantages other leaders have

discovered when they provide opportunities for students to experience what it is like to attend

institutions of higher learning by teaching them about different types of college experiences,

such as the Historically Black College or University (HBCU) experience. Participants claim that

by teaching students about different types of opportunities that they may wish to explore,

receiving a college education seems more attainable to even their lowest-income or students

most at-risk, thereby providing hope to students who may not otherwise see a pathway to

college.

School leaders may become more informed of the possible outcomes of developing

curriculum in their schools focused on people in history or in modern times with whom minority

students can identify, such as people who are members of the LGBQT+ community, Black or

Brown, or who may have a disability. They claim that by providing these role models, students

can see that not all successful people fit into a certain mold. When they recognize that many

people have overcome adversity and have still been successful in life, students most at-risk can

potentially see themselves as having a path of success in life. Joseph's case highlights the claims

of participants that explains that they and their staff have seen their students become more able to

identify with historical and modern-day figures when those figures share aspects of their own

lives.

Finally, the study gives insight into the benefits of students designing their own

extracurricular and academic learning experiences as one way they develop resilience.

Participants explain that allowing students to design their own learning experiences helps them

see that their learning can be useful to them and that they can impact their world. Joseph recommends that leaders should learn to take a step back and let children try something new, make mistakes, learn what it feels like to make a mistake, and then learn how to overcome and move on from that mistake, and explains that students cannot learn how to problem solve if they don't have problem-solving opportunities in a safe environment such as their school.

Implications for Scholarship. This study demonstrates that many of the participants value the curricular orientation presented in Joseph's case, which is related to the application of student learning to real-life problems. This orientation of school leaders adheres to the idea that resilience-building is integral to instruction that strives for academic and personal empowerment. Participants believe that when students have opportunities for real-life problem solving, it helps them become resilient. Further ethnographic studies could be developed to examine the experience of students who design their own curriculum or use the context of school to develop community actions of civic importance. Documenting student experiences that provide a rich description of students putting this work into practice would add to the scholarship about the impact of enmeshing students in learning that stems from their real-life experiences. In addition to focusing on the experiences of students in this work, future scholarly research could also be conducted to identify the specific practices that school leaders recognize as being effective in supporting students that design their own curricula. Descriptive ethnographic studies or case studies based on observations of school leaders' intentional facilitating of student-designed programming may provide vivid portrayals of leaders engaged in supporting their students with this work.

Third Research Question

The study's third research question is "What do charter school leaders report are the factors and conditions that inhibit and foster their efforts in improving resilience in their students?" An analysis of the data resulted in one finding relevant to participants' thoughts regarding their efforts towards facilitating curriculum, instruction and programming that cultivates resilience in their students as well as what inhibits these efforts.

Finding #5: Participants described several aspects of the societal climate in their schools that inhibited and supported their efforts in improving resilience for their students.

The study provided a great deal of insight into the thoughts of leaders regarding what elements of the societal climate of their schools inhibited the development of resilience in students and what elements of the climate supported the development of resilience.

Discrimination and Racism Inhibit Resilience. Some of the interviewees described issues in their schools related to supporting students regarding gender and race equality. They reported that schools should begin by "acknowledging that traditional American schooling may not be exactly facilitating the kind of learning that we want our students, who are predominantly Black and Brown, to experience." (Leader E, personal communication, December 19, 2019). These leaders shared stories of incidents where Black and Brown students were faced with blatant racism in their greater community. Other participants shared stories of students struggling with gender identity and discrimination based on their gender. Additionally, participants identified challenges faced by many of their Black and Brown students as they graduated to higher education. These leaders recognized that higher education may not have been part of the experience of the family members of many of their students, and therefore these students may not have had the family expectation that they would attend college. This may impact their effort

and focus on schooling, as well as their own expectation that they would attend college, as "expectation may directly promote academic outcomes by motivating adolescents to engage in goal-directed behaviors that help them attain their desired futures" (Brumley, Russell & Jaffee, 2019).

Trauma Inhibits a Student's Ability to Develop Resilience. The leaders portrayed in both Janet's case and Joseph's case recognized the presence of trauma in the lives of many if not most of their students as one of the primary factors inhibiting their students' ability to develop resilience. While both orientations identified trauma as an inhibitor to students developing resilience, each orientation addressed ways to overcome trauma differently. Joseph addressed trauma by stating that teachers should guide students as they find ways to overcome obstacles. Janet's case recognizes the assumptions of participants that when students have been impacted by trauma, they need intentional efforts by educators that consider the particular difficulties arising from these adverse experiences.

Limited Teacher Investment Inhibits Students' Development of Resilience. Participants reported struggling with the lack of teacher buy-in with the programming they are attempting to implement in their schools and stressed that this was an area that schools could focus on improving. Interviewees explained that when teachers are not invested in the material they are being asked to present to students, or if they do not even consider resilience-building a priority, they are less likely to be effective in cultivating resilience-building skills, which can have a long-term effect on students' academic engagement. Several participants explained that they are always trying to find ways to support their staff so that they are more invested in the teaching of resilience skills in the school.

Intentional Efforts of Educators Support Resilience Building. Participants described several intentional efforts of their educators that supported the development of resilience. Participants with the orientation portrayed in Joseph's case believe that when staff design their own professional development, they are more likely to invest in what they are learning. Additionally, when staff see the positive effects of being able to design your own curricula, they are better equipped to incorporate opportunities in their curricula that allow students agency in pursuing their own interests as part of their schooling. According to participants, when teachers can experience active learning in their own professional development, they are better able to support students in the same style of active learning.

Implications for School Leaders. Prevalent in the study was the idea that in modern society there are changes in how teachers must teach and how leaders must support their staff and students through their school's curriculum and programming. Teachers are faced with presenting such challenging topics such as teaching students about the role of race in the United States history as well as gender equality. School leaders may become more aware of the benefits of implementing professional development that prepares their educators to be better equipped to address these contested issues in their schools in meaningful and constructive ways, so teachers are ready to focus on these issues with their students.

Both cases portray the unmistakable priority these school leaders give to the school's role in supporting the mental well-being of students. The study reminds school leaders that supporting the mental well-being of students should be a priority even before academics. School leaders may recognize the benefit of forming affinity groups as a forum for students to speak about what is on their minds to help them feel safe at school. Some interview participants indicate that they are struggling with having difficult discussions that support the rights of all

students, and affinity groups are one possible venue where these discussions can take place. In various ways participants mentioned diversity training, gender equality training, and training in other resilience building skills as possible ways to create a supportive environment for students.

      Implications for Scholarship. The findings of my study give reason to believe that the emergence of the global pandemic has likely exacerbated the disparities faced by many minority families who are already facing trauma in their lives. Covid 19 has created challenging new situations related to interrupted schooling, access to food and medical resources, impact to job stability, and increased risk to physical, mental, and emotional health for many students and their family members, all factors that can create additional trauma for students. The societal impact has also influenced the societal climate of schools during the Covid 19 pandemic.

      The protocols existing in schools and work environments related to quarantining have exacerbated already existing issues for many minority families living at or below the poverty line. Students who rely on free access to breakfast and lunch through their schools had less access to these resources, especially at the beginning of the pandemic. Students who relied on connecting with a school employee had less access to these adults in the remote environment. This is critical, because the research, data and the cases identified a connection to a trusted school employee as a key component to students developing resilience. Students from abusive home situations were at home for longer periods of time during the school week, with less access to school support professionals. Media reports have revealed that many students labeled as at-risk simply disappeared from attending school at all when a switch to virtual schooling occurred (Mitropoulos, 2021). Students with limited Internet access were less likely to be able to access their school curriculum, though many schools and businesses were able to provide technology resources to students such as laptops and free wi-fi. These circumstances warrant new research to

determine the perceptions of school leaders regarding their effectiveness at supporting low-income and/or minority students during remote learning situations.

The current social and political atmosphere has indicated an intensified need within schools for teaching students accurate depictions of historical events that divulge multiple perspectives, including those of people from minority groups. Students in schools are potentially more aware of racial disparities than ever before, making this type of learning critical. Future research studies could be conducted to determine the experience of school leaders regarding their efforts to implement a curriculum in their schools focused on accounts of historical events from the perspective of people from many ethnicities, races, and cultures, and the impact these curricular efforts have on helping students develop resilience.

Recommendations for School Leaders

This investigation examining charter school leaders' perspectives on resilience building in their schools yielded findings and implications that could help school practitioners. Several recommendations for school leaders can be made based on the cases that highlight Joseph and Janet's orientations and the comprehensive insights of the case study participants. As a result, this study closes by recommending that school administrators concentrate their efforts on the following in order to incorporate resilience building practices into all aspects of the school's curriculum, programming, and school culture:

- Building trusting relationships with students and their families and providing families with necessary resources to access the school's programming and curriculum

- Utilizing restorative strategies and self-care practices and prioritizing the mental health of students and staff to help mitigate the effects of trauma

- Providing school staff with professional development opportunities to learn how to implement resilience building strategies for students as these strategies are not always a part of teacher-preparation programs

- Prioritizing the development of faculty and staff's capacity to identify and support each student's potential for continuous growth as well as their ability to provide challenging, yet age and ability level appropriate tasks for each child

- Offering students opportunities to explore their own interests within school programming, which allows them to be encouraged to pursue topics they are passionate about in the future

- Incorporating curriculum that provides accurate depictions of historical events that consider multiple perspectives of stakeholders to help all students identify with historical figures so they are better able to understand how history impacts their own lives

- Providing faculty and staff with professional development that gives them the capacity to address difficult topics with their students, especially topics regarding race, cultural difference, and inclusion

- Aiding students in seeing the relevance of academic knowledge and skills to their own lives by creating programming that address conditions students experience in their home, school, and community, such as teaching students how to overcome poverty, address racism, resolve conflict in relationships, and the importance of supporting community members and using their skills to advocate for their own communities

Final Thoughts

I have spent the past several years heavily immersed in researching and writing about the topics of resilience, charter schools, and how to best support students in becoming resilient. These topics represent my passion as an educator and as a human being, and I recognize that there is much research to still be done. The findings of my research study as well as the existing research highlight a society of ever-changing and diverse challenges that require us as people to become resilient and able to overcome many personal, environmental, and societal obstacles.

By researching resilience over these past few years, I have made strong connections to the literature that have resonated with my own experiences beginning in adolescence as a foster sister to children experiencing severe trauma. As a teacher for over 20 years, I have a great desire to support all children in leading happy and fulfilling lives. The importance of aiding children in developing resilience traits cannot be stressed enough.

In a society fraught with unrest in recent years, developing resilience is a critical need for all people. Without it, through no fault of their own, even some of the most intelligent people cannot succeed. Children are the future of our society, and so many of them are in living situations that most adults could not manage well. Schools are tasked with supporting such diverse needs and demanding work that teachers are leaving the profession in record numbers. We cannot lose dedicated educators because they are so important in supporting our students in being resilient. Schools must place emphasis on better supporting teachers both financially and professionally, governments must ensure that we have adequate staff, facilities, supplies and programming so that the education of our children is not undermined. By providing staff, programming and facilities that are resilient, we can better develop resilience in students. We must as a nation create schools where all students learn, where they have what they need to learn,

and where they have the resources to get to a place emotionally where they CAN learn. We must

develop schools that offer students opportunities that best fit their needs. Charter schools are one

such model that provides an education that provides not only curriculum but also often social

emotional learning as well. However, these are not the only schools that are able to help children

learn to be resilient. What is important is that schools provide programming that offers resilience

building opportunities. In an unprecedented time in history where children are learning using

high-level technology in an incredibly volatile political and social global climate, resilience is the

key to moving forward as a society.

My work during the interview portion of this study left me with a renewed passion for the

work we do as educators. I was privileged to speak with eight incredibly dedicated professionals

who willingly shared their extensive knowledge of resilience-building efforts in their schools. I

was amazed at the depth of their personal anecdotes about their experiences as school leaders. I

was incredibly humbled by the trauma that their students face daily, and the difficult conditions

present in some of their communities. The varied perspectives from the school leaders

interviewed for this study provide me with a renewed passion to continue the work of

researching resilience. I hope to pursue this topic further with the goal of educating teachers and

school leaders about various methods of developing resilience-building skills in their students. I

plan to develop professional development seminars about the topic of resilience building and

may conduct further studies around this topic.

Resilience is being able to overcome, to move forward, to push through despite obstacles,

despite trauma. It is not just intelligence; it is understanding and knowing how to go on even

from the darkest times of your life. Through my journey in this doctoral process, I have found

that I have become more resilient, at times I have found within myself the energy to move

forward even when I was sure I could not complete one more step. I hope that as an educator I

can have some small part in helping all children to always be able to take one more step towards

their dreams.

"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall." – Nelson Mandela

"You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step." -Martin Luther King, Jr.

"A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles." -Christopher Reeves

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Appendix A: Email to Invite Participation

Greetings,

I am a doctoral student at Lesley University, and I am interested in learning about the perceptions of charter school leaders regarding their efforts to help students in their schools build resilience. The aims of my study are to determine school leaders' opinions as to what hinders or supports resilience-building within their schools, the value they place on resilience efforts, and how they implement these efforts within their schools. In this study, resilience refers to the ability of students to overcome adverse situations in their lives so that they have the ability to develop healthy relationships and have positive life experiences.

I am requesting your participation in this study, as your insights are an invaluable part of my research. If you would be willing to offer your ideas regarding the topic of resilience within your school, as well as your own opinions about the topic of resilience, please click the link below to begin taking a survey through Survey Monkey. The survey also includes the opportunity for you to indicate if you wish to be considered for participation in the interview phase of this research. It is important to note that only a small group will be selected for participation in these interviews.

I hope that this study is of interest to you and that you will be willing to provide your insights.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

If you would like to hear more about the study or if you have questions about the study, please provide your contact information as well as a good date and time to call you.

Kind regards,

Katy Angelone
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603-498-7259

Appendix B: Survey

The purpose of this survey is to learn more about the perceptions, experiences, beliefs and analyses regarding the resilience-building efforts of middle and high school charter school leaders in Massachusetts charter schools. Survey data will be used for scholarly research aimed at fulfilling a Ph.D. requirement at Lesley University. This survey should take approximately10-20 minutes to complete. There are no direct benefits or drawbacks to taking this survey. Participation in the survey is completely voluntary and you may stop taking the survey at any point in the process. Any questions regarding this survey may be directed to the researcher, Katy Angelone via email at angelone@lesley.edu and/or the researcher's faculty advisor, Paul Naso, Ed.D., at pnaso@lesley.edu.

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential, and digital data will be stored in secure computer files. Any report of this research that is made available to the public will not include your name or any other individual information by which you could be identified. If you have any questions about whether you have been treated in an illegal or unethical way, contact the Lesley Institutional Research Board co-chairs, Robyn Cruz, Ph.D. and Ulas Kaplan, Ed.D. There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairperson at irb@lesley.edu.

Clicking the "yes" button below indicates that you consent to having the data from this survey used in my research on charter school leadership and resiliency-building.
   a. **Yes, I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time, and that data from this survey will be used for scholarly research on charter school leaders.**
   b. **No, I would not like to participate in this survey.**

   I. Section 1: Multiple Choice Questions

1. What is your gender?
   a. Female
   b. Male
   c. Gender non-conforming and/or transgender
   d. Prefer not to answer

2. Ethnicity
   a. White
   b. Black or African American
   c. Hispanic or Latinx
   d. Native American
   e. Asian/Pacific Islander
   f. Other
   g. Prefer not to answer

3. Current role in your school:
       a. Dean
       b. Executive Director
       c. Principal
       d. Teacher Leader
       e. Other

4. Are you a school leader, either teacher or administrator, involved with spearheading, facilitating, and/or overseeing the curriculum for your school?
       a. I am a school administrator in charge of spearheading, facilitating, and/or overseeing curriculum for my school.
       b. I am a teacher leader who is in charge of spearheading, facilitating, and/or overseeing curriculum for my school.
       c. I am a teacher leader or school administrator, but I do not handle curriculum design and/or implementation.
       d. I am neither a teacher leader nor a school administrator.

5. How would you categorize your current work environment)? Please check all that apply.
       a. Early Elementary
       b. Middle Elementary
       c. Elementary (Pre-K-5 or K-5 or 6)
       d. Middle/Junior High
       e. High School
       f. Other_____(Please explain)

6. How many years have you served in an administrative or teacher leader position?
       a. 0-5 years
       b. 6-10 years
       c. 11-15 years
       d. 16-20 years
       e. 21-25 years
       f. 26+ years

7. How many years have you worked in your current role at your current school?
       a. Less than one full school year
       b. 1-3 years
       b. 3-5 years
       c. 6-8 years
       d. 9-10 years
       e. 11-13 years
       f. 13+ years

8. How many years have you served as an administrator in a charter school? In this case,

charter school refers to a Commonwealth charter school that operates according to its own charter and is governed by a board of directors while having the freedom to operate under its own mission, curriculum or theme (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2018).
>   a. 0-5 years
>   b. 6-10 years
>   c. 11-15 years
>   d. 16-20 years
>   e. 21-25 years
>   f. 26+ years

9. Does your charter school incorporate resilience-building efforts within the curriculum or other aspects of your school program?
>   a. yes
>   b. no
>   c. not sure

10. Do you consider resilience-building efforts within your school to be a priority?
>   a. yes
>   b. no
>   c. unsure
>   d. other (please describe):

> If you have answered b to the preceding question, you may end the survey at this time. Thank you for taking this survey. Please feel free to send any questions or comments about the survey to angelone@lesley.edu.

II.   Section 2: Important Steps Taken to Foster Resilience:

11. Please identify the most important steps your school has taken in terms of fostering resilience within your school.

III.   Section 3: Interview Phase of the Study:

12. A small number of participants will be invited to take part in the interview phase of this study. The interview would last for approximately one-hour and would involve answering questions regarding your efforts at implementing resilience-building into your school's curriculum. Interviews will be scheduled to accommodate your schedule and all personal information presented in this interview will be kept anonymous. All information obtained in this interview would be used to develop a case study for a dissertation focused on learning about the perceptions of charter school leaders regarding resilience-building efforts in their schools.

a. Yes, I am willing to be considered for participation in a follow-up interview to further discuss my perceptions of resilience-building efforts in my school. I prefer to be contacted by_____. My contact information is: _____.

b. No, I am not willing to participate in a follow-up interview to further discuss my perceptions of resilience-building efforts in my school.

Those who are selected will be contacted by Katy Angelone either by phone or email to arrange a convenient time and place for a follow up interview.

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my interview today. As I have mentioned before, I am currently a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program at Lesley University. I am also a middle school social studies teacher with an interest in charter school leadership. More specifically, I hope to find out how charter school leaders perceive their resilience-building efforts within their schools. Very little research is available regarding these perceptions.

On the survey that I administered to you, you indicated that you would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview regarding your perceptions of your resilience-building efforts. This interview will take you approximately 1 hour.

Today, I will be asking you to describe your own thoughts and feelings regarding your resilience-building efforts within your school. Everything that you share with me today will be kept anonymous within my dissertation. I will be taking notes today on my personal computer and will password protect both the individual document and the computer itself. I will also be recording today's interview with my own personal smartphone device, which is password protected. I will be deleting the recordings upon final approval of the dissertation by my dissertation committee.

With your permission, I will record today's interview in order to transcribe the interview at a later date to ensure accuracy of your answers to each question. I will also be taking notes within a journal to include my own observations and understandings of the content of your answers. I will be asking you a list of 14 questions, but I want you to be aware that you may refuse to answer any of the questions I ask. You may also choose to end the interview at any time. This interview is entirely voluntary, and I will be using the information gained from the interview as one of several sources for my dissertation. I will send you a transcript of the interview within one week. You may ask for clarification on any section, or you may choose to modify or clarify any portion of the interview that takes place today. In addition, I may contact you at a later date to ask any follow-up questions to ensure that I have clearly understood your answers to the interview questions. Once the study is completed, approved and submitted, digital and hard copies of transcripts and recordings will be deleted and destroyed.

Do you have questions about what I have just read to you?

If everything I have described meets your approval can I have you sign this consent form and we can proceed with the interview? Thank you very much!

Part 1: The first part of this interview involves identifying how you view the concept of resilience. I want to remind you that you can refuse to answer any question, and there are no "right" or "wrong" answers to any of the interview questions. I am trying to identify what you think resilience is?

1. I have mentioned to you that this study is about charter school leader's perceptions of their resilience-building efforts. How do you explain resilience in personal situations in your life?
2. Based on your experience, what would make you label a curriculum component or specific program as "resilience-based" or "resilience-building"?
3. Can you give an example or share a story of a resilience-based lesson?
4. I asked you on the survey about the importance you place on resilience-building within your school programming. You said XX. Can you tell me more about your answer to this question and why you think this?

Part 2: The next group of questions is about how successful you feel you are at creating curriculum that fosters resilient students.

5. What makes a lesson ideal for incorporating resilience-building efforts?
6. Have you ever attended a professional development session on resilience-building? Please describe what you learned from that session.
7. Have you ever had a lesson or curriculum that you felt was unsuccessful at fostering resilience in students? Please describe why you felt this way.
8. Please describe how successful you feel you are at incorporating resilience-building into your school's programming? Please describe why you feel this way.

Part 3: The next section describes how you work with the teachers in your school towards fostering resilience in students.

9. Please describe any professional development sessions you have offered your staff with a focus on implementing resilience-building in their classrooms.
10. Please describe your opinions on the success of your teachers at implementing resilience-building.
11. Please describe your perceptions in regard to how students understand and recognize the importance of resilience-building in their development.

12. Please describe what hinders the implementation of resilience-building efforts within your school programming. Provide an example of a time these efforts have been unsuccessful if possible.

13. Please describe what supports the implementation of resilience-building efforts within your school programming. Provide an example of a time these efforts have been successful if possible.

14. How would you describe your part in building resilience within your school? How do you personally contribute to the development of resilience in your students?

Appendix D: Correlation Between Interview Questions and Research Questions

Interview Question	Research Question
1. I have mentioned to you that this study is about charter school leader's perceptions of their resilience-building efforts. How do you explain resilience in personal situations in your life?	• *Addresses Research Question One*: Why do charter school leaders regard the cultivation of resilience in their students a school responsibility and how do they communicate this understanding to their school community, including parents, staff and students?
2. Based on your experience, what would make you label a curriculum component or specific program as "resilience-based" or "resilience-building"?	• *Addresses Research Question One*: Why do charter school leaders regard the cultivation of resilience in their students a school responsibility and how do they communicate this understanding to their school community, including parents, staff and students?
3. Can you give an example or share a story of a resilience-based lesson?	• *Addresses Research Question One*: Why do charter school leaders regard the cultivation of resilience in their students a school responsibility and how do they communicate this understanding to their school community, including parents, staff and students?
4. I asked you on the survey about the importance you place on resilience-building within your school programming. You said XX. Can you tell me more about your answer to this question and why you think this?	• *Addresses Research Question One*: Why do charter school leaders regard the cultivation of resilience in their students a school responsibility and how do they communicate this understanding to their school community, including parents, staff and students?
5. What makes a lesson ideal for incorporating resilience-building efforts?	• *Addresses Research Question Two*: How do charter school leaders facilitate curriculum, instruction, and programming that cultivates resilience in their students?
6. Have you ever attended a professional development session on resilience-building? Please describe what you learned from that session.	• *Addresses Research Question Two*: How do charter school leaders facilitate curriculum, instruction, and programming that cultivates resilience in their students?
7. Have you ever had a lesson or curriculum that you felt was unsuccessful at fostering resilience in students? Please describe why you felt this way.	• *Addresses Research Question Two*: How do charter school leaders facilitate curriculum, instruction, and programming that cultivates resilience in their students?
8. Please describe how successful you feel you are at incorporating resilience-building into your	• *Addresses Research Question Two*: How do charter school leaders facilitate curriculum, instruction, and

school's programming? Please describe why you feel this way.	programming that cultivates resilience in their students?
9. Please describe any professional development sessions you have offered your staff with a focus on implementing resilience-building in their classrooms.	• *Addresses Research Question Three*: What do charter school leaders report are the factors and conditions that inhibit and foster their efforts in improving resilience in their students?
10. Please describe your opinions on the success of your teachers at implementing resilience-building.	• *Addresses Research Question Three*: What do charter school leaders report are the factors and conditions that inhibit and foster their efforts in improving resilience in their students?
11. Please describe your perceptions in regard to how students understand and recognize the importance of resilience-building in their development.	• *Addresses Research Question Three*: What do charter school leaders report are the factors and conditions that inhibit and foster their efforts in improving resilience in their students?
12. Please describe what hinders the implementation of resilience-building efforts within your school programming. Provide an example of a time these efforts have been unsuccessful if possible.	• *Addresses Research Question Three*: What do charter school leaders report are the factors and conditions that inhibit and foster their efforts in improving resilience in their students?
13. Please describe what supports the implementation of resilience-building efforts within your school programming. Provide an example of a time these efforts have been successful if possible.	• *Addresses Research Question Three*: What do charter school leaders report are the factors and conditions that inhibit and foster their efforts in improving resilience in their students?
14. How would you describe your part in building resilience within your school? How do you personally contribute to the development of resilience in your students?	• *Addresses Research Question Three*: What do charter school leaders report are the factors and conditions that inhibit and foster their efforts in improving resilience in their students?

Appendix E: Consent Form

Consent for Participation in Interview Research

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Katy Angelone from Lesley University. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about charter school leaders' perceptions of their resilience-building efforts in their schools for Katy Angelone's dissertation in Educational Leadership. More specifically, this dissertation seeks to find out more about how charter school leaders perceive resilience-building efforts in their schools.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

2. I understand that if I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

3. The interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. Notes will be typed during the interview and an audio recording of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be made. If I don't want to be recorded, I will not be able to participate in the study. I understand that all materials including typed notes and audio recordings of this interview will be kept on password-protected devices owned by the researcher.

4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.

5. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Lesley University. If you have any questions about whether you have been treated in an illegal or unethical way, please contact the Lesley Institutional Research Board co-chairs, Robyn Cruz (rcruz@lesley.edu) and Ulas Kaplan (ukaplan@lesley.edu).

6. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

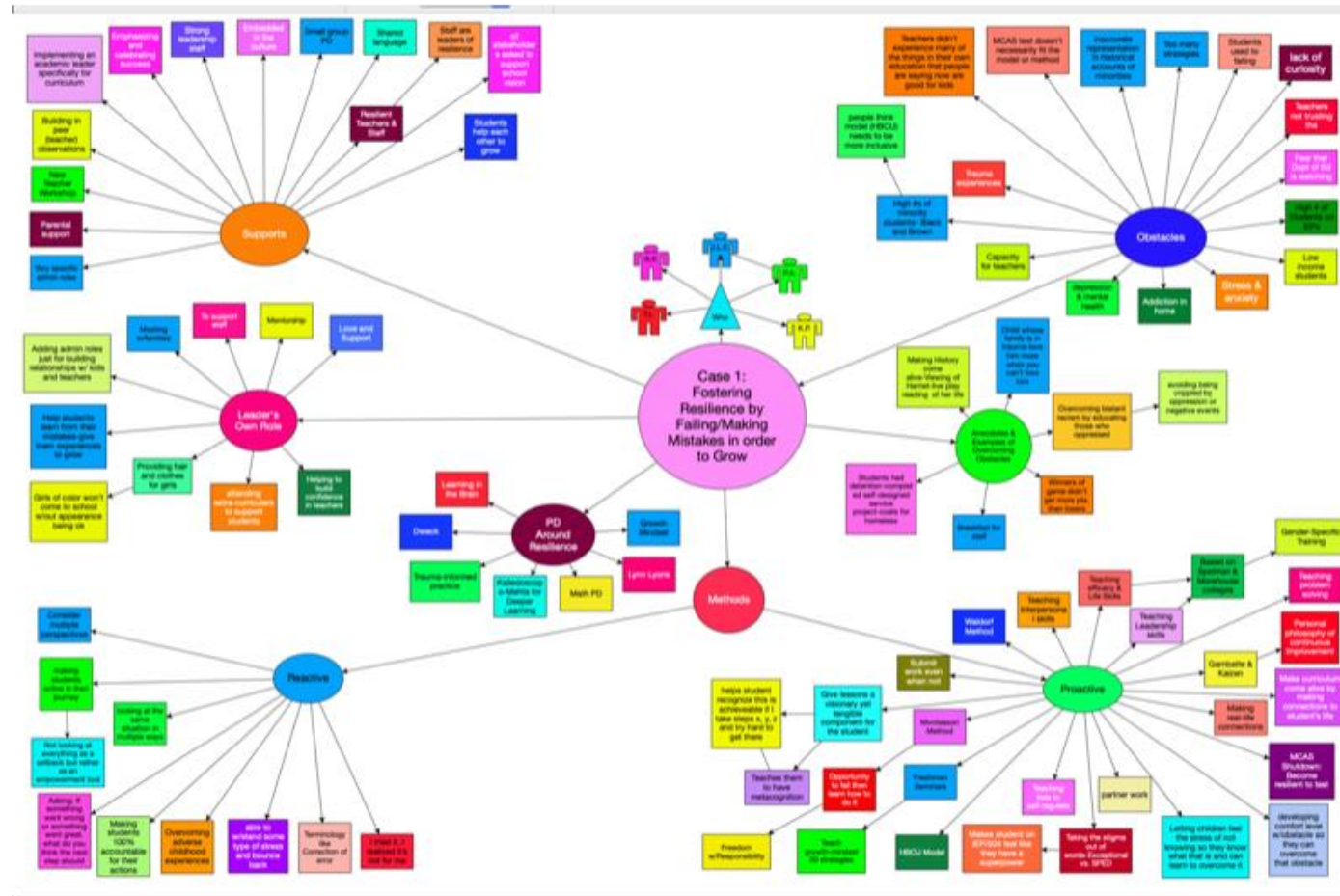7. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

_____   _____
My Signature   Date
_____   _____
My Printed Name   Signature of the Investigator

Appendix F: Concept Maps

Orientation 1 Concept Map

Orientation 2 Concept Map