Academically Resilient Elementary Students in one Virginia school division: Identifying and Exploring Protective Factors

LaQuiche R. Parrott

Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

In

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Carol S. Cash, Chair

Laura D. Kassner

Ted S. Price

Travis W. Twiford

October 12, 2015

Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: academic resilience, at-risk students, economically disadvantaged, protective factors, resiliency, risk factors, rural

Academically Resilient Elementary Students in one Virginia school division: Identifying and Exploring Protective Factors

LaQuiche R. Parrott

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to identify the internal and external protective factors found in family, school and community as perceived by rural elementary students who experienced poverty and demonstrated academic resilience in a Virginia school division. By identifying the common protective factors among the academically resilient elementary students, school leaders and educators can implement practices that foster a learning climate that cultivates and supports resilience in students who are at risk of academic failure.

A qualitative approach was used to analyze a purposefully selected group of academically resilient elementary school students living in rural poverty. The research questions were: 1. What are the self-identified protective factors regarding academic achievement for students purposefully selected as meeting the criteria for academic resilience? 2. What are the similarities and differences in protective factors among these purposefully selected students? Ten fifth grade elementary students, a boy and girl from each of the elementary schools in the rural school division meeting the definition of academic resilience and living in poverty were eligible to participate in the study. Phenomenological interviews were conducted with twenty-one questions related to family, community and school environments.

The results of the study indicated that the support of extended family, specifically grandparents of the participants was perceived to have had the greatest impact on the academic success of the academically resilient students living in rural poverty. Other protective factors revealed were lack of mobility in the rural community, peer influences and relationships with school staff. The academically resilient elementary school participants, in the study, all

possessed close relationships with their family to include extended family members and had at least one desired content area taught in school.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my 'resilient' grandma, Ms. Nell H. Pritchett. My grandma grew up in the rural South and did not have any of the opportunities afforded to me. She lived in rural poverty, her mother passed away when she was young and she raised several children without support. She possessed the spirit of Maya Angelou's poem, *Still I Rise*. She taught me throughout my entire life 'never to give up' and to 'learn as much as I could'. She was my first teacher, 'she walked the walk and talked the talk'. I am forever grateful for her love, guidance and support. My dear grandma passed away in 2011, the year I began this dissertation journey. This is for you, grandma!

This dissertation is also dedicated to LaShanda Pulliam, my twin sister and John David Parrott, my loving husband or whom I affectionately call 'My David'. These two are the 'protective factors' in my life. They love me unconditionally. They encouraged me throughout this dissertation journey and all my life endeavors. I am all yours now.

I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my future, my nephew, Bryce Cole Pulliam. I want you to have the 'world' at your fingertips and 'to learn as much as you can'. You inspire me to be more for you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deep appreciation for those who helped and supported me through the completion of this dissertation.

I appreciate the dedication and cooperation of my committee members, Dr. Price, Dr. Twiford, Dr. Kassner and especially my chair, Dr. Cash. Dr. Cash was always available, supportive and encouraging. Her leadership and guidance helped to take my 'big' ideas and thoughts and turn them into research. Her feedback has forever changed my view of writing and research and has encouraged me to do more with my research study.

I would like to thank my professional colleagues and school division for their support and guidance during this dissertation journey. Thank you to my 2011 cohort members for the phone calls, text messages and emails including words of encouragement and support, especially Dr. Melanie Patterson. In Dr. Cash's words, 'our cohort continues to excel' let us keep it going!

I am grateful for Autumn, Believe, Beast Mode, Bob the Builder, Challenge, Chloe J., Cleveland, Daisy, Percy Jackson, and T-Man for sharing their elementary school experiences with me. They inspire me in my work as an educational leader. Thanks to you all!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background of the Problem

Many students that come from families living in poverty have little formal education and come to school lacking background knowledge and family supports (Payne, 2008). This could lead to failure in school. Fram, Miller-Cribbs, and Horn (2007) shared that many children are exposed to events and experiences that can be considered traumatic. These experiences expose serious risks to students in terms of their ability to adapt. Despite exposure to challenging situations that could possibly lead to failure, some children persevere and experience academic success. Success despite exposure to adversity has been defined as "resilience" (McCubbin, 2001; Masten, 2011, Werner, 2004 & 2005) or the concept relevant to this study: academic resilience. The recognition and study of resilient children have changed many negative assumptions and deficit-focused models about the development of children growing up under the threat of disadvantage and adversity (Masten, 2001). There are many ways to approach the academic achievement gap for children. One way is to focus on failure another is to focus on success (Morales, 2010). The trend in resilience research is to focus on those students that are successful. However, the assumptions and criteria to define such resilient children have also changed over the years (Masten, 2001). Some have the following view on identification of a resilient student as:

> When a child is described as 'resilient,' we infer that a judgment has been rendered on the basis of a pattern of characteristics, akin to making a diagnosis with criteria like these: (a) the child is doing reasonably well on major

> developmental tasks important for children of that age and culture and (b) the child has experienced extraordinary adversity. (Masten, Hubbard, Gest, Tellegen and Garmezy, 1999, p.144)

The previous idea that resilient children were remarkable individuals possessing extraordinary strength or inner resiliency has changed in the research (Masten, 2001). Rutter (2012) reminds us that resilience should be viewed as a process and not a fixed attribute of an individual. Resilience is not luck of the person; however, is a set of processes that interact in an individual (Rutter, 2012). The process of adolescent resilience should be viewed as an interactive concept (Rutter, 2012).

When students demonstrate academic achievement despite risk factors these students can be viewed as academically resilient (Masten, 2010). For the purpose of this study, academic resilience can be defined as school success as measured by passing scores on both 3rd grade and 4th grade Standards of Learning assessments (SOLs) in the areas of mathematics and reading in the presence of at least two risk factors that must include: poverty and rural residence. Despite exposure to risk factors such as poverty, many students demonstrate academic resilience due to internal and external protective factors including high self-esteem, and supportive teachers contributing to their academic success (Werner, 2010). If school leaders can assist teachers and other support staff in the identification and knowledge of variables that appear to support academic resilience, practices can be developed or continued that appear to support students at-risk for failure in school (Doll &Lyon, 1998; Downey, 2008).

There is much research on the impact of poverty on urban students (Reeves, 2012). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), poor families living in rural

areas are exposed to substandard housing. These families often have a history of illiteracy and are often unemployed (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012).

Some may believe that rural schools are closely connected to the community; however, this relationship does not always yield positive outcomes for students (Fowler & Walberg, 1991). Hardre and Reeves (2003) report that many students in rural communities live in single parent homes and have limited access to economic resources. In some rural communities, family and community values may not support the educational goals for students beyond K-12 schooling (Hardre & Reeves, 2003).

Low student enrollment, in rural school divisions, which affects the average daily membership (ADM) in rural school districts, may also influence the locality's ability to pay for public education. In Virginia, a school district's ability to pay is determined by the "Composite Index of Local Ability to pay" formula (Virginia Department of Education, 2013). The Local Composite Index determines the level of state support. The formula to estimate the district's "ability to pay" is based on three indicators: true property value, gross income, and retail sales (Virginia Department of Education, 2013). Research suggests that students attending schools in rural areas may be exposed to the poverty associated with rural living that may negatively impact post school outcomes (Murray, 2003) and the localities ability to support local education.

Overview of the Study

The study explored the self- identified protective factors by a purposeful sample of 5th grade elementary aged students located in a rural school division in Virginia. The student sample exhibited academic success on standardized assessments and have two or more of the risk factors identified by the researcher to include: poverty and rural residence. Elementary principals at each of the rural elementary schools were provided criteria by the researcher to

guide the selection of students to participate in the research study. Qualitative interviews were conducted to gain a personal narrative of protective factors identified by the student.

Standardized assessment results on the Standards of Learning assessments were utilized to indicate academic success. Finally, the researcher identified common themes related to resilience and common protective factors that contributed to academic success despite risk factors.

Historical Context of Resilience

The study of resilience research began in the history of medicine, psychology, and education (Masten & Obradovic, 2006). Earlier pioneers set out to "identify the correlates and markers of good adaptation among young people expected to struggle because of genetic or environmental risk" (Masten & Obradovic, 2006, p.14). Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore and Ouston (1979) conducted a longitudinal study on 3,000 students with low socio-economic status. This longitudinal study was a first of its kind to identify positive school characteristics such as high academic standards, rewards and incentives, appropriate feedback and teacher' modeling that contribute to positive academic outcomes for at-risk students associated with poverty (Rutter, et al.,1979).

An important pioneer in the study of resilience and focus on positive adaptations was Garmezy (Masten & Obradovic, 2006). Garmezy and Masten led the Project Competence group that "focused on competence criteria for positive adaptation in their studies of resilience" (Masten & Obradovic, 2006, p.15). The Project Competence Longitudinal Study (PCLS) was formed over twenty years ago and was the last empirical study initiated by Garmezy (Masten &Tellegen, 2012). The goal of PCLS "was to learn about resilience, and specifically to search for clues to protective processes that might explain how children overcome adversity to manifest

competence at home and at school" (Masten &Tellegen, 2012, p. 347). Garmezy was an important pioneer in the research of resilience (Rutter, 2012).

Garmezy had a distinctive approach in his research. Garmezy (1991) believed that the positive attributes displayed by poor children; some were instilled by family, school and community outlets such as the church. Secondly, he believed that a rigorous methodology approach to data analysis was essential. Third, he accepted that in high-risk groups there were examples of individuals who showed adaptive patterns of social behavior and work achievement. Fourth, Garmezy believed that resilience research should include positive personality dispositions, a nurturing family unit and external societal support systems (Rutter, 2012). Garmezy reports that potential risk as well as positive adaptations attribute to resilience research (Masten and Tellegen, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

The problems facing some students in our schools are those at-risk to threatening exposure at an early age. School personnel's response to identify and understand children who are at-risk is critical in order to support their growth and development (Haycock, 2001). The role of schools and educators are to ensure that students have the protective factors and/or assets to be successful with curriculum and societal norms. Educators face the demands of academic curriculum and statewide accountability measures that lead the drive to ensure the success of at-risk students in schools. At-risk students need the support and guidance accessible at school by caring teachers and other staff to strengthen or acquire the skills to be successful in school and later in life. The monitoring of schools and their effectiveness has also increased demands on educators to improve student outcomes (Hanewald, 2011). The research in the area of resilience is moving away from deficits faced by at-risk students, but the strengths these students have to

overcome adverse conditions in their environments (Hanewald, 2011). What are the factors that make the academic resilient successful? Wang, Geneva, Haertel, and Walberg (1997) agree:

> Influences such as teacher actions and expectations, effective instructional methods and curriculum, school wide policies and school climate play key roles in raising student learning, motivation, and attitudes toward school (p.4).

Masten et al. (1999) asserts:

> However, signs of failing resources and rising adversity in the lives of American children, and the high levels of failure in developmental tasks among disadvantaged children, provide powerful incentives for testing evolving theories about risk and resilience by intervening to promote more desirable outcomes among children (p.166).

Elementary-Aged students in the Commonwealth of Virginia face high stakes testing as early as third grade (Virginia Department of Education, 2013). During the 2012-2013 school year, the Virginia Department of Education reported that 12 percent of all students did not graduate on-time and 18 percent of identified economically disadvantaged students did not graduate on time (Virginia Department of Education, 2013). It is vital that educators intervene early.

Significance of Study

As school leaders are faced with the growing numbers of students, failing to meet academic demands (Virginia Department of Education, 2013) the need to examine what is working for some children despite adverse life conditions and environmental exposure is crucial for educators. The *Regulation Establishing Standards For Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (2012) indicates the role of the principal as the individual responsible of ensuring that all staff

are involved in staff development to improve student achievement. It is the school leaders' responsibility to provide training to educators to identify factors that contribute to the academic success of the academic resilient population, as well as, identify potential barriers for this population. Federal regulations in Virginia, under The Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA)-known since 2001 as NCLB require states to establish annual measurable objectives (AMOs) for reducing the proficiency gaps between low-performing and high performing schools (Virginia Department of Education, 2013).

The AMOs represent the percentage of students across race, demographic and economic subgroups to meet the minimum pass rate on the Standards of Learning assessments, also referred to as SOLs (Virginia Department of Education, 2013. The need to increase interest in adolescence resilient has increased with the high achievement demands of schools (Grossman, Beinashowitz, Anderson, Sakurai, & Finnin, 1992). Under the flexibility waiver by the US Department of Education, accountability measures focus on improving outcomes for students in Virginia's lowest performing schools (Virginia Department of Education, 2013). With the noted accountability measures required by both the state and federal governments, schools must employ strategies and resources to ensure that disadvantaged students are successful or continue to meet with success. The results of this study could provide information that would assist school administrators in identifying protective factors that cultivate resilience in students who are at-risk for failure (Masten, 2010).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the qualitative study was to identify the internal and external protective factors found in family, school and community environments as perceived by rural elementary students in one Virginia school division who experience poverty and demonstrate academic

resilience. This study provided data to elementary school leaders working in like rural school divisions. The data presented to elementary school leaders in like rural school divisions, allow the opportunity to work collaboratively with families and students while providing needed resources in and outside of the school building. Also, provide staff development for teachers in helping them to identify the characteristic of the academic resilient child; and ways to create conducive learning environments for this population of students. This study can assist school leaders in their efforts to close the proficiency gaps among subgroups in our public schools. Federal education law requires that states hold both schools and divisions accountable for closing the achievement gaps between historically low-performing student subgroups and higher-achieving subgroups. Annual Measurable Objectives identify subgroups as economically disadvantaged, limited English proficiency, students with disabilities, and minorities' students.

The above-mentioned identified subgroups are expected to meet minimum proficiency on SOLs in the areas of mathematics and reading each year. Students identified as at-risk encompass at least two of the student subgroups previously noted. The ESEA and AMOs mandate that schools ensure that academic growth and success of all students regardless of race, demographic location, and economic status, specifically targeting the at-risk populations. For the 2013-2014 school year in Virginia, economically disadvantaged students must have 59% pass rate, all students in reading is 69% pass rate; in mathematics, economically disadvantaged students must have 57% pass rate, all students in mathematics 66% pass rate (Virginia Department of Education, 2015). This study identified the protective factors that resulted in the academic success of identified academically successful at-risk students and what common factors are shared among students in this population.

Justification of the Study

This study contributed to the research on at-risk elementary students in a rural setting and academic success. The data collected may provide researchers with knowledge and a deeper understanding of what protective factors contributed to the success of the selected at-risk elementary students and what impact schools and community play in the development of the protective factors identified. To be considered resilient the concept of risk and positive adaptation must be present (Masten & Tellegen, 2012). The reasons for resilience research are plentiful; however, "children suffering now or threatened with imminent harm cannot wait for definitive science and experimental evidence on what works best for every child and situation" (Masten, 2011, p.501). Educational leaders must identify now what is working for students identified academically resilient to employ strategies and resources to ensure they continue to meet with academic success as mandated by federal education law. Morales (2010) express this view on resilience research:

> The driving motivation behind such research is that by increasing our understanding of statistically unlikely high achievement, more resilient individuals can be facilitated on the way to the achievement of their goals (p.165).

The purpose of the qualitative study was to identify the internal and external protective factors of family, school and community as perceived by rural elementary students in one Virginia school division who experienced poverty and demonstrated academic resilience. It is through the examination of what has worked for these identified students that school leaders and practitioners can glean the knowledge base to implement educational practices and decisions that yield success for some deemed at-risk for academic failure.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study are:

Qualitative Research Questions

1. For students purposefully selected as meeting the criteria for academic resilience, what are their self- identified protective factors regarding academic achievement?

2. What are the similarities and differences in protective factors among these purposefully selected students?

Conceptual Framework

The study identified protective factors in at-risk elementary students meeting the criteria established as academically resilience. The conceptual framework illustrates factors that have the potential to present challenges and successes faced by students in schools to include the academically resilient. The variables investigated in this study are shown below. (See figure 1). The researcher utilized the person-focused approach as qualitative data was collected to gain the perspective of the successful at-risk student.

.

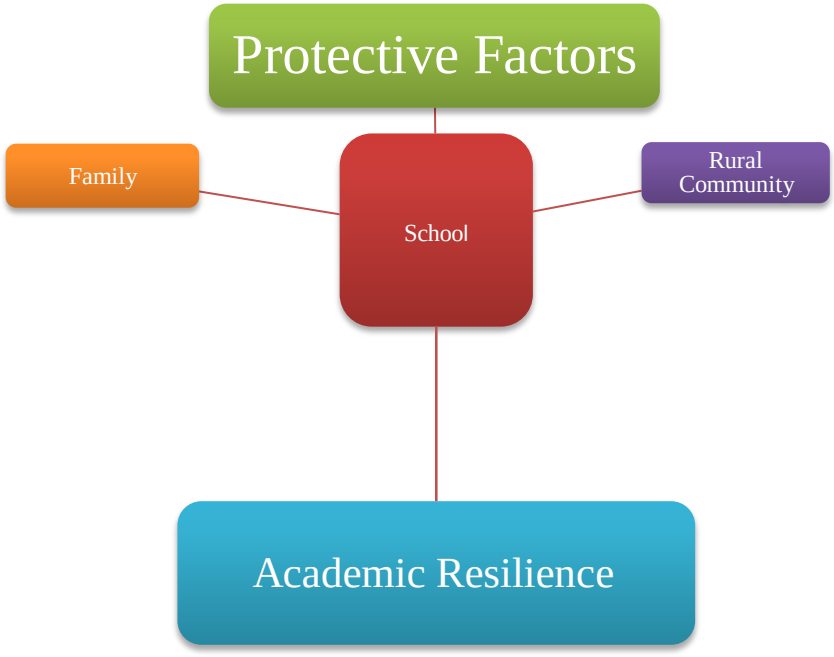

Figure 1 *A model to describe the factors impacting academic resilience*

Definitions of Key Terms

In the list below, definitions of key terms are provided as a resource to assist with the knowledge gleaned from this study.

Academic Resilience. Is "the process and results that are part of the life story of an individual who has been academically successful, despite obstacles that prevent the majority of others with the same background from succeeding" (Morales, 2010, p.164)

Assets. Are positive factors that a child possesses such as coping skills, competence, and self-efficacy (Fergus and Zimmerman, 2005).

Economically Disadvantaged. As noted on the *Student Records Data Definitions* on the Virginia Department of Education website, students who are identified as economically disadvantaged are those that receive free or reduced meals, receive TANF, or are eligible for Medicaid (Virginia Department of Education, 2012).

Educational Resilience. Is defined as "the heightened likelihood of educational success despite personal vulnerabilities and adversities brought about by environmental conditions and experiences" (Wang, Haertel, and Walberg, 2007, p. 2).

Extended Family. According to Taylor, Chatters and Celious (2003) extended family households are defined as "those households in which, in addition to the household head, spouse/partner, and minor children, there are other individuals (related by blood/marriage or unrelated) who reside in the household. These individuals could be adult children and adult and minor grandchildren of the household head and spouse, as well as other relatives (siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles) and unrelated persons" (p.134).

Head Start. Founded in 1965, the Headstart program provides comprehensive child development services to low income children and families through a network of grantee and delegate agencies (ECLKC, 2011).

Protective Factors. Are mechanisms that restrain a person's reaction to adverse conditions or stresses so that he or she can adapt successfully (Werner, 1993).

Resilience. Resilience is referred to as a class phenomena characterized by good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development (Masten, 2001).

Resources. Are positive factors that help at-risk youth overcome adverse conditions but are external to the child (Fergus and Zimmerman, 2005).

Risk factors. Are existing constructs that the potential to create roadblocks or impediments to academic success (Morales, 2010, pp.165).

Standards of Learning (SOLs). Are established minimum learning expectation for Virginia Public Schools for what student should know and accomplish by the end of the grade level in all content areas and specialty classes such as technology, the fine arts, foreign language, health/physical education and driver education (Virginia Department of Education, 2013).

Vulnerability. Is the increased likelihood of a negative outcome due to exposure to adverse conditions (Fergus and Zimmerman, 2005).

Limitations

The findings for the study were limited to the sample from which the data was drawn. These limitations of sample and location limit the generalization usage to other student groups, demographic locations and school populations.

Researcher bias is another possible limitation. As a school administrator and former classroom teacher that received free lunch as a child and self-identifies as 'academically

resilient', the researcher assumed some protective factors. To allow for objectivity throughout the study, boundaries between the researcher and participants were utilized. Data collecting and reporting was coded to keep names and identifying information, confidential. Biases in the qualitative interviewing process were addressed through strict procedures and questioning.

De-limitations

The study involved data collection from ten fifth grade students in a rural school division located in Virginia. The researcher targeted the opinions of young student participants in a small rural school division. The researcher chose not to interview parents or teachers in the study.

Organization of the Study

In this chapter, the researcher presented an introduction into the academic resilience concept with key definitions and terms identified. The purpose was identified and protective factors of at-risk academically successful elementary students were explored. Chapter II includes a review of the literature related to resilience, resilience models, risk factors and protective factors identified. Chapter III includes details of the methodology used in my study. Chapter IV includes the data collected in qualitative interviews that respond to the research questions. Chapter V contains the findings of the qualitative interviews responding to the research questions along with associated implications and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Within the literature pertaining to academic achievement among poor elementary students, protective factors, risk factors and resilience models were examined. The need to examine the accountability measures that have led to the study of resilience was vital to this study. As a result of the federal mandates and school accountability measures as by-products of the ESEA and AMOs, schools are held accountable for the academic achievement and ongoing academic progress of all students. Obstacles to academic achievement such as poverty, lack of exposure, demographic location and family dynamics continue to be addressed by school administrators and educators in an effort to close proficiency gaps among subgroups of students (Virginia Department of Education, 2013). Schools must become aware of what protective factors are identified by at-risk academically successful students to encourage the development of resilience (Doll and Lyon, 1998).

Search Process

To locate relevant literature and data related to the topic of study, the Virginia Department of Education and U.S. Department of Education websites were used; along with Virginia Tech Summon, Google Scholar and ERIC. The following search terms were utilized: academic resilience, educational resilience, economically disadvantaged, rural living, poverty, resiliency, resilience models, at-risk, protective factors, and risk factors were used to search online resources.

Introduction

"The overarching goal for studying resilience phenomena was to understand risk and resilience well enough to promote resilience and prevent harm" in children (Masten, 2011, p. 494). Powell (2010) asserts "resiliency research began with groundbreaking studies that moved the focus from a maladaptive perspective to adaptation in the midst of significant adversities" (pp.19). The study of resilience has "identified several models of resilience to explain how risk and protective factors affect outcomes" (Stevens & Morash & Park, 2011, pp.1435). Weaver (2009) shares this view regarding the role of educators in schools:

> Not only are relationships with adults at school important but the overall school climate as well. Resilient students who demonstrated high academic achievement, motivation, and attendance indicated that the perceptions of a positive learning environment contributed to their success (p.60).

Resilience Models

The importance of resilience models that promote the "positive influences without discounting risk and vulnerabilities" (Masten, 2011, p.495) is highlighted in the research. Researchers and educators must identify specific threats to development, "the criteria by which adaptation is judged to be successful, and the features of the individual or the environment that may help to explain resilient outcomes" (Masten et al., 1999, p.144). Resilience models are essential for how they work together to conceptualize resilience (Masten and Tellegen, 2012).

Resilience models stress the importance of the holistic context; external factors in addition to competence in assisting youth avoid the negative effects of risks (Fergus and Zimmerman, 2005). Resilience models assist with the viewing of resilience as process and not a fixed attribute of an individual (Rutter, 2012). Fergus and Zimmerman (2005) describe three models of resilience in their research, compensatory, protective and challenge. The first, a

compensatory model is defined as a positive factor that counteracts or operates in an opposite direction of a risk factor. For example, a youth living in low Socio-economic conditions, is more likely to take part in violent crime; however, a strong family unit may compensate for the negative effects of poverty. The compensatory model utilizes both statistical and methodological approaches, but is usually tested using a multiple aggression analysis or with structured equation models.

Another model of resilience is the protective model that is defined as assets or resources that mitigate or reduce the effects of a negative outcome. For example, parental support may enhance a positive effect of academic competence for producing more positive academic outcomes (Fergus and Zimmerman, 2005).

The third model discussed by Fergus and Zimmerman (2005), the challenge model. The challenge model described as the association between a risk factor and an outcome that is curvilinear. This model suggests that moderate levels of stress may have less negative or even positive outcomes. The researchers point out that [challenge model] low levels of risk exposure may be beneficial to youth to assist in practicing skills to overcome risk exposure later in life (Fergus and Zimmerman, 2005).

In summary, Fergus and Zimmerman (2005) identified three models of resilience:

- compensatory model is defined when a promotive factor counteracts or operates in an opposite directions of a risk factor;
- protective model identifies assets or resources moderate or reduce the effects of a risk on a negative outcome;
- challenge model identifies the association between a risk factor and an outcome is curvilinear (pp. 401-403).

The researchers point out that adolescents' exposure to all three models: compensatory, protective and/or challenge will prepare them for adversities that they may face in the future (Fergus and Zimmerman, 2005).

Pathway models have been used in resilience research. These models are conceptual and empirical studies providing data on longitudinal growth patterns (Masten, 2011). Pathway models influenced by the work of Michael Rutter, a leading investigator in resilience research focused on both "resilience and nonresilience in human behavior" (Masten, 2011, p.495). The focus of what has worked for students and success rates has become the focus of resilience. Hanewald's (2011) review of the literature states three kinds of resilience:

- "overcoming the odds" described as an individual's personal strength to withstand adversity;
- "coping" despite a number of negative risk exposures;
- "recovery from trauma" describing the ability to bounce back from adversity (p.19).

The changes in the study of resilience are characterized in waves in the research as well. Masten & Obradovic (2006) describe the research of the study of resilient children in the terms of four *waves* [emphasis added]. The first wave of research is described as the work of behavioral scientists in search of knowledge regarding the mental disorders and how children affected appeared to develop normally despite the adverse conditions. The early researchers' goal was "to ascertain what makes the difference in the lives of children at risk for problems due to hazardous experiences and vulnerabilities" (p.14). With this initial research, protective factors or potential assets associated with resilience in young children and adolescents emerged (Masten and Obradovic, 2006).

The second wave of research focused on "uncovering the processes and regulatory systems" (p.14) that effect resilience in children, as implied by Masten and Obradovic (2006) currently works in progress in their research. The third wave is described in the research as the efforts "to promote resilience through prevention, intervention, and policy" (Masten and Obradovic, 2006, p.14).

The need of this third wave was due in part of the increase of children growing up in adverse conditions and a need of urgency arose (Masten and Obradovic, 2006). The third wave initiated the studies of interventions providing "some of the most compelling evidence for the power of the family environment for individual resilience" (Masten and Obradovic, 2006, p. 16). The linkages among the role genetics and family level dynamics were rare during this time.

Masten and Obradovic (2006) mention twelve cautionary notes in the fourth wave of research. They are as follows: resilience is a complex family of concepts that always require careful conceptual and operational definition; resilience is not a single trait or process, but many attributes and processes are involved; there are multiple pathways to resilience; resilience definitions are embedded in cultural, developmental historical contexts, even if these contexts are assumed rather than made explicit; resilience definitions always have a time frame and it is quite possible for the picture to look different in a shorter or longer time frame, and there are likely to be cases of adaptive trade-offs, with risk and benefits in the short and long term; it is easy to make the mistake of blaming the victim when resilience does not occur, if one assumes that resilience arises only from internal capacities; the evidence strongly implicates the roles of transactional processes and adaptive capacity arising external to the organism in resilience; adaptive systems that are operating in normal ways can be "hijacked" for goals and purposes disapproved by society or damaging to development; no magic bullets for producing resilience;

no invulnerable children; there are levels of risk and adversity so overwhelming that resilience does not occur and recovery is extraordinarily rare or impossible; the enthusiasm for understanding and promoting resilience, it is important to remember that many sources of threat to child development are preventable, and far less costly to prevent than to address once they begin to erode development and the adaptive tools for life (pgs.22-23).

The fourth wave of research currently in progress focuses on the "integrating the study of resilience across levels of analysis, across species, and across disciplines (Masten and Obradovic, 2006). This fourth wave incorporates the need of sciences in the areas of brain development and function; and genes. With new technologies now available that were not an idea in the 1970s when the research of resilient children began, this fourth wave of research has begun (Masten and Obradovic, 2006).

Masten and Obradovic (2006) reveal that the *waves* [emphasis added] of resilience research have provided us with the following conclusions:

- adaptation is multidimensional and developmental in nature;
- success is salient tasks of particular developmental periods forecast success in future age-salient tasks, even in new domains.
- competence and symptoms are related within and across time for multiple reasons, including: (a) symptoms undermining competence; (b) failures (or perceived failures) in competence increasing symptoms in various ways; (c) a common cause contributing both to competence problems and symptoms; and, (d) transactional or sequential combinations of these reasons;

- success or failure in multiple developmental task domains can have cascading consequences that lead to problems in other domains of adaptation, both internal and external.
- interventions to promote success in these tasks have preventive effects on behavioral and emotional problems (Masten and Obradovic, 2006, p. 15-16).

Resilience Approaches

The concept of resilience has many approaches that are described in the literature. Masten (2001) reports two major approaches to assist with the explanation of resilience among at- risk children, variable-focused and person focused:

> Variable-focused approaches utilize multivariate statistics to test for linkages among measures of the degree of risk or adversity, outcome and potential qualities of the individual or environment that may function to compensate for or protect the individual from the negative consequences of risk or adversity (p.229).
>
> Person-focused approaches compare two people who have different profiles within or across time on sets of criteria to ascertain what differentiates resilient children from other groups of children (p.229).

Both approaches have positives and negatives in the research. The variable focus emphasis on statistical data works well to establish relationships among predictors and outcomes that can assist with intervention creation and implementation (Masten, 2001). However, Masten (2001) acknowledges that this approach "can fail to capture striking patterns in the lives of real people" (Masten, 2001, p.229). This approach can negate who is most at-risk and may need intervention (Masten, 2001). However, the person focus approach does not emphasize the statistics that can be used to make connections among evidence (Masten, 2001). Masten (2011)

endorses the role of variable-focused models as influential in resilience research for determining relationships between main affects and interactions; however, person-focused studies were as useful. Both models variable and person-focused approaches were used in a study investigating the competent outcomes in late adolescence (Masten, et. al., 1999).

The historical person-focused study, the Kauai Longitudinal Study was the first of its kind to examine development from birth to midlife (Werner & Smith, 1992) in 1955. The study was conducted on the Hawaiian island of Kauai, the westernmost island in the United States of America. This study examined the impact of a variety of high-risk factors of 698 children born on the island. Prenatal and perinatal problems, low maternal education, poverty status, psychological and biological development, protective factors and stressful life events were identified as factors. A team of health professionals and social workers monitored the development of all the children born on the island at major life stages (ages 1, 2, 10, 18, 32 & 40). Thirty percent of the population lived in high-risk conditions and experienced poverty. Two-thirds of the children experienced four or more high-risk factors by the age of 2. However, one out of three children grew into caring, competent adults. The results of the Kauai study "challenges the myth that a child who is a member of a so called "high-risk" group is fated to become one of life's losers" (Werner, 2005). Three clusters were revealed in the resilient children that overcame the odds:

1. Protective factors within the individual. Mothers reported happy and cuddly babies. In school, students succeeded academically and behaviorally. Children had appropriate language development.

2. Protective factors in the family. Early bond developed with at least one caring and emotionally stable person, usually a substitute caregiver such as a grandparent. Some of the families had religious beliefs that provided stability to their lives.

3. Protective factors in the community. Reliance on supportive elders and peers in the community. A favorite teacher was often a positive role model (Werner, 2005, p.12).

The results of the study proved many differences that benefited the resilient group. Parenting resources, appearance as infants, cognitive test scores, and positive self-perceptions were better than the maladaptive group. However, researchers reported that improvements were shown in the maladaptive group during adulthood especially in females (Werner, 2005). Overall the study revealed:

> Protective buffers appear to make a more significant impact on the life course of individuals who thrive despite adversity than do specific risk factors and stressful life events, and they transcend ethnic and social class boundaries (Werner, 2005, p.12).

Masten (2001) revealed "variable-focused studies of resilience underscore the importance of well-established individual and family differences for the course of good outcomes" (p.232). The presence of adverse conditions, a lack of parenting and cognitive abilities increases the risk of bad outcomes. However, typical-developing cognition and good parenting appear to be protective factors for competent development under such adverse conditions.

The aforementioned Project Competence Longitudinal Study was 20 years long and an example of a variable-focused study that began in the late 1970s lead by Garmezy (Garmezy, 1985; Masten & Tellegen, 2012). Initiated by Garmezy and continued forward by Ann Masten the study was designed to investigate adaptation and adversity in youth and families. The study included 205 children and families. Students were in the third to sixth grades from two central

Minneapolis elementary schools. Initial data collection included interviews with parents, classroom data provided by teachers and staff, and laboratory sessions with parents and students. As part of the longitudinal scope, data were collected by the students at intervals 7, 10 and 20 years later to capture life experiences spanning youth through adulthood. The results of the study revealed the interconnection between individual and environmental factors and stress. Levels of resilience were greatly impacted by intelligence scores, self-perceptions, socio-economic level of the family and parenting (Masten, 2001). The study showed that the higher the IQ, more positive behavior was observed. Also, poor parenting and low SES resulted in antisocial behavior whereas appropriate parenting along with SES returns indicated higher levels of competence in participants.

Rutter (2012) concluded that resilience research should focus on *individual* [emphasis added] difference in response to risky environments rather than an assumption that outcomes can be accounted for in terms of the balance between positive and negative influences. Rutter (2012) described nine features that serve to characterize resilience research:

- there is a direct analysis of the features associated with heterogeneity in response to adversity;
- there is an interest in variables that are without effect in the general population of low risk individuals but which have substantial effects in the presence of adversity;
- there is an interest in the *steeling effect* [emphasis added] of successful coping with stress or challenge;
- a specific example of hypothesis-driven strategies, there is the group of studies of G x E interactions. G x E meaning, gene-environment interactions that occur as a result of resistance to adverse environmental conditions;

- the need of resilience research of animal models;
- the study of *turning effects* [emphasis added] of individual differences. Turning effects signified as overcoming adversity in adulthood; when childhood adversity was presence;
- the use of qualitative data to determine the *meaning* [emphasis added] of life experiences;
- the need of continued brain-research (brain plasticity) to learn more about temporal limits and accessibility to external influences;
- the need to *define* [emphasis added] resilience in terms of a better outcome that is seen in other individuals from a similarly adverse background (Rutter, 2012,p.341-342).

Resilience models and approaches make reference to risk factors that can negatively impact academic resilience.

Risk Factors

Grossman et al. described risk as "psychosocial factors that have been demonstrated to increase the risk of children and adolescents for the development of psychopathology" (p. 530). Adversity can occur as events or experiences. Hanewald (2011) described risk as a range from physical or mental illness; unemployment of parents to sudden traumatic events. The concept of risk for the purpose of this study is used to "refer to environmental factors that are likely to hinder the child's ability to succeed" (Hanewald, 2011, p.22). Rutter (1990) reminds that risk factors are not fixed attributes, but change as situations for an individual changes.

Internal risk factors. The well being of students are also impacted by internal risk factors. An example of an internal risk factor is psychological disorders. Brackenreed (2010) identifies psychological disorders such as developmental, emotional and learning disorders that affect one in five children. As in the Kauai study (Werner & Smith, 1992), Brackenreed (2010) pinpoints preventable factors such lack of prenatal care, low birth rate, child abuse and mother's

psychological condition as contributors to increased rates of psychological disorders among students.

Decisions that students make are another example of internal risk factors. Decisions such as negative peer groups and youth violence are internal risk factors that can likely lead to negative outcomes (Brackenreed, 2010).

External risk factors. A significant external risk factor that places student at risk is poverty. The effects of poverty increase the risk of a student (Fram, et. al, 2007). Families and students living in poverty have a driving force for daily survival (Payne, 2005). Payne (2005) shares there are "hidden rules" shared by those living in poverty. The "hidden rules" include: a sense of helplessness; the importance of quantity with regard to food and things; a reverence for education in the abstract, but not as a reality; and a matriarchal family structure. Ellis (2010), *Against the Odds*, examined the academic resilience of African-Americans living in rural poverty. The study stated that in such a survival mindset or "hidden rules" for families living in poverty, resources for the family may have negative implications for achievement for students in general, especially our high achieving students. (Willis, 2000). Werner (2004) identified a few external risk factors that may affect child development to include: parental mental illness, substance abuse, and economic hardship. Also embedded in poverty are where families and students live that contributes to the risk factors of poor, high-ability students.

Rural Factor

In poverty, community resources are important, because they are needed for survival (Payne, 2005). Khanlou and Wray (2014) remind us "that strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability is secondary to reducing exposures to adversity such as poverty and exclusion

(p.74). The majority of impoverished Americans live in rural settings (Evan & English, 2002). Irwin (2012) stated that poverty among rural youth is seen across diverse regions and racial backgrounds. The fiscal responsibilities of rural school divisions are greater impacted by a lack of financial and human resources. In Virginia, school localities ability to support local education is based upon a Composite Index that factors property values as one factor. (VDOE, 2013) School divisions in rural localities tend to have a lower Composite Index and need financial support in the form of federal aid (VDOE, 2013). Lewis (2009) stated that lack of financial resources and location; resources available to educate high-ability students in rural schools are limited. This lack of resources may also limit the ability to attract and retain high quality teachers.

Family and Community

Rural schools are often closely connected to the community; however, this relationship serves as no guarantee students will experience positive outcomes (Fowler & Walberg, 1991). The effects of rural living, poverty and family dynamics are also impacted by community values. Foster (2013) stated that high-ability students in rural living may face rejection not only from peers for pursuits of academic success, but potential rejection from family and community which may be more devastating. Community members may resent the fact that high-ability students excel and may possibly move away from the community in which they live (Clausen, 1989). Khanlou and Wray (2014) in a literature review of child and youth resilience emphasized a need of a whole community approach as an important domain of resilience. Family, school environment and community can foster resilience through collaborative partnerships.

Protective Factors

The study of resilience not only considers risk factors but also incorporates the positive factors. These positive factors are considered assets or resources available to the at-risk student (Foster, 2013). Grossman et al. (1992) defined protective factors as "characteristics in an individual's world that mitigate against the development of psychopathology despite the existence of risk factors" (p. 530). Protective factors can be seen as the shield that protects the at-risk child from their adverse condition, which may be internal or external factors. Like risk factors, the more protective factors a child possesses the more resilient or equipped that child will be to face adversity (Brooks and Goldstein, 2001). Protective factors can be categorized as individual familial and socio environmental (Grossman et al., 1992). In Morales' study (2010), 50 academically resilient low-socioeconomic students of color were identified. The study was over 8 years. Selected students had a parent with limited educational backgrounds, low paying employment and were identified as an ethnic minority. The post criteria required 30 completed college credits. Each student was interviewed at least three times and inverted triangulation interviews were utilized. Students were selected by college professors, friends, and flyers placed on the college campus. The results of the research were categorized in two broad clusters:

1. "It's Okay to be Smart." Skillful Mentoring for Future Success
2. Pride, Debt, Effort and Success: Becoming Someone (Morales, 2010, p.167-169).

Within the two clusters, twelve protective factors were identified. The data presented revealed linkages among the participants' perspectives. The practical implications were to inform policy and interventions being implemented or created. The study revealed twelve protective factors to include willingness/desire to "class jump", caring school personnel in K-12 and college, sense of obligation to one's race/ethnicity, strong future orientation, strong work ethic,

persistence, high esteem, internal locus of control, attendance at out of zone school, high parental expectations, and mother modeling strong work ethic (Morales, 2010, p.167)

These protective factors were results of the qualitative interview data taken from the participants in the study (Morales, 2010). The protective factors in context explain the process "known as academic resilience for these participants" (Morales, 2010, p.167). Morales (2010) emphasized this view:

The focus on resilience presented here is not intended to blame those who have not been successful but rather to better understand those who have. It is hoped that through this increased understanding, programs, and initiatives designed to help the potentially resilient and/or the undocumented gifted will be more intelligently designed (Morales, 2010, p.173).

Internal and external protective factors are also defined in the research. Werner (2004) identified both external and internal protective factors; the developmental period most highly impacted by the factors, and associated risk factors that appear to be alleviated as a result of protective factors.

Internal protective factors. In the Kauai Study, Werner (2004) resilient children were described as self-confident, cheerful, and alert. Resilient children were also described as good communicators and problem-solvers (Werner, 2004). A feeling of self-worth and self-competence are common among those children with such positive characteristics later in life.

A study by Wolin and Wolin (1993) identified seven internal characteristics found in both children and adults that were termed "resiliencies". These resiliencies include creativity, humor, independence, initiative, insight, morality and relationship. Werner (2004) asserted that positive relationships developed at an early age were the result of temperament and personal

characteristic of positive children. These children tend to have a more positive and open communication with others, and grow from life experiences.

Studies focusing on internal factors effecting resilience found that good communication skills were the result of internal factors like self-esteem, control, self-competence, and self-efficacy. Students with well-developed internal protective factors are confident in their abilities at school. With such characteristics, these students were able to make good choices that positively impacted their future (Werner, 2004; Martin & Marsh, 2006). Masten et al. (1999) conducted a study that demonstrated that resilient adolescents when compared to their low adversity peers had better or high IQ and psychological well-being.

Khanlou and Wray (2014) reaffirmed resilience research that "suggests that to increase one's capacity to deter risk, build relationships and utilize their assets helps to reduce differential vulnerability–that the building of resilience and protective factors associated with resilience is one of the pathways to better health and well-being" (p. 74).

External protective factors. School, community and family are considered external supports that can serve as protective factors for an at-risk child. As in the Morales' study (2010), external characteristics identified by the participants included mother's work ethic, school attendance zone and supportive teachers. Foster (2013) found that impoverished 12th grade students identified as academically resilient viewed peer relationships, parental support and community resources (part-time jobs) as protective factors.

Summary

Among academically successful students, any one of the risk factors to include poverty and rural residence may increase the likelihood for academic failure. Possessing both risk factors increases the likelihood of academic failure for elementary students living in rural poverty.

Khanlou and Wray (2014) stated that there is “no single factor or attribute that helps explain why some children and youth are able to overcome adversity” (p.74). Despite such risk factors of poverty and rural residence, some elementary students prevail academically and therefore are considered academically resilient. The present study investigated the stories of five such elementary students.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design and methods utilized throughout this study. It begins with a summary of the research purpose and theoretical focus. It then identifies the rationale for the research design, the role of the researcher, the selection of the participants and the procedures used for data collection.

Research Design

Using case study methodology and qualitative semistructured interviews with a representative sample of students, the researcher investigated the protective factors in the lives of the ten elementary-aged students in one rural school division in Virginia that have experienced poverty. Case study served as the methodology for this study. A case study is "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social event" (Merriam, 2009, p. 46). For this study, the units of analysis were students of poverty who demonstrate academic resilience in a rural school district, thus a bounded system. Case studies allowed the researcher to ask subjective questions tied to the bounded system studied. According to Merriam (2009) qualitative researchers are interested in "understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p.5). Qualitative research allows for the *understanding* of how people make sense out of their lives (Merriam, 2009, p.14). The study results may provide school administrators and educators with support systems identified by academically at-risk students. The overall goal of the study was to understand meaning as individuals have experienced.

All research designs have strengths and weaknesses (Merriam, 2009). The benefits of conducting case studies include the attainment of rich and holistic accounts of a phenomenon. Real-life responses and insight may expand the researcher's experiences on the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). Case studies are useful for "studying educational innovations, evaluating programs and informing policy "(Merriam, 2009, p. 51). Limitations with case study research may include the time needed to gain rich description and analysis of a phenomenon, and the integrity of the researcher. Issues of reliability, validity and generalizability of the study must be addressed carefully (Merriam, 2009).

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews as the primary method of gathering explicit experiences of the subjects (Merriam, 2009). The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to gain the protective factors contributing to the academic success of identified at-risk students attending rural elementary schools located in a school district in Virginia.

Research Questions

The questions that guided the research are as follows:

1. What are the identified protective factors regarding academic achievement for students purposefully selected as meeting the criteria for academic resilience?

2. What are the similarities and differences in protective factors among these purposefully selected students?

Site/Sample Selection

The participants in the study were fifth graders attending elementary school in a Middle Peninsula (rural) school district located in Virginia. The researcher interviewed

two fifth grade students from each of the elementary schools in the rural school district. Participants were selected based upon criteria determined by the researcher that characterizes an academically resilient student to include poverty and living in a rural setting. According to Creswell (2007), it is vital to develop the attributes essential to the study and then ensure the participants match the attributes needed.

The selection criteria for this study included students that matched the definition of academic resilience provided by the researcher. Participants had experienced academic success despite living in poverty and attended elementary school in the rural school division. Students passed Standards of Learning assessments in both reading and mathematics for the 2012-2013 & 2013-2014 in the Commonwealth of Virginia were determined to experience academic success. This study focused on students living in rural poverty as a risk factor. Participants experienced other risk factors exposed during interviews or through demographic data collection.

Current elementary principals based on criteria provided by the researcher selected the fifth grade elementary students for the study. The characteristics considered for this study included the risk factors of poverty and rural residence. School principals ensured the fifth grade students selected from their individual school met passing Standards of Learning assessments in both reading and mathematics for the 2012-2013 & 2013-2014 testing year, met eligibility criteria for free or reduced meals. The selection of two fifth grade students from each elementary school located in this rural community allowed for broad experiences that spanned the entire school division. Seidman (2006) reported that a relatively small number of participants may be enough to tell a powerful story; however, vital to include a large enough sample to ensure data are

rich. The study targeted ten elementary students representing the profile of academic resilience in the chosen school district. Purposive sampling was utilized through criterion-based selection to ensure the participants represent the background and experiences to be explored for this study (Merriam, 2009).

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection included transcribed interviews from semi-structured interviews, phenomenological interviews and a review of demographic information provided by the school principals on the *Selection of Student Participant Protocol* to include standardized test scores. For the purpose of the study, semi-structured interviews were the main data collection tool used. "Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them" (Merriam, 2009, p.88). Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to explore experiences that may not be discovered through structured interviews or surveys (Harrison, 2009). According to Merriam (2009), semi-structured interviews are guided by a list of questions to be explored, and questions are not ordered ahead of time and questions can be used flexibly (p.90).

Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to explore the philosophical view of academic resilience. The philosophy of phenomenology is relevant to this study. Phenomenology comes from the "focus on the experiences itself and how experiencing something is transformed into consciousness" (Merriam, 2009, p. 24). The primary goal of phenomenological interviews was to "depict the essence or basic structure of experience (Merriam, 2009, p.25). With phenomenological interviews, it was important that the researcher acknowledged and/or "bracket" their own experiences as it relates to

the experience being studied to decrease researcher bias as a possible limitation to the study (Merriam, 2009, p.25).

Semi-structured interviews utilized open-ended questions. Seidman (2006) describes two types of open-ended questions that are vital to interviewing. The first type is the "grand tour" question. The grand tour question asks the participant to describe a particular experience using physical details (Seidman, 2006). A second-type of open-ended question focuses on the emotional and mental details of an experience (Seidman, 2006). Open-ended questions allowed the researcher to gain personal thoughts and experiences as it relates to the phenomenon of study.

The interview questions reflected the purpose of the study: to identify protective factors as perceived by academic resilience students who face the risk factors of rural community living and poverty. The literature review framed the background on academic resilience, which guided the interview questions that may reveal the individual experiences of poor elementary students that relate to protective factors found in school, family and rural residence. The interview questions supported the review of literature and encouraged participants to share their experiences (Downey, 2008).

Lastly, the researcher reviewed the demographic school records of each participant. Reviewing the school records (documents) provided the researcher with pertinent data such as scholastic records (grades and attendance history), achievement test data, and residential history prior to interviewing the participants of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The content analysis of records provided a "method for describing and interpreting artifacts of society or social group" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p.108). The data collected in school records such as attendance records, historical

report cards, and special program documents (i.e. gifted referrals, special education) provided a better understanding of the participants and their historical performance within the time frame examined.

Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher completed IRB training (Appendix A) before applying for IRB approval for the study. Once permission was granted from the Institutional Research Board (IRB) of Virginia Tech (Appendix B), the researcher gained permission from the school district to conduct research with the students in the district. A letter outlining the purpose of the study and procedures for collecting data was provided to the school district's superintendent (Appendix C). After receiving permission to conduct research in the desired school district by the school superintendent, a letter was sent to the elementary school principals stating the purpose of the research and outlining procedures to gather data from students (Appendix D). The researcher provided the school principals with a *Selection of Student Protocol* to select participants for the study (Appendix G). The researcher following successful defense of the study provided insights from the study to the school district's superintendent.

Each school principal selected two fifth grade students that met the established criteria determined by the researcher as academically resilient. The school principals selected student participants that met the academic success indicators; and free and reduced meal eligibility. Once participants were selected, the researcher contacted the participants to set-up a meeting at their home-base school. The researcher explained to the parent or guardian; and student the purpose of the study, the format for participation and asked for written consent for participation in the study and consent to access the

student's scholastic record (Appendices E & F). The researcher was provided written consent and release of records from the participant's parents due to the age of participants. The researcher discussed time and place for the interview at the initial meeting.

The interviews were semi-structured in format. An interview guide was used with each participant (Appendix H). The interview guide included specific questions for each participant to include open-ended and probing questions (Merriam, 2009). For reliability purposes, each participant was asked questions from the same interview guide. The researcher met each participant individually and in person. Interviews lasted no longer than an hour. Student interviews were held at the participant's individual school or another agreed location.

The interviews were recorded and the researcher to ensure accuracy of the data created transcriptions of the sessions. Students chose pseudonyms or aliases, to use for the interviews, to protect confidentiality during the transcription process. The transcription and recording of the interview sessions allowed the researcher precise data to analyze to uncover the factors being examined. Following each interview session, the researcher provided a copy of the transcribed interview to review for accuracy, member checking. Member checking is a "common strategy for ensuring for internal validity or credibility" (Merriam, 2009, p.217) of information provided through observation. The researcher was available to the participant and their parent to assist in reading the transcribed interview or to answer questions that the student or parent may have to ensure accurate interpretation of information. Once participants and the parent had read the transcribed interview, the researcher asked the participant and their parent signs their

names in both cursive and manuscript and date the document indicating they had read the transcribed document and confirm accuracy. The researcher provided a copy of the transcribed interview to parents and asked the parent to sign for their receipt of the transcription. The researcher kept a signed copy of the transcription by both the participant and their parent.

School records were another data collection source. The reviews of the participants' school records took place before and after interviews were conducted for saturation of data.

In an effort to ensure reliability and validity of interview questions, the researcher asked principals enrolled in the Virginia Tech Doctoral Program familiar with the target population of study to review interview questions and provide feedback. The researcher also asked 5th grade elementary school students enrolled in a rural elementary school for feedback on readability of interview questions. Due to personal experiences being shared by participants, the researcher took every effort to ensure privacy and confidentiality of data collected (Seiber, 2009).

Data Analysis

Semistructured interviews were transcribed and recorded. The researcher analyzed the data to explore themes, patterns and categories developed through the process (Merriam, 2009). Each student interview was organized as a data set. Each data set identified by a pseudonym determined by the participant. The researcher used a notebook the pseudonym determined by the participant to organize interview data, and student data gained from student records, written permission slip forms and transcribed interviews for each participant.

According to Merriam (2009), the organization of the data should be done early in qualitative research. As data were collected through interviews and school records, coding began. Coding as described by Merriam (2009) is "assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of data" (p.173). This allowed the researcher to establish relevance to data collected as it relates to the phenomenon of study.

As themes and patterns developed emerged, data analysis began. According to Merriam (2009) "qualitative data analysis is primarily inductive and comparative (p.175). The researcher examined data sets to identify responses to research questions developed, similarities among participants and insight on the phenomenon of study, the "process of data analysis begins by identifying segments in your data set that are responsive to your research questions (Merriam, 2009, p. 176).

Triangulation of data was conducted to ensure validity and reliability (Merriam, 2009). The triangulation process was accomplished through transcribed and recorded student interviews, a review of school records for each participant in the study, and member checking of transcribed interviews. Using this method allowed the researcher to gather multiple sources of data to compare to explain the phenomenon of study.

The researcher maintained data collected through interviews and student records. The same interview guide was utilized with each participant. Collected data were stored in a notebook, on a flashdrive and placed in a secure, locked location. The collected data was destroyed following successful defense of study.

Summary

The researcher of this study conducted qualitative research to include semistructured interviews to gain insight and identify protective factors of students that meet the criteria of academic resilience. Interviews were conducted at the participant's school or another agreed upon location. The researcher reviewed the school records of each participant before and after conducting interviews in an effort to saturate data collection.

Fifth grade students identified as academically resilient have the following risk factors: poverty and rural residence. Participants for this study were selected by the school principal using criteria determined by the researcher. The researcher conducted semistructured interviews with two students from each of the elementary schools in the rural school district to gain insight of experiences of the target group that spanned the school division.

The goal of the researcher was to gain data that answered the research questions pertinent to the study and gain insight of the protective factors self- identified by the targeted group. The data collected can assist school leaders in their knowledge of academic resilience and how to create learning environments that foster protective factors in all students, to include our at-risk students.

Chapter 4

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to explore the self-identified protective factors of ten-fifth grade students meeting the criteria of academically resilience. The researcher interviewed the ten fifth-grade students in one rural school division in Virginia. The ten students were selected by principals of the elementary schools located in the rural school division using criteria provided by the researcher.

The ten-fifth grade students all reside in the same rural community located approximately one hour's drive from the State Capital of Virginia. In contrast to the state capital, the rural county in which the study was conducted makes up for a lack of tall buildings and shopping, in breathtaking views of the waterways and natural landscape. Approaching the rural county from the south on a clear spring day, provides beautiful views of the river that feed into the bay; a community rich and proud of their "watermen." The community is small, yet welcoming to military families and retirees. However, in spite of its natural beauty and pockets of wealth, over 25% of families live below the poverty levels without husbands present with children under the age of 18 (American Community Survey, 2009)

The elementary schools that the study participants attended were spread across the rural county from north to south; and east to west. There are over 5,000 students in the community of about 33,000. There are five traditional elementary schools, two middle schools and one high school. The elementary schools serve approximately 2300 students in grades K-5, 42% of whom qualified for free or reduced meals during the 2014-2015

school year. The ten student participants in the present study either qualified for free or reduced meals at times of data collection or did so for a portion of their academic careers. About 81% of the students in the elementary schools are identified as White, 7% as Black, and 12% Hispanics, Native American, or Asian during the 2014-2015 school year. For this study, seven of the students identified as White, three identified as Black.

Research Questions

The research was based on two over-arching research questions:

Research Question 1: For students purposefully selected as meeting the criteria for academic resilience, what are their self-identified protective factors regarding academic achievement?

Research Question 2: What are the similarities and differences in protective factors among these purposefully selected students?

Research Question 1: For students purposefully selected as meeting the criteria for academic resilience, what are their self-identified protective factors regarding academic achievement?

Case #1: Believe

Believe was a nine-year old student attending one of the smallest student population elementary schools in the rural county. Believe was the 1st participant to be interviewed for this study. She recalled an experience or situation when she became aware of her academic success was when she earned a "600 on my math SOL in 3rd grade" (Be *l*1). A score of 600 is a perfect score. The Standards of Learning assessment

score bands in the range of: 400-499 indicating passed Proficient, 500-600 indicates an Advanced passing score.

Believe lived in a household with her paternal grandparents and three brothers. Believe's mother lives out of state and her father lives in the same rural county but at the time of the interview was planning to move out of state with an uncle. Believe mentioned a half-sister, a sister that lives with her mother whose age she could not recall. Believe had lived in the rural county since a baby with her paternal grandparents and had always attended the same elementary school since Headstart. She recalled a time living in New York with her biological mother; she thinks she was 3 months old.

On the day that Believe was interviewed, she appeared confident and excited. Her paternal grandmother appeared proud of her granddaughter's selection for this study accompanied her. The interview occurred at the researcher's school to accommodate the schedule of the participant during non-school hours. The researcher took the participant and her guardian on a tour of the school, since it was their first visit to the school. This seemed to ease anxiety for both the researcher and participant. During the course of the interview, she was quite talkative and appeared comfortable with the interview process.

A number of themes arose from the analysis of transcription of Believe that address the question as to how an elementary student living in rural poverty, such as Believe, can overcome the odds to be academically successful. Protective factors that were revealed were: her relationship with her grandparents, especially grandmother and siblings, school environment; specific personality traits and academic behaviors.

Family. According to Believe, her academic success was rooted with her grandparents, especially her paternal grandmother. They were her legal guardians since 3 months of

age despite her biological father living in the same rural county at the time of the interview. Believe's biological mother lived out of state with a half-sister. When asked by the researcher to name family members, Believe mentioned her mother last. Believe has contact with both sets of her grandparents. Believe's paternal grandmother did not work; however, her paternal grandfather worked locally. The household was a busy one, with Believe and three brothers all residing in a trailer along with her paternal grandparents, with cousins and aunts in close proximity.

Believe acknowledged her paternal grandmother and brothers as helpful to her elementary school education. She shared,

"Sometimes when I don't understand my homework my grandma helps with it, sometimes my brother helps me with my word study. He says the word and I spell it. Every week, I have word study or vocabulary quiz…any brother I choose helps me (Be *l* 4-6)."

Believe did not indicate any close relationships with adults outside of her family that have helped or influenced her elementary education. Her responses were simply "No" (Be *l*6) to both questions related to the relationships with adults outside of her family. As a follow-up, the researcher asked if she had ever participated in extra-curricular activities or sports, such as Boys and Girls Club, softball or gymnastics, her response was "No" (Be *l6*). Believe shared that she had received free meals at school since Headstart but this school year she had reduced meals.

Community. Believe has lived in the rural community since 3 months of age, "almost my whole life" (Be *l*8) in the same home. She has attended the same elementary school since Headstart. Though spending almost her entire life in the rural community, when

asked to describe the community to someone that was going to move there, she did not feel comfortable answering the question. When asked, to describe anyways in which living in the rural community has helped or been supportive of her academic success in elementary school, her initial response was "No" (Be *l11*). Then she shared, "Well…what has been supportive has been the leaves falling off the trees. Cause my teacher Mr. Higgins asked me to bring in a leaf so that we can study it under a microscope. We did something cool (Be *l11*-13)."

Believe did not consider herself to have friends at school and therefore they did not impact her learning. When asked by the researcher, why she believed she had no friends, her response was "I don't know" (Be *l14*). Believe shared that not having friends, "Really doesn't change it. If I had friends it would probably be the same as it is now" (Be *l15*-16). At the end of the structured interview questions, the researcher asked as series of probing questions regarding friendships. The researcher asked additional probing questions to confirm the participant's initial response to not having no friends, Following the probing questions, Believe did mention a female peer that she liked to play with at recess as "kinda a friend" (Be *l*59).

School Environment. Believe was aware of how she learned best and what she liked to learn by her responses to questions regarding her school environment. Believe mentioned several times that she learned best by "staying focused" (Be *l20*, *l*22, *l*56, *l*58 & *l*59). She shared that she felt "pretty comfortable" (Be *l*17) in the school that she attended since Headstart. When asked to describe her K-5 elementary school, she simply stated, "that's a tough one…let's just say I like learning" (Be *l*16-17). When asked what has helped you become a good student, Believe initially stated" I don't

know…no clue why" (Be *l*17) then later mentioned having "a quiet place for homework" (Be *l*58).

Believe indicated her learning style as to "work *alone* and to be an *island*" (Be *l*24-25). Believe's favorite academic subjects mentioned were mathematics, "math because numbers are fun to work" (Be *l*l8) and history, "I like learning about presidents and stuff" (Be *l*18-19). Her ideal classroom would include each student having their own "island" (Be *l*21) to "help them stay focused" (Be *l*22). She shared that switching classrooms helped with keeping her focused, "I like switching classrooms so I can focus on one subject at a time" (Be *l*23-24). She recalled that her current math class seating arrangement was set up in rows, "so when the person that sits next to me isn't here, I am in my island" (Be*l*24-25). Believe liked her current school schedule that required that she switch classes seven times throughout the day. She prefers small group instruction and activities to whole group instruction. She explained the small group instruction in her math class:

> " Groups 1,2-3… 20 minutes blocks go to her [teacher] twice in Group 1 during the week, when you go to her [teacher] she tells you what to be more focus on and what to study…go the lab to do IXL, independent stations or do math homework, Station 3 is with her [teacher]…she has a little chart to tell you where to go and another chart to tell you what group you are in (Be *l*30-33)."

When asked, if she had a favorite teacher or math teacher, she mentioned her current 5th grade math teacher. She described her math small group structures as helping her become successful:

> "I am usually in Group 1 during the week. About five people meet with the teacher in small group, five or six. You get to move around…one is a whole group thing but then we switch into the groups for 20 minutes from 11:15-12:00 whole group, but then you got 12:00-12:20 is 1st group, 2nd group is 12:20-12:40, 12:40 until lunchtime (Be *l*34-37)."

Believe took comfort in the learning structures provided in the math small groups and routines established by the teacher that kept learning "focused" (Be *l*20, *l*23). When asked to describe her school in one word, she chose "interactive" (Be *l*38) and again, her first example related to a math learning structure as follows:

> "With fractions she [teacher] uses cubes, but when she switches to decimals she uses blocks…so she shows you fractions and then decimals as two different things but then converts them, so you know what they are the same but different in some ways (Be *l*38-41)."

Another example shared involved the science teacher pulling students to the back table to work with them. Believe mentioned a reading teacher using books to teach reading skills such as cause and effect relationships. Believe describes a time when the reading teacher read a book, and then stated, "Raise your hand, if you heard a cause and effect?" (Be *l*46-47). Believe also shared an unwanted interaction with a fellow male peer, "he talks randomly…I am not focused with him there" (Be *l*53).

Believe is focused on the right now. When asked by the researcher about middle school next year, Believe responded:

> "I am not thinking about middle school. I am not thinking about what will happen in my future. I am thinking only about the subject that I am in. When I am in

reading, I'm not thinking about math…I'm trying to stay focused right now…in this room…what he or she is teaching right now (Be *l*54-57)."

Though unable to name specific friends when asked, Believe is knowledgeable of others that exhibit like learning styles and academic success. When asked by the researcher, if other students could be as focused as she, Believed responded, "Yes" (Be *l*57). She named and described the two students as "super smart" (Be *l*58, *l*59, *l*60) and "focused" (Be *l*58, *l*59, *l*60).

Table 1-1
Data Matrix of Case #1 Student- Believe

Theme	Category	Protective Factor
Family	Parental Grandparents Brothers	Support
Community	No Involvement Longevity	Familiarity
School Environment	"Pretty comfortable" Island-working alone Consistency Favorite Teacher: Math	Focus Self-awareness Small group learning structures

Case #2-Cleveland

Cleveland was a ten-year old student attending the same school as Believe, which is the smallest student populated elementary school in the school division. He recalled an experience or situation when he became aware of his academic success was when "my parents encouraged me and told me I was a smart student" (Cl *l*1-2). Cleveland also shared that he knew in 3rd grade that he was successful because "I was taught more and it's been hard but now I have been able to keep it up and be good at it" (Cl *l*4-5).

Cleveland lived in a household with his maternal grandmother, mother and seven-month old sister. Cleveland did not mention a father or male figure living in the home,

and the interviewer did not ask any probing questions regarding a possible male figure in the home. Cleveland has lived in the same rural community all of his life in the same home and has attended the same school since preschool. Cleveland's home-base principal indicated on the *Selection of Student Participant Protocol* that the maternal grandmother had petitioned for full custody in the past.

His mother escorted Cleveland to the interview session. The interview occurred at Cleveland's home-base school. Cleveland appeared nervous on the onset of the interview process but after initial conversation and introduction to the study process, he appeared more comfortable. During the course of the interview, he appeared more comfortable. Cleveland's mother interrupted the interview session towards the middle of the session to bring Cleveland two slices of pizza from the local corner store, which appeared to make him more relaxed.

A number of themes arose from the analysis of transcription of Cleveland that address the question as to how an elementary student living in rural poverty, such as Cleveland, can overcome the odds to be academically successful. Protective factors that were revealed were: his relationships with his maternal grandmother, mother and school friends, school environment; specific personality traits and academic behaviors.

Family. Cleveland recalled his academic success based on the *encouragement* and *confidence* provided by his maternal grandmother and mother. Cleveland has lived with maternal grandmother and mother all his life as an only child prior to the birth of his little sister, who is seven-months old. Cleveland did not mention his father or another male figure prevalent in his life. He shared that his maternal grandmother and mother

encourage him "telling me I am smart, I am a smart kid and always have confidence in myself" (Cl *l*7-8).

Cleveland indicated a close relationship with a school-aged cousin that does not live in his home. The interviewer then asked if his cousin attended school in the school division, he responded "No" (Cl *l*9). The cousin lives outside of the rural community; however, he recalled that the cousin helped him with math work, which helped to "get his grades up" (Cl *l*8). The interviewer then asked if he attended a local church, and his response was "No" (Cl *l*10). Cleveland shared that he currently received free meals at school as long as he could remember but pays for the "extras" (Cl *l*11).

Community. Cleveland has lived in the rural community since a baby, "my whole life" (Cl *l*12 in the same home. He has attended the same elementary school since Preschool. When asked to describe the community to someone that was going to move there, he described it as a "pretty nice place" (Cl *l*15). He explained, "cause nothing goes wrong most of the time and everything is peaceful" (Cl *l*15). The interviewer then asked Cleveland, to describe anyways in which living in the rural community has helped or been supportive of his academic success in elementary school, his response:

> "In this rural area I have been thinking of a lot of things and I know when I go outside and I just think about things when I am down…like my confidence gets me right back up (Cl *l*15-17)."

Cleveland considers himself to have friends and knows why. Cleveland recalls why he has friends, "they have been with me since preschool…they never turn their backs on me and they never say mean things to me" (Cl *l*18-19).

When asked by the interviewer how his friendships impacted his learning at school, Cleveland shared:

> "Well it can be a bit frustrating at times but when I don't have someone to play with their they are. They help me with my learning because mostly our teachers put us together in groups (Cl *l*20-22)."

School Environment. Cleveland described his K-5 elementary school as "pretty good" (Cl *l*22); however, acknowledged that he has had a "couple of blockings" (Cl *l*22-23). He elaborated:

> "Maybe a couple of mean things being said to me but I ignore it and I continue with my learning so I can be smart…really smart. That is why I passed the SOLs and I have the confidence to pass this year's SOLs (Cl *l*23-25)."

When asked by the interviewer, whether the mean things were done by adults or children, he responded, "children" (Cl *l*25). Cleveland attributed that "learning...paying attention to his teachers and listening" (Cl *l*25-26) as contributors to helping him become a good student. Cleveland shared that being a good student was important to getting "a good scholarship" (Cl *l*27). The interviewer then asked him about his college plans. He shared that he wanted to go to college but unsure of which school or area of study.

Cleveland mentioned he felt "really comfortable" (Cl *l*30) at the school he has attended since Preschool. Cleveland stated, "everyone is nice this year…no one is in the way of being mean to others" (Cl *l*30). He recalled that last school year, "certain people were not following the matrix and we have special events" (Cl *l*31-32). Cleveland is referencing his Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) initiative that

promotes positive reinforcement and common school-wide expectations throughout the school building, which are outlined on a matrix. The interviewer is knowledgeable of PBIS model due to its implementation throughout the school division. Cleveland learns best by "doing something" (Cl *l*32) which helps him pay attention and do his best Cleveland's favorite subject is science, "science because science really encourages me and we do all the cool stuff" (Cl *l*32). Cleveland elaborates on a science project:

> "Because first we did a project on bake sale cookies about cells…we used plant and animals and made cookies. The plant and animal cells were the toppings for the cookies. Then we ate them (Cl *l*40-41)."

His ideal classroom would look like an "experiment room" (Cl *l*44) with "experiment tubes and science" (Cl *l*43). The self-described "experiment guy" (Cl *l*43) shared that he liked "to mix things up …to make something else" (Cl *l*43-44). When asked by interviewer to describe his ideal classroom for reading, he shared, "it would have books and assignments, books on one side and assignments on the other" (Cl *l*45-46) in comparison, this response lacked the detail provided for his ideal science classroom. He could not recall if any of his science classrooms looked as he described above.

When asked, if he had a favorite teacher, he mentioned his current 5th grade science teacher. He shared that the science teacher "does fun things and when does fun things, everybody enjoys them like I do" (Cl *l*47-48). He also shared that the science teacher has "confidence in everyone and I trust him in helping me" (Cl *l*49). When asked to describe his school in one word, he chose "great" (Cl *l*50) and again described a science example to support:

"Because he [science teacher] does like all fun things, he let us do some fun things. He makes us be safe with it…in experiments, he tells us to put on our safety googles. We start-off with a project…we are paired in groups so we don't have any problems (Cl *l*50-52)."

Table 1-2
Data Matrix of Case #2-Cleveland

Theme	Category	Protective Factors
Family	Maternal Grandmother Mother and Baby Sister	Encouragement
Community	No involvement Cousin Longevity	Support with math Friendships Familiarity
School Environment	Great "Really Comfortable" Consistency Favorite Teacher: Science	Small group structures Doing cool stuff

Case #3: Daisy

Daisy was a nine-year old student attending the elementary school located in the southeastern region of the rural school division. Her school community has an annual parade and festival celebrating the close net community. Daisy recalled an experience when she became aware of her academic success as follows:

"Uhmmm…when I was in 3rd grade and we were taking our SOLs at the end of the school year, we had got our scores. My teacher called me over and I was kinda of worried that it was going to be a bad grade. So I walked over kinda nervous and when I saw my scores, I was really happy about it (Da *l*1-3)."

Daisy lived in a household with her mother and her boyfriend, and six siblings ranging in ages, 10 years old to 1-years old. Daisy mentioned that her 1-year old brother's father is her mom's boyfriend living in the home. Daisy did not mention her biological father and the interviewer did not ask any probing questions. She has lived in the rural community all of her life; however, has lived in her current home for two years. Daisy has attended another local elementary school for a brief time in Kindergarten, but has been at her current school ever since.

On the day of the interview, Daisy initially appeared shy but willing to participate in the study. Her maternal grandmother accompanied her to the interview session. Daisy's mother was sick, and was unable to accompany her as previously arranged. The interview occurred at Daisy's school in the Assistant Principal's main office. During the interview, Daisy answered all questions posed by the interviewer.

A number of themes arose from the analysis of transcription of Daisy that address the question as to how an elementary student living in rural poverty, such as Daisy, can overcome the odds to be academically successful. Protective factors that were revealed were: her relationships with her mother and teachers, friendships, school environment; specific personality traits and academic behaviors.

Family. Daisy lives in household along with her mother, six siblings, and her mother's boyfriend, which is the father to her one-year old brother. Daisy did not mention her biological father or any other male figure in her life. She did not mention throughout the interview her mother's current boyfriend as a factor in her life. She was escorted to the interview session by her maternal grandmother; however, did not

mention her grandparents in interview responses. The interviewer did not ask any probing questions regarding unmentioned family members.

Daisy recalled a situation when her mother assisted with school. She shared:

> "Last year I had a difficult time with fractions. She helped me get through them…I got them pretty well. This year I am doing really good with fractions (Da *l*6-7)."

Daisy mentioned a close relationship with teachers that worked at a daycare that she attended afterschool. She described:

> "I use to go to a daycare and the teachers there helped me with my homework and studies. I started daycare in Kindergarten…went there in the middle of the school year. Well, they helped me and they taught us cards and games (Da *l*8-10)."

Daisy revealed that she has received free meals at school since.

Community. Daisy has "grown up here" (Da *l*16) in this rural community. She attended the same school since the middle of Kindergarten. She had attended another local elementary school for a brief time in Kindergarten. She has lived in her current home with her family for the past two years. When asked to describe the community to someone that was going to move there, she shared:

> "Well, some days we have the Save the Bay Days…teaches us about the community and about wildlife…there is a lot of wildlife around here. And this community…really is a great community with a lot of helping people, and people that can help you (Da *l*13-15)."

When asked, to describe anyways in which living in the rural community has helped or been supportive of her academic success in elementary school, Daisy shared:

> "Uhmm…this community helped me and I have grown up here for a while…it's just amazing how people can be by your side and you know will help you with things (Da *l*15-17)."

Daisy considered herself to have friends at school that impacted her learning. Daisy described her friends below:

> "Nice and have lots of empathy…and to be caring and be willing to help people and accept who your other friends are and be there for each other (Da *l*17-18)."

When asked why her friends liked her, he response was "I don't know" (Da *l*19). Daisy described how her friendships impacted her learning at school by revealing a close long-term friendship:

> "I have this one friend, we have been friends since 2nd grade and we have been together for a long time now. She just helps me because she is awesome. She is awesome and funny and whenever I am down at school, she will help me get back on my feet and you know she helps me and she makes something that is really boring, really fun (Da *l*19-23)."

School Environment. Daisy described her K-5 elementary schooling, "nice, caring and got people all around the school trying to take care of you" (Da *l*23-24). She described the adults in the school, "they are respecting you, and they are just there for you. To get you ready when hard times coming" (Da *l*24-25). She credited her teachers as why she is a good student. She shared:

> "My teachers…they have always been there for me to help me get through what I couldn't do…always be there. If I was stuck on a problem, they would help me

> get through that problem. They would take me step-by-step…building my foundation for me (Da *l*25-27)."

When asked how comfortable she felt in her school, Daisy reported that she felt "comfortable because you know you got people around…they are just caring" (Da *l*28). To identify one favorite subject proved difficult for Daisy, she shared, "I feel successfully in geography and Virginia Studies and math…and reading" (Da *l*28-29). The interviewer then asked Daisy to identify one subject and Daisy chose reading. She then shared:

> "Reading. I love reading and I'm really good at it. When I get into a book, I just can't put it down, you read every day, and if you couldn't read, you wouldn't get through the day. So I would really have to say reading because reading has really helped me (Da *l*31-34)."

Daisy mentioned that she has a "hard time in writing" (Da *l*30). She attributes the hard time to "I get my verbs and adjectives mixed up" (Da *l*30). Daisy described the way best by providing a science example:

> "I learn best in science class. Our science teacher draws pictures to help go through her mind to her remember it. That is how I like to do it. I like to draw pictures and have small captions for them (Da *l* 34-36)."

Daisy described a learning technique that has helped her organize her thinking in all content areas. She shared:

> "This might sound funny. So I sometimes to help me remember things...I pretend to have a small file cabinet in my brain. I open it up to whatever subject I am doing and I open it up, put my information in, and close it up. When I need it

for the SOL, all I have to do is open the file and get that information (Da *l*36-39)".

When asked by the interviewer when the described learning technique began, Daisy revealed:

"Well at the beginning of school year, my math teacher said it was going to be kinda hard and crazy since it was 5th grade, so I came up with this solution…filing cabinets. A filing cabinet has many drawers and lots of files where you could keep things safe in…so I decided to try that out. I did it and it has helped me a lot so far (Da *l* 39-42)".

Her ideal classroom would have "lots of books and papers to keep track of myself" (Da *l*43). Daisy would have "one comfortable spot in a corner…if you wanted to read a book you could sit down and be comfortable and enjoy" (Da *l*44-45). She recalled, "all my classrooms have had lots of books" (Da *l*45). Daisy described that one of her teachers has "lots of papers…kinda of a bad thing" (Da *l*46) because "you mix them up" (Da *l*46). Her solution, "if you write down a note and file it away it would be right there…you could remember everything and remember your notes" (Da *l*48-49).

When asked if she had a favorite teacher or staff member at her school, she shared:

"I always look forward to seeing all my teachers, when I come to school. I look forward to seeing my best friend. She makes my day most of the time (Da *l*50-51)". When asked if a specific teacher or staff member has helped, her become successful, Daisy named her Kindergarten teacher. She shared the following experience:

> "My kindergarten teacher [name omitted] taught me what I needed to know and she has always been there for me. She has told me a lot, like it does not matter who you are…you can become successful and believe in yourself. You can get as far as you want to go (Da *l*51-54)".

Daisy became emotional while sharing the experience above. When asked by the interviewer why she became emotional, she shared, "it touches my heart that she really cared" (Da *l*54). Daisy described her school and kindergarten teacher as "amazing" (Da *l*55). She elaborated, "she has always been there and she is just amazing and she has taught me a lot of things in Kindergarten" (Da *l*55-56).

Table 1-3
Data Matrix of Case #3- Daisy

Theme	**Category**	**Protective Factors**
Family	Mother Six Siblings	Support
Community	Daycare Longevity	Teachers and learning activities Familiarity
School Environment	Amazing "Comfortable" Friendships Favorite Teacher: Kindergarten	Teachers Lasting Friendships Organization: Filing cabinets Reading

Case#4: Bob the Builder

Bob was a ten-year old student attending the same school as Daisy. Bob recalls his time at the school, "I remember Kindergarten through Fifth grade, here" (Bob *l*15-16). He recalled an experience or situation when he became aware of his academic success was "around Second Grade when I was uhmm…successful doing my homework and being more successful than when I was in First Grade" (Bob *l*1-2).

Bob lived in a household with extended family to include two aunts, maternal grandparents and a young cousin. Bob's maternal grandparents are his legal guardians. Bob's mother lives out of state with her boyfriend and little sister. Bob referred to his mother's boyfriend as his "dad". Bob did not mention his biological father and the interviewer did not ask any probing questions. Bob recalled a time living out of the rural county, "when was I little itty bitty child, I lived in Colorado" (Bob *l* 14).

On the day that Bob was interviewed, he appeared excited as he sat in the school lobby awaiting the researcher. His maternal grandmother that participated in the pre-interview process accompanied him. The researcher was notified that his biological mother at the end of the interview that his biological mother would pick up Bob. The interview occurred at Bob's home-base school. Bob was quite talkative during the interview and answered the interview questions posed.

A number of themes arose from the analysis of transcription of Bob that address the question as to how an elementary school student living in rural poverty, such as Bob, can overcome the odds to be academically successful. Protective factors that were revealed were: his relationships with his family, friendships, learning styles; specifics traits and academic behaviors.

Family. Bob's extended family members all play a role in his academic success. Bob is the only school-aged child living in his home. His maternal grandparents are his legal guardian, and his grandmother is currently a school bus driver for the school division. He is a big brother to a sister that does not currently live in his home; however, he shares a bedroom with a cousin

that he "feels like a big brother to him" (Bob *l*6). Bob recalls that his mother lived in his home "around two years ago" (Bob *l*12).

When asked how his family members helped him in his elementary education, Bob shared:

> "They sometimes help me with my homework, they help me get through school like talking me into what I am doing, and helping me get through the things I am going to do (Bob *l* 6-8)."

Bob identified close relationships with adults outside of his family that have helped or influenced his elementary education. Bob shared:

> "Uhmm…my teachers help a lot. The help me get through school. They help me a lot, with getting the work done. Telling me what to do and how to do it (Bob *l* 8-9)."

Bob detailed how teachers help him as follows:

> "Like not Bob do this, but Bob this is what I need you to do, blah blah and this is how you do it and I think it's a good thing. Teachers give me the work and they help me learn stuff by being fun, showing videos, just helping me (Bob *l* 9-12)."

Bob acknowledged his participation in Cub Scouts as a help to his elementary education. He shared:

> "I have been in Boy Scouts for three years now. I love Boy Scouts. Helping me learn about stuff that is more efficient of the way I live, but not that you must live like this but helping on the ways that are better (Bob *1* 17-19)."

Bob shared that he received free meals at school around two years ago, "my mom lived in my house and she, we were poor and I received free lunches. I usually bring my lunch, now" (Bob *1* 12-13). The *Selection of Student Participation Protocol* completed by Bob's school principal indicated that Bob qualifies for free/reduced meals.

Community. Bob has lived in the rural county, "my whole life except when I was itty bitty child, I lived in Colorado" (Bob *l* 14). He has attended the same school since Kindergarten. Bob recalled moving at least twice, "I've lived in my house 3-4 years, and I lived in [town omitted] before that" (Bob *l* 16-17). When asked, to describe his rural county to someone moving here, Bob shared:

> "Uhmm… more clean than dirty, nice place lots of water to do sports, canoeing all that stuff. It's a good place to do a lot of stuff but on some occasions there are bad people. But I really encourage this school, I heard it's better than a few of the other schools" (Bob *l* 19-22).

Bob acknowledged by "Yes" (Bob *l* 22) that living in his rural county has been supportive to his academic success in elementary school, but could not explain why. When asked about his friendships, Bob shared:

> "Yes, I have friends. My friends are nice to me. In fact, one of my friends he's been my friend here for 3 years, he moved from [school name omitted]. He is my friend. I have really no complete idea why, we are really nice to each other" (Bob *l* 23-25).

Despite a brief disagreement, Bob described his continued friendship:

> "We were not really speaking to each other for a while and then we just kinda came together and started to talk and hang out and we became friends still. I am nice" (Bob *l* 25-26).

When asked in what ways has his friendships impacted his learning at school, Bob described:

> "If I have friends and then I would be able to educate more and they can help me. If I get a question wrong on my homework, they can help me get through. If I do something bad, and I get drowsy or whatever, they can help me" (Bob *l* 27-29).

Bob also described another friendship view:

> "In a bad way, they can play around and they can like, and be bad in some certain way like the can be mean to you and that could…well it makes me keep it on my mind and then it's in my mind and pushing it back it and fills in the empty spot. This has happened on some occasions" (Bob *l* 29-32).

School Environment. Bob described his K-5 elementary education, as "it's really good because with me being here, I'm use to the stuff I am learning because it's the same place" (Bob *l* 32-33). When asked what has helped him become a good student, Bob shared:

> "My education…well my family. They helped me and they helped me get through things that have been bad. My great-grandfather died about a month ago it was hard, they helped me" (Bob *1* 36-38).

Bob acknowledged his teachers, “I am smart cause of my teachers that has helped me get from Kindergarten to here because of my education, again” (Bob *l* 38-39). Bob feels “pretty comfortable” (Bob*l*39) in the elementary school that he has attended since Kindergarten. He explained, “I know mostly everybody that is here, now that I am in fifth grade” (Bob *l*39-40). He elaborated:

> “If a new person were to come in, we can help them, help them get through things. You can be a friend when they first come. Two weeks ago, we got a new student in our class [name omitted]. She is a nice girl” (Bob *l*40-42).

Bob’s favorite academic subject in fourth grade was science, but this school year is math and science. He explained:

> “Math helps science, more than science helps math because adding and subtracting and all that stuff and millimeters and milliliters and chemicals and you need to know how much to add” (Bob *l*43-44).

When asked how he learned best, Bob had the following viewpoint:

> “Well, you can do that boring stuff like teaching but as well as having fun. Teaching is as well as having fun can go together. So you can be doing the boring stuff in a fun way. Like teaching them without saying anything like blah blah blah, 7x7, and then you just keep going” (Bob *1*44-47).

Bob elaborated further:

> "Not doing anything fun like watching videos, just like telling them to do math problems, and how they have to do it. The teachers this year as well as last year, they really tried to have fun with the students as well as teach them. So they are really good, not like those boring teachers that say you gotta do this, do this, boring" (Bob *l*47-50).

Bob shared that he liked working in groups because "working with partners equal the activities to do" (Bob *l*50-51). He explained, "just doing the work without being able to talk to people is boring" (Bob *l*51-52). Bob's describes his ideal classroom as follows:

> "I would have my desk over in the corner; I would have desks of course, and then have the screen, the slide down screen, a couple of computers over in the other corner. I would probably have a thing for people to sit down and read, I would have a carpet in the middle, almost every class that I have been in has had a carpet in the middle where they could sit on" (Bob *l*52-56).

Bob's current writing class has his ideal classroom arrangement. He shared that writing is not his best subject; however, "I like writing as much as anything else" (Bob *l*62). When asked if he had a favorite teacher or staff member in his elementary school, he asked. "Can I have two?" (Bob *l*63). He named the school's assistant principal and his fourth grade teacher. Bob shared:

> "[Name omitted- Assistant Principal] and [name omitted-Fourth Grade Teacher]. Assistant Principal is really nice Assistant Principal. [Name omitted] is really nice like I said, and really smart, smarter than me. My fourth grade teacher last year would joke around. She wouldn't say anything major, she wouldn't say you are stupid and laugh about but she would mess around with us. She would try to have a good time, she was a really nice teacher and helped us with our education, she taught math" (Bob *l*64-68).

When asked to describe his school in one word, he chose "fun" (Bob *l*69). When asked is this the same word you would use to describe your favorite teacher, he simply stated "Yes" (Bob *l*69). When probed to elaborate why, Bob shared, "other than my teachers and my education there is not really anything else" (Bob *l* 71-72).

Table 1-4
Data Matrix of Case #4-Bob the Builder

Theme	**Category**	**Protective Factors**
Family	Maternal grandparents Aunts	Help me "Get through things"
Community	Cub Scouts Longevity	Life Skills and Survival Familiarity
School Environment	Fun "Pretty Comfortable" Friendships	Lasting Friendships Nice Teachers Working in groups

Case #5: Chloe J.

Chloe J. was an eleven-year old student attending the elementary school in the northeastern region of the school division. Her elementary school is located adjacent to one of the school division's middle schools. This school location allows students to *see* their next level of education following elementary school on a daily basis. The school community is close net with churches, a corner store and view of the bay in close proximity. Chloe began the interview with a question for the interviewer, "I want to become a teacher when I grow up, do I have to do what you doing?" (Ch *l*1). Chloe J recalled an experience when she became aware of her academic success as follows:

"When I first took my SOL test, I seen my grade and I was like wow, and I did not know I was going to get such good grades on my SOLs. Because at first I thought was going

to get…the max is 600 and I got around 400s…I thought was going to get around 200s…not pass in 3rd grade" (Ch *l*2-5).

Chloe J. lived in a household with her mother, stepfather, older brother, two younger brothers and one younger sister, ranging in ages from 12 years old to 1 year's old. Her older brother is in middle school, and another brother is in 3rd grade at the same school. Her two younger siblings do not currently attend school.

On the day of the interview, Chloe J. appeared calm and greeted the interviewer with a smile. Her mother escorted Chloe J. to the interview. The interview occurred at Chloe J.'s home-base school in the conference room. During the interview, Chloe J. answered the questions posed by the interview; and even asked the first question of the interview.

A number of themes arose from the analysis of the transcription of Chloe J. that address the question as to how an elementary student living in rural poverty, such as Chloe J., can overcome the odds to be academically successful. Protective factors that were revealed were: her relationship with her mother, teachers and friends; school environment, specific personality traits and academic behaviors.

Family. Chloe J. lives in a household with along with her mother, stepfather, and four siblings. Chloe mentioned her biological father when responding to a question related to her time living in the rural county. She referenced that her biological father was in the Army. The interviewer did not ask any probing questions. When asked if her parents or any other family member helped in her elementary education, Chloe J. recalled a time when her mother helped her with schoolwork:

> "When I think it was a couple of weeks ago, I was working on my work and I didn't get it, I asked the teacher about it and I still didn't get it. I asked my mom and she taught me how to break it down and figure it out the easier way…it was mathematics" (Ch *l*7-10).

The interviewer then asked if her mother was her primary person to help her homework, Chloe J. responded, "Yes, if she doesn't get it…I go to my dad" (Ch *l* 11). When asked, Chloe J. could not describe any close relationships with adults outside of her family that helped in her elementary education, and therefore, could describe any influence on her elementary education. Her response to both questions was "No, not really" (Ch *l* 11). The interviewer then asked, if she attended church in the community, she responded, "Yes, sometimes with my grandfather" (Ch *l* 12). When asked if she had received free or reduced meals at school, Chloe J. recalled, "we have been having free meals since I was in Preschool…I bring money for snacks" (Ch *l* 12-13).

Community. Chloe J. has lived in her current house since she was six-years old and could not recall exactly how long she has lived in the rural county. She explained:

> "I don't know how long…I have been living in [omitted county name] because we have been moving a lot since I was young. My mom and dad…I mean my other dad…was in the Army. Once I remember my mom telling me we lived in New York and moved to North Carolina and to Texas and all over the world…I was a baby" (Ch *l*14-17).

When asked to describe her community to someone that was going to move there, she shared:

> "I think I would say it is a really nice place and there are nice people here and you would really like it here and you'll love to go to this school" (Ch *l*17-18).

When asked how living in the rural community has helped or been supportive to her academic success in elementary school, Chloe J. responded, "Well, what do you mean by that?" (Ch *l*19). The interviewer then asked a probing question, "Do you feel like living in this area with nice people has helped you academically? Chloe J. then responded:

> "I think I am good student here, once my mom met a girl…her and my mom are really good friends. I just noticed I'm going to school with her daughter. She did not get the homework that we had…her mom said I could come over to help her with the homework" (Ch *l*20-22).

Chloe J. considered herself to have friends even a best friend since 2nd grade. The following dialogue occurred:

Interviewer: Why is this person your friend?

Chloe J.: "She knows the real me" (Ch *l*24).

Interviewer: Can you tell me who is the real you?

Chloe J: "Well, I am really a nice person and I have a great personality, I can make people laugh a lot" (Ch *l*24-25).

When asked how her friendships impacted her learning at school, Chloe J. shared:

> "Yes, positively because whenever I am mad or sad, I can't concentrate on one thing and my friends cheer me up so I can just concentrate.

Chloe J. explained a time when she was sad and her friends helped:

> "Like last year, I was sad because someone was bullying me and my friends told me… had a talk with me and told me to ignore that person. Whenever someone says something mean to you, just walk away" (Ch *l*29-31).

School Environment. Chloe J. described her K-5 elementary schooling, as "really fun because I gained new friends each year…I had really, really nice teachers too" (Ch *l*31-32). Chloe J. credited her teachers as helping her become a good student, she explained:

> "My teachers because they are really helpful like if I can't get a problem, and I get it wrong on a test…they call me back and help me with that" (Ch *l*32-34).

When asked how comfortable she feels in her elementary school, Chloe J. revealed, "since I have been here like since Preschool, I feel really comfortable" (Ch *l*34). Chloe identified her favorite academic subject as art class, "I like to draw and paint" (Ch *l*37-38). When probed by the interviewer to choose an academic subject, Chloe responded, "I think it would be writing" (Ch *l*39). Chloe elaborated, "Cause I like writing stories…right now we are writing a story…I am writing mine about a field trip on a bus…a bus made for kids…the bus has to be wacky…to Busch Gardens" (Ch *l*39-41).

Chloe described the way she learns best as follows:

> "I want a teacher to give a few lessons…then a test. I want 5-10 lessons then the test…so you are built up and ready! Like 2-3 lessons then a test…wrong way. We do groups for games and when it's time to study, we do the whole class. Sometimes, I work to pop music, my favorite is Christmas music. Yea, we play around the class, there are task

> cards around the classroom…we answer on a sheet of paper, [omitted teacher's name] plays music" (Ch *l*42-47).

When asked to describe her ideal learning classroom, Chloe responded, "This is going to be kinda wacky" (Ch *l*47). She elaborated:

> "So around the classroom, I'm planning on having an art clss. Around the classroom, I will have wreaths made out of crayons, markers and scissors. Instead of chairs, I will have beanbags and my teacher's desk will not be full of paperwork and that kind of stuff instead of drawings on papers…they will do little art figures with marshmallows and t toothpicks. I'm going to have individual desks…I'll be sitting on a beanbag chair too…a big beanbag" (Ch *l*47-51).

Chloe J. identified two school settings that had some of the characteristics of her ideal classroom, "like the first start of school, we had bouncy balls in the library" (Ch *l*52) and "in the regular classroom, we have individual desks" (Ch *l*52-53). When asked if she had a favorite teacher or staff member at school. Chloe J. responded, "I really liked my 3rd grade teacher, [omitted teacher name]" (Ch *l*53). She recalled the following experience:

> "She was really fun, and whenever we didn't get it…she would put it to song. It was in history, the rhythm was Miley Cyrus, and I can't remember…the old Miley Cyrus. I remember the Columbus went on a ship song. Whenever I didn't get it, she would pull me back, and if I still didn't get it, after recess we would have a talk about it. Once we get to a problem I didn't get, she would call on me and say remember the song" (Ch *l*53-57).

When asked to describe her elementary school in one word, Chloe J., responded, "helpful" (Ch *l*58). When asked if this is the same word, she would use to describe her favorite teacher, she responded, "kind and helpful" (Ch *l*58). Chloe J. shared, "helpful because she taught me everything I needed to know and build me up until I got it and she put in a little challenges" (Ch *l*58-60).

Table 1-5
Data Matrix of Case #5-Chloe J.

Theme	Category	Protective Factors
Family	Mother and Step-father Four Siblings Grandfather	Support "Break it down"
Community	No involvement Longevity	Familiarity Church-sometimes
School Environment	Helpful "Pretty Comfortable" Friendships Favorite Teacher: Third Grade	Teachers Lasting Friendships Putting Lessons to Music

Case #6: T-Man

T-Man was a ten-year old student attending the same school as Chloe J., which is located in the northeastern region of the rural school division. He recalled an experience or situation when he became aware of his academic success as "when there was finally one question left on the SOL test" (Tm *l*1). He shared, "I think I was in 4th grade, the 4th grade was a pain, but I got through the SOLs" (Tm *l*1-2).

T-Man lived in a household with his father. He mentioned that his biological mother lives at a friend's house in a bordering locality. T-Man mentioned that his paternal grandpa who is the landlord and lives on the property in a separate home owns his home. He described the close proximity of his paternal grandfather's home to his as "about 10 hops away" (Tm *l*5). T-Man did

not mention any siblings or any other details regarding his mother, and the interviewer did not ask any probing questions.

His father escorted T-Man to the interview session. The interview occurred at T-Man's home-base school in the conference room. T-Man appeared nervous while waiting in the main office for the interview to begin. During the course of the interview session, T-Man answered the questions posed succinctly with not much detail unless furthered prompted by the interviewer.

A number of themes arose from the analysis of transcription of T-Man that address the question as to how an elementary student living in rural poverty, such as T-Man, can overcome the odds to be academically successful. Protective factors that were revealed were: his relationships with father and paternal grandfather, friendships and interest, specific personality traits and academic behaviors.

Family. T-Man lived with his father on property owned by his paternal grandfather. T-Man did not mention how long he has lived with just his father, and the interviewer did not ask any probing questions. T-Man divulged that his biological mother lived in a bordering locality at a friend's home. According to the *Selection of Student Participation Protocol*, completed by the home-base principal, T-Man's father has sole legal custody. T-Man did not mention any siblings or any other family members other than his father and paternal grandfather. When asked how his parents or any other family member has helped in his elementary education, T-Man began to share a teacher experience. The interviewer allowed for him to finish his thought, and then asked, Does your dad or grandpa help you with school? T-Man responded:

> "Yea, my dad helped me once when I didn't understand this question and it took us some time to figure it out, but we figured it out" (Tm *l*9-10).

The interviewer then asked, if dad helps with your homework? T-Man shared, "well, only if I really need help" (Tm *l*11). When asked to describe any close relationships with adults outside of his family that supports his elementary education and the influence these adults may have had on his elementary education, his response to both questions were "None" (Tm *1*12). T-Man could not recall if he received free meals while at school, "my dad has this account" (Tm *l*12-13). According to the *Selection of Student Participant Protocol*, the principal indicated that T-Man is eligible for free meals at school.

Community. T-Man has lived in his current home since two-years old, "I don't know past two-years old" (Tm *l*13). He has attended the same elementary school since Kindergarten. When asked to describe the community to someone that was going to move there, he described it as "rural…covered with trees. Lots of dirt. I live on a backroad…I can't think of anything else to say" (Tm *l*16). When probed by the interviewer if this a good place or bad place, T-Man responded, "Good place" (Tm *l*17). When asked to describe any ways in which living in the rural county has helped or supported his academic success in elementary school, his response was, "Uhmm…I don't think so… I think you can do it anywhere, city or rural" (Tm *l*17-18)

T-Man has lived in the rural community since two-years old, yet when questioned by the interviewer about his community, he did not elaborate. T-Man considered himself to have friends when asked, "Yep, more than one friend" (Tm *l*18). When asked why they are his friends, T-Man elaborated:

> "I've been around them along time because in this school, it's usually whoever you've been with last year, the chances are you know them, they will be in the same class or a class close to yours. Most of my friends have the same interest" (Tm *l*19-21).

The interviewer then asked, what are your interests? T-Man shared, "Uhmm…we like the same games, video games outside games like football" (Tm *l*22). T-Man shared that his friendships do not impact his learning, his response, Uhmm…not really" (Tm *l*22).

School Environment. T-Man described his K-5 elementary schooling as "uhmm… nice, nice people" (Tm *1*23). When asked what has helped him become a good student, he simply stated, "getting work done" (Tm *l*23). T-Man shared that he feels "pretty comfortable" (Tm *l*23) in the school he has attended since Kindergarten. He shared that science was his favorite subject. When asked, why science. T-Man shared, "I just like science" (Tm *l*24). When asked, in which ways he learns best, T-Man explained, "uhmm…show me and tell me. Don't just tell me" (Tm*l*25-26). His ideal classroom would "be the same as a normal classroom, desks, chairs, blackboard, a teacher, a teacher's desk and teaching materials" (Tm *l*26-28). When asked if any of his classrooms look like his ideal classroom, T-Man stated, "Uhhh…yes" (Tm *l*28).

T-Man responded, "no, not really" (Tm *l*28) when asked to identify a favorite teacher or staff member. He did share, "I like [teacher name omitted] Science Teacher, but not my favorite" (Tm *l*29-30). T-Man described his school as "fun" (Tm *l*30). Since T-Man did not identify a favorite teacher or staff member, the interviewer asked, what makes your school fun? T-Man responded, "uhmm… most of the time, the teachers make it fun to do the work" (Tm *l*31).

Table 1-6
Data Matrix of Case #6-T-Man

Theme	Category	Protective Factors
Family	Father	Support
	Paternal Grandfather	
Community	No Involvement	Familiarity
	Longevity	

School Environment	Fun "Pretty Comfortable" Favorite Teacher: No	Friendships Show me and tell me Science

Case #7: Autumn

Autumn was a ten-year old student attending the 2nd largest elementary school in the school division. The elementary school is located in the rural county's business district. The school's location is centrally located for shopping, restaurants and county resources. Autumn recalled an experience or situation when she became aware of her academic success as:

> "Well, uhmm…throughout the school years I have always been good. I have a lot of brothers and I did not get discipline referrals or stuff. I made Honor Roll, 2nd Quarter of fifth grade and got good grades" (Au *l*1-2).

Autumn lived in a household with her mother, step-dad (her mother's current boyfriend), and four brothers. Her siblings' ages range from eleven-years old to one-years old. She also shared that she has an eighteen-year old brother that lives outside of the home. There is also a roommate living in the home that is not related to the family. Autumn has recently moved to the rural county from another rural locality approximately 50 miles away. Autumn moved to the rural county about six months ago after a two-month stay in a local homeless shelter while attending school in the current school division.

On the day that Autumn was interviewed, she appeared anxious to begin the interview session. Her maternal grandmother escorted her to the interview session due to her current living arrangement for the summer vacation. The interviewed occurred at a local restaurant in close proximity to the interviewee and interviewer.

A number of themes arose from the analysis of transcription of Autumn that address question as to how an elementary student living in rural poverty, such as Autumn, can overcome the odds to be academically successful. Protective factors that were revealed were: her relationship with her mother and extended family, friendships, learning strategies, and teachers; specific personality traits and academic behaviors.

Family. Autumn lived in a household along with her mother, her boyfriend that she refers to as step-dad, four brothers, and her mom's roommate that is unrelated to the family. Autumn shared that she has an eighteen-year old brother that lives outside of the home. Autumn did not mention her biological father and the interviewer did not ask any probing questions. When asked how her mother or any other family member has helped her elementary education, she shared:

> "My nana and papa, and aunt help me study and buy my school supplies. My mom in the afternoons, ask me about my day and encourage me to do good in school" (Au *l*5-7).

Autumn indicated a close relationship with her mother's friend, "she helps me on Fridays with study notes and extra notes to study…her daughter is my friend and she is in middle school" (Au *l*7-8). Autumn currently is not involved in any extracurricular activities in the rural county; however, she recalled, "I was a cheerleader in [rural county named omitted] a year ago" (Au *l*9-10). When asked if she had ever received free or reduced meals at school, Autumn responded, "Yes, I always get free meals in school" (Au *l*12).

Community. Autumn has lived in the rural county for six months, she shared, "I move a lot" (Au *l*12). Prior to moving to this rural county, she lived a rural locality 50 miles away for four years. She has attended three elementary schools during her fifth grade school year. Autumn shared that she "always moved back to [rural locality name omitted]" (Au *l*13). When asked to

describe the community to someone moving there, she described it as "really beautiful landscape, kind people, friendly neighborhoods, good school…really good school" (Au *l*13-14). When asked to describe any ways in which living in the rural county has helped or has been supportive to her elementary education, she shared, "I know different schools have different views, but I learned something new at each of my new schools" (Au *l*15-16).

Autumn considered herself to have friends, which she describes as "all five friends are kinda alike…hangout at lunch, same point of view…favorite subjects" (Au *l*16-17). She acknowledged that her friendships impact her learning at school by "yes, they give me helpful hints…like studying something new to learn it better and understand" (Au *l*17-18).

School Environment. Autumn described her K-5 elementary schooling, she explained:

> "Uhmm… fun, especially 3rd-5th grades, experimental with a lot of things and did not expect to succeed. I worried a lot about SOLs, but passed. I was paranoid and did not think I was doing well. I overcome what I did not think I could achieve" (Au *l*18-20).

When asked what has helped her become a good student, Autumn responded:

> "Uhmm…I have a lot of good influences that are really good. I know my limits. I am kinda of quiet…I stay with my friends…good influences…tell me good things…not trying to do bad things" (Au *l*20-22).

Autumn mentioned that she "ran into problems" (Au *l*22) at the school she attended for 4 months. She recalled, "I felt depressed and some kids were not nice. I was bullied" (Au *l*22-23). Autumn shared that once she transferred to another school in the rural school division, she "felt

good about myself" (Au *l*23). She described her new school as "nice and welcome…could achieve more" (Au *l*24).

Autumn's favorite academic subjects are science and reading because "get good grades in it" (Au *l*25). When asked, in what ways do you learn best, she explained:

> "Uhmm…I like using the Internet, a lot of websites to learn from. I write notes to study from. Use study packets work a couple of problems and study over it each night. The teachers give the study packets" (Au *l*25-27).

She elaborated:

> "Uhmm…encourage students to their best…give them something to daily. On Fridays give a study packet to study over the weekend, if they struggle over it in class, make it fun but educational. Have games to help them learn" (Au *l*27-29).

When asked to describe her ideal classroom, Autumn described:

> "Each student will have their own space…less drama. A teacher helper and teacher...certain tables like A, B, C, etc. for small groups. Encouraging posters like You can do it! Animal posters with inspirational quotes, a TV in the corner for free time, and desks spread out so they don't talk to each other (Au *l*30-34).

Autumn shared that two of her current fifth grade classrooms look like her ideal classroom, "seats are spread out and inspirational posters" (Au *l*33-34). When asked if she had a favorite teacher or staff member in her elementary school, she named two of her current 5th grade teachers. She explained:

> "They all taught me tricks, showed me easy ways and ideas. They are inspiration and nice. They understand what I really did not know. Get 5, 100% on Successmaker and get a piece of candy. I like candy" (Au *l*36-37).

When asked to describe her elementary school in one word, she chose "okay" (Au *l*38) for the elementary school she attended for the 1st four months of her 5th grade school year, and " intelligent" (Au *l*38) for the elementary school, she attended the last 6 months of the 5th grade school year. Autumn would describe her favorite teachers as intelligent for the following reason, "Yes, they were all kind and bright…they all had their ways of teaching and getting people to learn. They were there when I needed them" (Au *l*38-39).

Table 1-7
Data Matrix of Case #7-Autumn

Theme	Category	Protective Factors
Family	Mother Maternal Grandparents Aunt	Encouragement Support
Community	No involvement 10 months	
School Environment	Okay* Bullied* Welcoming Favorite Teachers: Reading/Mathematics	Friendships Teachers Support Inspirational messages

Note: * First 4 months in school division

Case #8: Beast Mode

Beast Mode was an eleven-year old student attending the same school as Autumn. Beast Mode and Autumn are brother and sister, but not twins. Beast Mode was retained in Kindergarten according to the *Selection of Student Participant Protocol* completed by the home-

base principal. Beast Mode attended the 2nd largest school in the rural school division. He recalled an experience or situation when became aware of his academic success:

> "Because I didn't get in trouble, I got compliments from teachers. Probably would say, 3rd grade because I passed my SOL tests. Let's say 2nd grade and up, I got compliments from teachers" (Bea *l*1-2).

Beast Mode lived in a household with his mother, sister and three younger brothers. His siblings' ages range from ten- years of age to one-years old. Beast Mode mentioned that his mother also has a boyfriend and roommate that live in the home. Beast Mode has recently moved to the rural county about six months ago with his family from another rural locality located approximately 50 miles away. Beast Mode has lived in the rural county for about six months, two months of which were in a local homeless shelter while attending school in the current school division.

On the day that Beast Mode was interviewed, he appeared uneasy about this interview process. His maternal grandmother escorted him to the interview session. The maternal grandmother shared with the researcher it may be difficult to get him to talk. The interviewed occurred at a local restaurant in close proximity to the interviewee and interviewer.

A number of themes arose from the analysis of transcription of Beast Mode that address question as to how an elementary student living in rural poverty, such as Beast Mode can overcome the odds to be academically successful. Protective factors that were revealed were: his relationship with his extended family, and teachers, friendships, learning strategies; specific personality traits and academic behaviors..

Family. Beast Mode lived in a household along with his mother, her boyfriend, three younger brothers, one younger sister and his mom's roommate that is unrelated to the family. Beast Mode did not mention his biological father and the interviewer did not ask any probing questions. When asked how his mother or any other family member has helped his elementary education, he shared, "my nana and papa and aunt help me with homework, they live in [rural county name omitted]" (Bea *l*3).

Due to the recent move to the rural county, Beast Mode could not identify any close relationships with adults outside of his family. However, he shared two close relationships with adults outside of his family in his previous rural locality:

> "My speech teacher helped me when I didn't understand something. Boys and Girls Club in [rural locality name omitted]. Speech teacher was good and stuff. I'm not in speech anymore" (Bea *l*4-5).

When asked if he had ever received free or reduced meals at school, Beast Mode responded, "Yes, free lunch since preschool" (Bea *l*5-6).

Community. Beast Mode has lived in the rural county for six months, he shared, "[Rural locality named omitted] moved back and forth from preschool to 5th grade" (Bea *l*6). Prior to moving to this rural county, he lived a rural locality 50 miles away for four years. He has attended three elementary schools during his fifth grade school year. Beast Mode shared, "I've been in [rural county name omitted] since November and have been to two schools already" (Bea l6-7). When asked to describe the community to someone moving there, he shared, "I told my cousin it was a nice place with good schools" (Bea *l*8). Beast Mode shared that since living in this rural county, he has been "less stressful" (Bea *l*9) in regards to his elementary education.

When asked about whether he had friends at school, his response was "I have plenty of friends" (Bea *l*9). When asked why they were his friends, he shared, "well, good personality and cool" (Bea *l*10). Beast Mode did not elaborate on ways his friendships impact learning, his response to the question was, "couple times, not sure" (Bea *l*10).

School Environment. Beast Mode described his K-5 elementary schooling, as "it was good and helpful" (Bea *l*10-11). When asked what has helped him become a good student, Beast Mode shared, "Well, probably being here with my nana…helping others work, where you grew up at" (Bea *l*11-12). He recalled feeling "pretty good" (Bea *l*12) at his previous elementary school. When asked to describe his comfort level at his current elementary school, he shared, "I got picked on for a while" (Bea *l*12).

He identified his favorite academic subject as science because "learning about animal life is not too hard" (Bea *l*13-14). When asked to describe in what ways he learned best, his response was "I learn through the teacher…teaching" (Bea *l*14). When further probed to give some examples, Beast Mode response was "I don't know" (Bea *l*14). Beast Mode response to describe his ideal classroom was "uhmm…not sure. I guess desks in a row, computers" (Bea *l*14-15). The interviewer then asked, the participant if he prefer individual work at his desk or group work? His response was "I like doing group work to get help from friends" (Bea *l*15-16). When asked if any of classrooms looked like his ideal classroom, his response was "Yep" (Bea *l*16).

When asked if he had a favorite teacher or staff member in his school, his response, "Yes, [teacher name omitted], she was really nice…do nice things and activities" (Bea *l*19). When probed to give examples of the nice things and activities, he responded "No, not really" (Bea

*l*20). Beast Mode's response to how has the teacher help you become successful, "Probably, yes" (Bea *l*20).

Beast Mode described the school he had attended for the 1st four months of his 5th grade school year in one word as " good" (Bea *l*21) and " brilliant" (Bea *l*21) for the elementary school, he attended the last 6 months of the 5th grade school year. When asked if brilliant would describe his favorite teacher, he responded, "No, [teacher name omitted], she was very nice and helpful. Not too much work (he laughed). We read chapters, then stop and described in homework" (Bea *l*23-24).

Table 1-8
Data Matrix of Case #8-Beast Mode

Theme	Category	Protective Factors
Family	Maternal Grandparents	Help
	Aunt	Support
Community	No Involvement	
School Environment	Good	Teachers
	Bullied*	Friendships
	Favorite Teacher: Science	Subject Content

Note: * First 4 months in school division

Case #9- Challenge

Challenge was a ten-year old student attending the largest student populated elementary school in the school division and the school assigned to the researcher. When asked to recall an experience or situation when she became aware of her academic success, she shared "I was in the "Great Computer Challenge in 3rd grade. I could work with computers and my brain" (Ch*l*1).

Challenge lived in a household with her mother, older sister and younger brother. She did not mention a father or male figure living in the home, and the interviewer did not ask any probing questions. The interviewer is knowledgeable that Challenge and her family have frequently lived with the maternal grandparents at times. Challenge was "born here" (Ch*l*5) in the rural county and lived in the same house until 2010, "lived there until the tornado" (Ch*l*5). Since the tornado damaged her home, she shared, "I've moved three times" (Ch*l*5-6).

Her mother escorted Challenge to the interview session. The interview occurred at the home-base school afterschool hours. Challenge appeared nervous on the onset of the interview process about meeting with the researcher. During the course of the interview, she spoke quickly and appeared anxious to complete the interview session.

A number of themes arose from the analysis of transcription of Challenge that address the question as to how an elementary student living in rural poverty, such as Challenge, can overcome the odds to be academically successful. Protective factors that were revealed were: her relationship with her sister and school friends; sport participation, specific personality traits and academic behaviors.

Family. Challenge shared "my sister bribes me with playing the XBOX for me to get good grades" (Ch*l*2-3). Challenge has lived in the rural county all her life with her mother, older sister in middle school and younger brother in preschool. Challenge currently resides in a home with her immediate family; however, her family has lived with her maternal grandparents over her elementary education. Challenge did not mention her father or any male figure prevalent her life. When asked how her mother or any family member has impacted her elementary education,

she shared, “They remind me to get good grades so I can go to a good college and get a good job” (Ch*l*2-3).

Challenge participated in the local Parks and Recreation, soccer program. She shared, “[coach name omitted] makes us run and do math problems” (Ch*l*3-4). Challenge stated that if she did not get good grades her mom would not allow her to play soccer. When asked how the coach influenced her elementary education, her response, “I guess doing the math problems” (Ch*l*4). Challenge shared that she has received “reduced meals since in school” (Ch*l*5).

Community. Challenge shared that she was “born here” in the rural county. Challenge mentioned, “My first house was destroyed in the tornado in 2010. I lived there until the tornado. I moved three times” (Ch*l*5-6). Due to being displaced by a close of an elementary school in the school division, Challenge has attended two elementary schools during her elementary school years. When asked to describe the community to someone moving here, she shared, “Little fun…most of the time depends on the school. Weird people. It’s boring for me because I don’t live near other kids…no one to play with” (Ch*l*6-7). When asked how living in this rural community has helped or been supportive to her academic success in elementary school, she shared an experience involving her sister, “sometimes when I go to different places and read signs, my sister helps me…I use to have speech problems…not anymore” (Ch*l*7-8).

When asked if she had friends, Challenge responded, “Yes. I don’t know…I think I am a weird person. I do weird things, weird voices for fun…to make people laugh” (Ch*l*8-9). Challenge revealed the impact of her friendships on her elementary education as “Friends…a lot of people…smart friends…funny friends…we are usually together…there for each other” (Ch*l*9-10).

School Environment. When asked to describe her K-5 elementary school, Challenge shared a feeling about her previous elementary school before it closed, "I was use to the staff at [school name omitted]. It was somewhere everyone wanted to be around" (Ch*l*10-11). Challenge responded, "I don't know, I don't study" (Ch*l*11) when asked what has helped her become a good student. She also stated, "It comes naturally" (Ch*l*12). Challenge mentioned that she felt "very comfortable…all my friends support me…pretty sure I won't fail" (Ch*l*12-13).

Challenge's favorite academic subjects are math and reading. She explains, "Reading is easy. You got the way…to understand numbers instead of words" (Ch*l*13-14). She described her learning style as "Visual…looking at it. Teachers explain, watching someone, video or powerpoint" (Ch*l*14-15). Challenge's ideal classroom would have "a bunch of stuff…bean bags, desks, posters….colorful things" (Ch*l*15-16). When asked if any of her elementary school classrooms looked like this, she responded, "Yes, [teacher name omitted] my reading teacher" (Ch*l*16).

Challenge identified her 2nd grade teacher as her favorite teacher in elementary school. When asked how the teacher helped her become successful, she shared, "She always kept me busy, pushed me to succeed…felt good learning in her class" (Ch*l*16-17). When asked to describe her elementary school in one word, she chose, "fun" (Ch*l*18). Challenge shared she would you use the same word to describe her favorite 2nd grade teacher because "she always had fun things for us to do…penguins, thermometers, checking temperatures in science class" (Ch*l*18-19).

Table 1-9
Data Matrix of Case #9- Challenge

Theme	Category	Protective Factors
Family	Mother	Support

	Sister	
Community	Parks and Recreation Longevity	Sports-Soccer Familiarity
School Environment	Fun "Comfortable" Visual Learner Favorite Teacher: Second Grade	Teachers Friendships Challenge Good memory

Case #10: Percy Jackson

Percy Jackson was a ten-year-old student attending the same school as Challenge, which is the largest student populated elementary school in the school division. He recalled an experience or situation when he became aware of his academic success was "uhmm… when I had a parent-teacher conference and the teachers kept complimenting me, telling me how I was a great student…I was in 5th grade" (Pj*l*1-2). The interviewer then asked, so you didn't think you were a good student until 5th grade? He responded, "pretty much" (Pj*l*3).

Percy Jackson lived in a household to include his mother, his other-mom (his mother's girlfriend), and his five sisters and younger brother. His siblings' ages range from sixteen years old to 5-months old. Percy Jackson did not mention a father or male figure living in the home and the interviewer did not ask any probing questions regarding a possible male figure in the home. Due to the student's attendance at the home school of the interviewer, she is knowledgeable that his parents are either separated or divorced.

His mother escorted Percy Jackson to the interview session. The interview occurred at Percy Jackson's home- base school. Percy Jackson appeared comfortable and ready for the interview to begin. The interviewer provided chocolate candy that appeared to make him more relaxed.

A number of themes arose from the analysis of the transcription of Percy Jackson that address the question as to how an elementary student living in rural poverty, such as Percy Jackson, can overcome the odds to be academically successful. Protective factors that were revealed were: his relationships with his mother and sisters, school friendships; specific personality and academic behaviors.

Family. Percy Jackson lives with his six siblings and "my mom…two moms" (Pj*l*6). His siblings' ages range from sixteen years old to five-months old. He is the oldest son. Percy Jackson credits his three older sisters for helping with his elementary education, "they help me... tell me and give me little hints on what to do and I figure out the rest" (Pj*l*7-8). Percy Jackson did not indicate a close relationship with adults outside of his family that helped his elementary education. The interviewer asked, Don't you play sports? He responded, "Yea, but they have not helped…not really" (Pj*l*8-9). The interviewer then asked, You played football for this team, but don't believe the coaches have helped with your elementary education? His response, "Not really...none" (Pj*l*10). When asked if he had received free or reduced meals at school, he responded, "The whole time I have been here for six years." (Pj*l*10-11).

Community. Percy Jackson has lived in the rural county since being a baby, yet shared that he lived in Colorado as a baby, "I really didn't go to school in Colorado, you have to wait to be nine before you go to Kindergarten there" (Pj*l*40-41). Percy recalls living in his current home for "seven years, I turned 5 years old when we first bought our house" (Pj*l*11). When asked to describe the community for someone moving here, he described:

"It gets kind of creepy at night. Fun, a lot of fun things to do in the winter, big fields for snowball fights and playing football and baseball…lots of sports" (Pj*l*12-14).

He elaborated on the nighttime in his community:

> "It gets really creepy at night because my mom always calls the cops when she sitting in the window trying to get the baby back to sleep and she sees one of our neighbors walking around with a pistol in his pocket and they get in fights and pull out guns on each other. I have heard gunshots and ambulance sirens" (Pj*l*14-17).

Percy Jackson shared a situation that occurred near his home:

> "We had a neighbor and she moved and there house was abandon. It was a pretty nice house but somebody was in there checking out to see if they wanted to buy it, but when they got in the house, they were smoking, and fell through the floor. The cigarette fell and caught the house of fire…two houses away. Lots of dangerous stuff" (Pj*l*17-20).

When asked how living in this rural community has helped or supported his academic success in elementary school, his response, "Not really" (Pj*l*21). Percy Jackson considers himself to have friends and knows why. He identified "[name omitted] friend since I moved here and [name omitted] pretty much is the only friend I have in my neighborhood, and he is also my cousin" (Pj*l*27-29). He elaborated:

> "There the only people that really understand how I feel and they don't make fun of me and they know I won't make fun of them if they get in trouble if other students taunt them about it, they know I won't laugh at them. I know they won't laugh at me, that is pretty much it and I know where they both live (Pj*l*29-32).

School Environment. When asked to describe his K-5 elementary school, Percy Jackson shared "it was really fun and really an improvement to my learning" (Pj*l*38-39). He attributed that his "teachers and all my friends throughout the years" (Pj*l*39) helped him become a good student. Percy Jackson reported that he felt "very comfortable" (Pj*l*40) in the elementary that he has attended since Kindergarten. When asked to give an example on what being very comfortable would look like? He described:

> "Like all the new kids are really shy and shy to ask people for help because they don't know what to do or where to go. People can tell we are comfortable here because we know where everything is, don't look nervous walking around the halls" (Pj*l*44-47).

Percy Jackson shared that his favorite academic subjects were reading and math. He explains:

> "I would have to say reading and math; those are the subjects that are easiest to me. I love reading books and I have a lot of sisters to remind me to work on my math problems, all summer long" (Pj*l*47-49).

When asked how he learned best, Percy Jackson's initial response, "I don't know" (Pj*l*49). The researcher then asked, do you learn best by hearing the teacher talk or doing stuff, his response, "doing stuff" (Pj*l*50). Percy Jackson's ideal classroom was described as followed:

> "Just roomy enough, a bunch of desks arranged in different orders, a couple of rugs to be in there. The desks would be in a U-shape, so there is nobody sitting in front of everybody, trying to move around to see. A comfy spot to read, maybe a bean bag or two" (Pj*l*50-52).

Percy Jackson shared, "the U-shape is math and the comfy spot is reading" (Pj*l*53). He identified his favorite teacher as his 5th grade reading teacher. He explained:

> "If you want help, she will help you. If you have not clipped up in a long-time, and she sees that you are trying, she will clip you up. If you are still trying to clip up, she will clip you up and let you pick out of her treasure box. And she always gets us good books to read, especially the big books" (Pj*l*58-61).

When asked how his favorite teacher has helped him become successful, Percy Jackson shared:

> "She gives us plenty of time to read and do our work. Even the slowest workers have time to finish. She gives us activities that have to do with the book she reads. Like main idea, supporting details and all kinds of stuff" (Pj*l*61-63).

Percy Jackson described his elementary school as "awesome" (Pj*l*63). He described his favorite teacher as awesome. He explained:

> "Yes, because she never holds away fun Friday, if she sees that you have been trying to do all you work. If you haven't been there for the first few days, she won't hold you accountable for it" (Pj*l*63-65).

Table 1-10
Data Matrix of Case #10-Percy Jackson

Theme	Category	Protective Factors
Family	Six Siblings	Support
	Three older sisters	Help with schoolwork
Community	Parks and Recreation	Sports-Football
	Longevity	Familiarity

School Environment	Awesome	Teachers
	"Pretty Comfortable"	Friendships
	Doing Stuff	Reading
	Favorite Teacher: Fifth Grade	Learning Activities

Themes that arose from Participants' Responses

The purpose of the interviews were to reveal the self-identified protective factors of the ten fifth grade students through their reflection of their K-5 elementary education. To address Research Question One, participants' answered twenty-one questions in relation to their academic success based on family, community and school environments. Through the participants' responses, self-identified protective factors were revealed in family, community and school environments.

Research Question 2: What are the similarities and differences in protective factors among these purposefully selected students?

Four overarching themes arose from the interviews that address Research Question Two: (1) relationships with extended family, which include grandparents, aunts and uncles; (2) longevity in the community; (3) friendships; (4) identification of a favorite teacher and content area of interest.

Relationships with Extended Family, which include grandparents, aunts and uncles

There were many references by the participants of their relationships with extended family members, which contributed to academic success in elementary school. These references include being supporters, encouragers, and helpers. These references are contained in the participants' reflections shared below.

Believe's paternal grandparents have been her legal guardian since the age of 3 months old. She acknowledged her paternal grandmother and brothers as helpful to her elementary education. Believe shared:

> "Sometimes when I don't understand my homework, my grandmother helps with it, sometimes my brother helps me with my word study. He says the word and I spell it" Every week, I have a word study or vocabulary quiz…any brother I choose helps me" (Be*l*4-6).

Cleveland lived in the household along with his mother and maternal grandmother all his life. His home-base principal indicated on the *Selection of Student Participation Protocol*, that Cleveland's maternal grandmother had petitioned the court for custody during his matriculation at the elementary school. He shared that his maternal grandmother and mother encourage him "telling me I am smart, I am a smart kid and always have confidence in myself" (Cl*l*7-8).

Cleveland also noted a close relationship with a cousin living outside of the rural county, he shared that his cousin, "helped get his grades up" (Cl*l*8) in math.

Bob lived in the household with extended family to include two aunts, maternal grandparents, and a young cousin. Bob's maternal grandparents are his legal guardians. Bob shared the impact of his extended family on his elementary education.

> "They sometimes help me with my homework, they help me get through school like talking me into what I am doing, and helping me get through the things I am going to do" (Bo*l*6-8).

T-Man lived with father on property owned by his paternal grandparent. Despite his grandparent not living in his home, he described the close proximity of this extended family member as "about 10 hops away" (Tm *l*5).

Autumn lived in the household with her mother, her boyfriend and siblings. When asked to describe how her family has helped her elementary education, she shared, "my nana and papa, and aunt help me study and buy my school supplies" (Au*l*5).

Beast Mode, Autumn's brother echoed a similar experience of the support provided by their extended family, "my nana and papa and aunt help me with homework" (Bea*l*3).

Daisy did not indicate an impact of extended family on her academic success; however, her maternal grandmother escorted her to the interview session. Challenge, Chloe J. and Percy Jackson did not indicate an impact of extended family on their academic success in elementary school.

Table 1.11
Participants Protective factors: Family

Category	Protective Responses	Participants Response
Grandparents	Support Encouragement Helpful	Believe, Cleveland, Bob, T-Man, Autumn, Beast Mode
Mother	Support	Daisy, Challenge, Cleveland, Chloe J., Beast Mode, Autumn
Siblings	Support	Percy Jackson, Challenge, Believe
Aunts/Uncles	Support	Autumn, Beast Mode. Bob
Father	Support	T-Man

Longevity in the Rural Community

The participants attended elementary school in the rural school division their 5th grade school year. All participants but two have completed their entire K-5 elementary education in the rural school division, but when asked to describe in which ways living in the rural county has helped or has been supportive of their academic success, this is the question that seemed to give them the most pause. For them, the familiarity of the rural county yielded as a protective factor.

Believe has lived in the rural county "almost my whole life" (Be*l*8) in the same home. She had attended the same elementary school since Headstart. Believe was unable to share how living in the rural community impacted her elementary education. Her response when asked, "No" (Be*l*11).

Similar to Believe, Cleveland had lived in the rural community since a baby, "whole life" (Cl*l*12) in the same home. He has attended the same elementary school since Preschool. Cleveland shared that living in the rural community has helped him in his elementary education. He shared:

> "In this rural area I have been thinking of a lot of things and I know when I go outside and I just think about things when I am down…like my confidence gets right back up" (Cl*l*15-17).

Daisy echoed similar experiences as Believe and Cleveland, she has "grown up" (Da*l*6) in the rural community, She attended two schools in the rural school division and has lived in her home for the past two years. She, like Cleveland shared an experience on how living in the rural community has helped her elementary education. Daisy shared:

> "Uhmm…this community helped me and I have grown up here for a while…it's just amazing how people can be by your side and you know will help you with things" (Da*l*15-17).

Bob shared that he lived in the rural community, "my whole life except when I was itty bitty child" (Bo*l*16-17). He has attended the same school since Kindergarten. Bob has lived in the same home for the past 3-4 years. Bob responded, "Yes" (Bo*l*22) that living in the rural county has been supportive to his elementary education, he could not explain.

Chloe J. has lived in her current home since the age of six-years old. She has attended the same elementary school since Preschool. Chloe J. shared experiences living outside of Virginia as "a baby" (Ch*l*17) due to her parents being in the Army. When asked how living in the rural community has been supportive to her elementary education, she shared:

> "I think I am a good student here, once my mom met a girl…her and my mom are really good friends. I just noticed I'm going to school with her daughter. She did not get the homework that we had… her mom said I could come over to help her with the homework" (Ch*l*20-22).

T-Man has lived in his home since two-years old and has attended the same elementary school since Kindergarten. Like, Bob and Believe, T-Man did not attribute any supports from living in the rural community on his elementary education, his response, "Uhmm…I don't think so…I think you can do it anywhere, city or rural" (Tm*l*17-18).

Autumn and Beast Mode were the two participants that were new to the rural county, they both shared that they move a lot (Au*l*12, Bea*l*6). They both arrived to the rural school

division in the middle of their fifth grade school year. They had attended three elementary schools during their 5th grade school year. Despite the lack of the longevity in the rural community, when asked how living in the rural community has helped in their elementary education, Autumn shared, "I know different schools have different views, but I learned something new at each of my new schools" (Au*l*15-16). Beast Mode shared that it has been "less stressful" (Bea *l*9) since attending elementary school in the rural school division.

Challenge shared she was "born here" (Ch*l*5). She has two elementary schools in the rural school division due to displacement caused by tornado. When asked how living in the rural community has helped her elementary education, Challenged shared, "sometimes when I go to different places and read signs, my sister helps me…I use to have speech problems…not anymore" (Ch*l*7-8).

Like many of the participants, Percy Jackson has lived in the rural county since being a baby. He has lived in his home for "seven years, I turned 5 years old when we first bought our house" (Pj*l*12-14). He has attended the same elementary school since Kindergarten. Like, T-Man, Bob and Believe he did not attribute any supports of living in the rural community on his elementary education, his response, "not really" (Pj*l*21).

Table 1.12
Participants Protective Factors: Community

Category	Protective Factors	Participants Responses
Born in the rural Community	Longevity	Believe, Cleveland, Daisy, Bob, T-Man, Challenge
Attended K-5 elementary school in the rural school division	Consistency	Believe, Bob, Challenge, Chloe, Cleveland, Daisy, Percy Jackson, T-Man
Attended the same K-5 elementary school	Familiarity	Believe, Bob, Chloe J., Cleveland, Percy Jackson, T-

		Man
New to the rural county and/or rural school division	Newcomer	Autumn, Beast Mode

Friendships

All but one participant indicated friendships in their K-5 elementary schools. Longevity in the rural school division and lasting friendships appeared to be connected for a majority of the participants, except for Autumn, Believe and Beast Mode. Participants shared how friendships were established and why they are maintained.

Believe did not indicate any close relationships with peers. When asked why she believed she had no friends, her response was "I don't know" (Be*l*14). Believe shared that not having friends, "Really did not change it. If I had friends it would probably be the same as it is now" (Be*l*15-16).

Unlike Believe, Cleveland considered himself to have friends and knew why. Cleveland shared, "they have been with me since Preschool…they never turn their backs on me and they never say mean things to me" (Cl*l*18-19).

Percy Jackson echoed Cleveland's experiences and reasons for friendships. Percy Jackson explained his friendships. He elaborated:

> "There the only people that really understand how I feel and they don't make fun of me and they know I won't make fun of them and if they get in trouble if other students taunt them about it, they know I won't laugh at them. I know they won't laugh at me" (Pj*l*29-31).

Daisy considered herself to have friendships at school that impacted her learning. Daisy described her friendships below:

> "Nice and have lots of empathy…and to be caring and be willing to help people and accept who your other friends are and be there for each other (Da *l*17-18)."

Daisy described a long-time friendship with a peer since 2nd grade.

> "She just helps me because she is awesome. She is awesome and funny and whenever I am down at school, she will help me get back on my feet and you know she helps me and she makes something that is really boring, really fun" (Da*l*19-23).

Bob shared his friendships at the school he has attended since Kindergarten.

> "Yes, I have friends. My friends are nice to me. In fact, one of my friends he's been my friend here for 3 years, he moved from [school name omitted]. He is my friend. I have really no complete idea why, we are really nice to each other" (Bob *l* 23-25).

Chloe J, acknowledge that had friendships at school even a best friend since 2nd grade. She explained:

> "Yes, positively because whenever I am mad or sad, I can't concentrate on one thing and my friends cheer me up so I can just concentrate" (Ch*l*27-29).

T-Man associated his friendships to common interests.

> "I've been around them a long time because in this school, it's usually whoever you've been with last year, the chances are you know them, they will be in the same class or class close to yours. Most of my friends have the same interest" (Tm*l*19-21).

Despite being, a new arrival to the rural school division Autumn and Beast Mode both acknowledged school-based friendships. Autumn shared:

> "All five friends are kinda alike…hangout at lunch, same point of view…favorite subjects. Yes, they give me helpful hints…like studying something new to learn it better and understand" (Au*l*16-18).

Beast Mode shared that he has "plenty of friends" (Bea*l*9). He shared that he has friends because he has a "good personality and cool" (Bea*l*10).

When asked if she had friends, Challenge responded, "Yes. I don't know…I think I am a weird person. I do weird things, weird voices for fun…to make people laugh" (Ch*l*8-9). Challenge revealed the impact of her friendships on her elementary education as "Friends…a lot of people…smart friends…funny friends…we are usually together…there for each other" (Ch*l*9-10).

Table 1.13
Participants Protective Factors: School Friendships

Category	Protective Factors	Participants Responses
Friendships	Support	Autumn, Beast Mode, Bob, Challenge, Chloe J., Cleveland Daisy, Percy Jackson, T-Man
No Friendships		Believe

Favorite Teacher and Academic Subject (s)

The participants were asked if there is a favorite teacher or staff member at their elementary school. Nine of out of the ten participants identified a favorite teacher. When asked

to identify a favorite subject area, all the participants identified a favorite academic subject area taught in their elementary school.

Believe indicated that her favorite teacher was her 5th grade math teacher and her favorite subject was math. She shared, "numbers are fun to work" (Be*l*8). She explained a math structure that has helped her become successful:

> "I am usually in Group 1 during the week. About five people meet with the teacher in small group, five or six. You get to move around…one is a whole group thing but then we switch into the groups for 20 minutes from 11:15-12:00 whole group, but then you got 12:00-12:20 is 1st group, 2nd group is 12:20-12:40, 12:40 until lunchtime (Be *l*34-37)."

Cleveland identified his favorite teacher was his 5th grade science teacher and science was his favorite subject, "science because science really encourages me and we do all the cool stuff" (Cl *l*32). Cleveland elaborated on a science project:

> "Because first we did a project on bake sale cookies about cells…we used plant and animals and made cookies. The plant and animal cells were the toppings for the cookies. Then we ate them (Cl *l*40-41)."

Daisy identified her Kindergarten as her favorite teacher in elementary school and her favorite subject was reading. She elaborated:

> "Reading. I love reading and I'm really good at it. When I get into a book, I just can't put it down, you read every day, and if you couldn't read, you wouldn't get through the day. So I would really have to say reading because reading has really helped me (Da *l*31-34)."

Bob shared, "I am smart cause of my teachers that has helped me get from Kindergarten to here" (Bo*l*36-37). However, he identified his 4th grade teacher as his favorite teacher and math as his favorite subject. He elaborated:

> "Math helps science, more than science helps math because adding and subtracting and all that stuff and millimeters and milliters and chemicals and you need to know how much to add" (Bo*l*43-44).

Chloe J identified her 3rd grade teacher as her favorite and her favorite subject as writing. She shared an experience about her favorite teacher.

> "She was really fun and whenever we didn't get it…she would put it to song. It was in history, the rhythm was Miley Cyrus, and I can't remember…the old Miley Cyrus. I remember the Columbus went on a ship song. Whenever, I didn't get it, she would pull me back, and I still didn't get it, after recess we would have a talk about it. Once we get to a problem I didn't get, she would call on me and say remember the song" (Ch*l*53-57).

Like Cleveland, T-Man indicated his favorite subject as science and did not identify a favorite teacher. When asked why science, T-Man stated, "I just like science" (Tm*l*24). T-Man did share that he liked his current science teacher but not his favorite (Tm*l*29-30).

Autumn identified her favorite subjects as science and reading because "get good grades in it" (Au*l*25). When asked if she had a favorite teacher or staff member in her elementary school, she named two of her current 5th grade teachers. She explained:

> "They all taught me tricks, showed me easy ways and ideas. They are inspiration and nice. They understand what I really did not know. Get 5, 100% on Successmaker and get a piece of candy. I like candy" (Au *l*36-37).

Beast Mode identified his favorite subject area as science and his favorite teacher taught science. Beast Mode liked science because "learning about animal life is not too hard" (Bea*l*13-14). He described his favorite science teacher as "she was really nice…do nice things and activities" (Bea *l*19).

Challenge indicated her favorite teacher as her 2nd grade teacher. When asked how the teacher helped her become successful, she shared, "She always kept me busy, pushed me to succeed…felt good learning in her class" (Ch*l*16-17). Her favorite academic subjects are math and reading. She explains, "Reading is easy. You got the way…to understand numbers instead of words" (Ch*l*13-14).

Percy Jackson, like Challenge identified his favorite academic subjects as reading and mathematics. He explained:

> "I would have to say reading and math, those are the subjects that are easiest to me. I love reading books, and I have lots of sisters to remind me to work on my math problems, all summer long" (Pj*l*47-49).

Percy Jackson identified his favorite teacher as his 5th grade-reading teacher. He shared:

> "If you want help, she will help you. If you have not clipped up in a long-time, and she sees that you are trying, she will clip you up. If you are still trying to clip up, she

will clip you up and let you pick out of her treasure box. And she always gets us good books to read, especially the big books" (Pj*l*58-61).

Table 1.14
Participants Protective Factors: School

Category	Protective Factors	Participants Responses
Favorite Teacher	Support	Autumn, Beast Mode, Believe, Bob, Challenge, Chloe, Cleveland, Daisy, Percy Jackson
Favorite Academic Subject	Interest	Autumn, Beast Mode, Believe, Bob, Challenge, Chloe, Cleveland, Daisy, Percy Jackson, T-Man
Favorite Academic Subject: Mathematics	Content Area	Autumn, Believe, Bob, Challenge
Favorite Academic Subject: Reading/Writing	Content Area	Autumn, Chloe J., Daisy, Percy Jackson
Favorite Academic Subject: Science	Content Area	Beast Mode, Bob, Cleveland, T-Man

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the results of the interviews with 10 fifth grade students meeting the definition of academic resilience. Four overarching themes emerged from the study: (1) relationships with extended family, which included grandparents, aunts and uncle; (2) longevity in the rural community; (3) friendships; and (4) identification of a favorite teacher and content area.

Six of the ten participants acknowledged support from extended family to include grandparents, aunts and/ or uncles that helped in their academic success in elementary school. Two of the participants' grandparents have sole legal custody. Three of the participants lived

with extended family members to include grandparents, aunts and/or uncles. The participants supported by extended family recognized the support whether emotional, physical or financially.

Longevity in the rural community affected eight out of the ten participants. The majority of the participants were born and raised in the rural community. Two out of the ten participants were new to the rural community, with only a six-month stay. The longevity in the rural community appeared connected with friendships in elementary school, except for Believe. Eight of the ten participants indicated living in the rural community since an early age, and most attended the same school since Kindergarten.

Nine out of the ten participants identified school-based friendships. The participants acknowledged friendships, roles of friends, and the impact of friendships on their learning. Believe, was the only participant not to identify a friend in her K-5 elementary school, despite attending the same school since Kindergarten.

The identification of a favorite teacher and content area presented as an overarching theme among the participants. All of the participants identified a favorite subject area or two; and nine out of ten participants identified a favorite teacher in their elementary schools.

Chapter Five provided interpretations and conclusions drawn from the data as well as recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 5 Findings, Summary, and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to identify the self-identified protective factors found in the family, community and school of ten elementary students living in rural poverty meeting the definition of academic resilience. Through the responses of the participants, prevalent themes were exposed that revealed the similarities and differences in protective factors among the participants. A qualitative research design was used to address two research questions:

> **Research Question 1:** What are the identified protective factors regarding academic achievement for students purposefully selected as meeting the criteria for academic resilience?
>
> **Research Question 2:** What are the similarities and differences in protective factors among these purposefully selected students?

Summary of Findings

After review and analysis of the data in the study, eight findings have emerged. The findings are in the following section.

Finding One. Academically resilient elementary students living in rural poverty are supported by family. They shared accounts of support and encouragement from extended family members. Dunifon (2013) discussed that grandparents "can serve as role models for their grandchildren, discussing appropriate behavior, encouraging academic or other success, helping with homework, and providing advice and emotional support" (p.55). Believe, Cleveland, Bob, T-Man, Autumn, and Beast Mode, all spoke of the support and encouragement provided by their grandparents to their K-5 academic success. Believe, Cleveland, and Bob lived in the same home along with their grandparents. Believe's and Bob's grandparents were their legal

guardians. The support of grandparents affected six out of the ten participants. Referring to his grandmother and mother, Cleveland said, “They tell me I am smart, I am a smart kid and always have confidence in myself” (Cl*l*7-8). Bob shared this about his grandmother and aunts, “…they help me get through school like talking me into what I am doing and helping me get through the things I am going to do” (Bob*l*6-8). Autumn shared how her grandparents pay for her school supplies. Beast Mode discussed how his aunts supported his K-5 education.

The support of family members proved vital to academic success of participants living in rural poverty. Solomon and Marx (1995) found that children raised by grandparents coped better across academic, behavior and health domains than those raised by a single parent. Six out of the ten participants acknowledged support and encouragement provided by family members other than parents.

Finding Two. Academically resilient students living in rural poverty are raised in single-parent homes. Lee and Kushner (2008) reported that most of the research on single-parent families and student academic success assume a deficit model. The participants in this study experienced academic success despite the risk associated with single-family parenting. The participants discussed how their mother, father, or grandparent supported their education and helped them become academically successful in elementary school. One out of the ten participants lived in a two-parent home to include a mother and father. Chloe J. lived with her biological mother and step-father. Believe lived with her paternal grandmother and grandfather. Autumn, Beast Mode, Bob the Builder, Challenge, Cleveland, Daisy, Percy Jackson and T-Man lived in a single-parent home to include their mother, grandmother or father. Six of the ten

participants lived with only their mother. Lee and Kushner (2008) indicated that a majority of American children are raised in single- parent homes led by the mother.

Finding Three. Academically resilient students living in rural poverty experienced a lack of mobility. The participants discussed familiarity and consistency in living in their rural community as a positive factor. Eight of the ten participants attended elementary school in the rural community for their entire K-5 education. Out of the eight, six participants had attended the same elementary school throughout their K-5 education. Believe shared that she had lived in the rural county "almost my whole life" (Be*l*8) in the same home. Several of the participants shared the same sentiments, lived in the same home and attended the same elementary school for their entire K-5 elementary education. This longevity in the rural community provided a confidence that a few of the participants shared contributed to their comfort levels in their schools. Percy Jackson, shared an example:

> "…like all the new kids are really shy and shy to ask people for help because they don't know what to do or where to go, people can tell, we are comfortable here because we know where everything is, don't look nervous walking around the halls" (Pj*l*43-45).

All the participants respond that they felt very comfortable or comfortable in their elementary schools. Cotton (1996) synthesis of 103 research studies revealed that students attending small rural schools experienced positive attitudes about schools, higher academic self-concepts, and a greater sense of belonging. These 10 participants felt comfortable in their elementary schools, and experienced academic success.

The lack of mobility also provided a positive outlook on the rural community, Cleveland described his school community as "…pretty nice…cause nothing goes wrong most of the time and everything is peaceful" (Cl*l*15).

Finding Four. Academically resilient elementary students living in rural poverty experienced mobility in the rural community. Two of the ten participants lived in the rural community for only six months prior to the study. Autumn and Beast Mode are siblings and moved to the rural community in October 2014. Barton (2004) shared that poor students who come from single parent homes have the highest school-changing rates. This statistic is true for both Autumn and Beast Mode. Autumn and Beast Mode are raised by their mother along with three other siblings. Autumn shared during her interview, "I move a lot" (Au*l*12). They attended three elementary schools during their fifth grade school year. Despite living in the community for only six months, Beast Mode described the rural community as "a nice place with good schools" (Bea*l*9).

Finding Five. Academically resilient elementary students living in rural poverty communicated a relationship with a school staff member. The work of Hughes, Kwok, Split and Wu (2012), revealed that supportive teacher and student relationships foster student engagement in learning activities and academic achievement. Eight out of the ten student participants identified a positive relationship with a teacher during their K-5 education. They shared how the teacher encouraged or supported their learning, taught using their preferred learning style or favored the teachers' classroom configuration. Percy Jackson described his favorite reading teacher, "she always gets us good books to read, especially the big books" (Pj*l*60-61). Their teachers also supported and encouraged them. Daisy shared,

> "My kindergarten teacher…she taught me what I needed to know and she has always been there. She told me…it does not matter who you are you can become successful and believe in yourself, you can get as far as you want to go" (Da*l*51-54).

Challenge shared similar sentiments about her favorite teacher, "…always kept me busy, pushed me to succeed, it felt good to learn" (Ch*l*17). The participants' relationships with their teachers connect with the work of Burney and Cross (2006), which stated, "…another person with an interest in the student, must provide that solid support for educational persistence and attainment" (p.19). They went on to share, "the school faculty member will need to do this in a way that communicates that he or she cares about what happens to the student and has confidence in his or her ability to be successful at the next level" (p. 19).

The participants discussed how their favorite teacher made them feel good and provided additional support. Ryan and Deci (2000) discussed two factors influencing students' academic success, as academic efficacy and support from parents, teachers, and school counselors. Chloe J. shared a student-teacher interaction, "whenever I didn't get it…she would pull me back, and if I still didn't get it, after recess we would talk about it" (Ch*l*54-56). Cleveland described a similar sentiment regarding his favorite teacher, "…he has confidence in everyone and I trust him in help me" (Cl*l*49-50). The participants felt like their teachers were there for them and provided comfortable learning environments.

Finding Six. Academically resilient elementary students living in rural poverty have a desired content area of interest. All the participants identified a favorite content area with mathematics and science being popular subject areas. Believe shared that she worked well under the math structures provided by her teacher that kept her "focused" (Be*l*20, Be*l*23). Cleveland

explained that he likes science because of the "cool stuff you can do" (Cl*l*39). Danvill (2014) shared that "there is no magic bullet to fostering students' interest or engagement; both are the results of the interactions among student-instructor variables" (p.211). There was a link among the participants' relationship with teachers and their desired content area. Beast Mode identified his favorite subject as science and teacher as his science teacher. Eight of the ten participants shared that their favorite teacher also taught their desired content area of interest.

Finding Seven. Academically resilient elementary students living in rural poverty identified peer influences. Nine of the ten participants identified school-based friendships and discussed the impact on their K-5 elementary education. Preciado, Snijeders, Kerr, Burk and Stattin (2012) shared "geographic proximity is one of the essential causes of homophily because people that are spatially close are much more likely to meet and interact" (p.18). Due to the isolation that rural living can create, school-based friendships were important. When asked to describe her community, Challenge shared, "it's boring for me because I don't live near other kids…no one to play with" (Ch*l*6-7). Despite the isolation of Challenge's community, she shared the following about her school-based friendships, "friends…a lot of people…smart friends…funny friends…we are usually together…there for each other" (Ch*l*9-10). Percy Jackson shared similar sentiments of limited friends in his community, "… [name omitted] pretty much is the only friend I have in my neighborhood, and he is my cousin" (Pj*l*27-29).

The participants described school-based friendships as supportive, helpful and lasting. Daisy shared this about her school-based best friend, "she makes my day most of the time" (Da*l*50-51). Autumn despite her short time in the rural community, described her friendships, "all five friends are kinda alike…hangout at lunch…same point of view…favorite subjects" (Au*l*16-17). Shin and According to Ryan (2014) friendships are a significant part of a students'

school experiences, "friends are likely to be an important source of influence on achievement goal" (p.1453).The participants experienced friendships that provided a positive K-5 elementary education experience.

There was a link between peer influences and longevity in the rural community. Cleveland described his school-based friendships, "they have been with me since preschool …they never turn their backs" (Cl*l*18-19). T-Man shared similar views about school-based friendships, "I've been around them along time because in this school, it's usually whoever you've been with last school year, the chances are you know them" (Tm*l*19-20). Cleveland, Daisy, Bob the Builder, Chloe J., T-Man, Challenge, and Percy Jackson all discussed school-based friendships due to longevity in the rural community. Moody (1999) shared that rural schools provide more opportunities for strong and reciprocal friendships then in suburban schools. Flashman (2012) found that "whether cause of geography, limited opportunities, or because they have grown-up together in small communities, the friendships formed in these schools are not based on achievement" (p.62). The participants shared that their school-based friendships based on supportive, caring and familiarity relationships.

Finding Eight. Academically resilient elementary students living in rural poverty were not impacted by extra-curricular participation. Two of the ten participants mentioned participation in extracurricular activities away from school. The two participants did not indicate any major contribution extracurricular participation had on their K-5 academic success. This is a conflicting view in the research that links participation in extracurricular activities outside of school positively with student achievement. Percy Jackson responded, "they have not helped not really" (Pj*l*8-9) when responding to how his football coaches influenced his academic success in elementary school. Challenge shared that her soccer coach "made her run and do math

problems" (Ch*l*3-4), but did not indicate any further academic influence. Convay and Carbonaro (2010) reported that success in school and extracurricular activities was a result of positive interactions with and from adults in authority. This connection was not present with participants in this study. Eight of the ten students in this study did not participate in extracurricular activities in the rural community, and therefore did not have such interactions. However, eight of ten participants experienced academic success in their K-5 education through relationships with elementary school staff.

Implications

The findings of this study have implications for educational leaders and supports in other similar settings to consider as they seek to improve academic achievement for all students especially those experiencing rural poverty. The following implications are suggestions based on the areas addressed by participants' responses in the study.

Implication One. Educational leaders should host and build relationships with members of the entire school community. The responsible family members for the participants of this study expanded the traditional family unit of mother and father. Six of the participants lived with grandparents or other family members. School administrators should work to build relationships with extended family members since they may be the primary caregiver for the child. School leaders should look for ways to welcome and educate these "2nd round" guardians by hosting school events that encourage their participation. School leaders should look to identify such families to provide a support group for identification of available community resources.

Implication Two. Educational leaders should work to build a sense of family and community in rural elementary schools. Eight of the ten students in the study attended

elementary school in the rural school community for their K-5 elementary education. Six of the eight attended the same elementary school for entire K-5 elementary education. This documented longevity in the rural community could serve as a great protective factor, if all students enjoyed being in their elementary schools. With so much time in the same place, the positive impact on student learning with appropriate emotional and academic supports could result in higher student achievement.

Implication Three. Teachers should work to build relationships with students and get to know students' subject areas of interest, learning styles and preferences. Nine out of the ten participants in this study acknowledged a favorite teacher. Many of the participants gave detailed responses about their favorite teacher. When teachers know what gets students excited or how they learn best, then higher levels of student engagement are evident. All participants identified a favorite subject area, if teachers were knowledgeable of what students enjoyed learning about, the ability to plan cross-curricular lessons and activities can occur. Teachers need to find creative ways to get to know *all* their students.

Implication Four. Educational leaders and teachers should work to provide positive student interactions both in and outside of schools. Nine of the ten participants in this study acknowledged close friendships and lasting school-based friendships. Due to the geographic limitations of a rural community to include availability of extra-curricular activities. School-based personnel should create social and outreach opportunities for students to allow and foster healthy friendships. The school may be the only opportunity and venue for appropriate interactions.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Future research should include the role of the changing family unit. With more students raised by family members other than their mother and/or father, this change in the family unit will influence student learning and the roles of the entire school community.

2. Future studies on academically resilient elementary students living in rural poverty would help educators network regarding practices that are improving student achievement.

3. Expanding the research that involves a larger sample of academically resilient elementary students across similar sized rural setting would allow for deeper knowledge and understanding of the relationships among family, community and school factors that contributed to their success.

4. Future research should include the collection of qualitative data from members of the student's family, community and school factors.

5. Conduct a longitudinal study to chronicle the K-12 education of a purposefully selected sample of academically resilient students living in rural poverty beginning in elementary school.

6. Replicate the study in an urban school division using the same selection criteria: academic and poverty indicators to determine similarities and differences of protective factors found in home, school and community.

7. Future research should focus on extracurricular activities available to academically resilient students living in rural poverty and data on student achievement.

Conclusions

Extended family played an important role in the lives of the academically resilient elementary students living in rural poverty. The relationships with extended family were prevalent in the participants' responses as a protective factor. Only three participants did not discuss extended family members in their responses, Chloe J, Challenge and Daisy. However, Daisy was brought to the interview session by her grandmother. I know from demographic data that Challenge and her family lived with her grandparents during the past three years. The participants discussed how their extended family members primarily grandparents but aunts, uncles and siblings were parts of their lives and important to their K-5 elementary education.

Elementary students were chosen because elementary achievement and success is the foundation of K-12 academic success. So many research studies on academic resilience focus on minority groups, secondary education or urban settings, I wanted to capture another perspective. The participants in the study for the most part were born and raised in the rural community. This served as a protective factor for them. Ironically, the two participants not born in the rural community, previously resided in a similar sized rural community, which they desired because of the absence of their extended family members.

The impact of longevity in the rural community and extended family supports were prevalent themes with the participants. Despite longevity in the rural community, extra-curricular activities and relationships with adults outside of their family were not impactful on their academic success. The outside adults impactful on the students' academic success were teachers. Nine out of the ten participants identified a favorite teacher.

Personal Reflections

This study was definitely a journey, but well worth it. There were a few bumps during this journey due to confidentiality of students' poverty identification and age of my participants, which required the parental consent process. This mandatory requirement did not allow my random selection of elementary students, and collection of student data. I had to ask principals to identify students based on criteria I provided, and then I contacted parents. Would I choose the same participation group again? Yes! To gain the perspective of elementary students was so powerful for me as an elementary school leader and someone that self-identifies as academically resilient.

The participants were all in fifth grade, which is at the end of their elementary education. I would love the opportunity to speak with these students again to keep up with their progress as they matriculate through middle school and then high school. The qualitative interviews provided an insight that you just cannot capture through surveys; however, I believe a quantitative measure would have been beneficial due to some of the short responses of the participants. After disaggregating the participants' responses, I discovered I should have interviewed a family member that a student identified as a support to their academic success to gain a broader knowledge of the protective factor. The participants were engaging and provided me what I needed!

Finally, as an elementary school leader my primary role is improving student achievement. What the participants shared with me in this study, can assist in my efforts in improving student achievement in a rural school division with like demographics. The relationship between family, community and school are vital to student achievement: Autumn, Beast Mode, Believe, Bob the Builder, Challenge, Chloe J., Cleveland, Daisy, Percy J. and T-Man shared their academic success based on those relationships. Thanks to them all!

References

American Community Survey. (2009). *U.S. Census Bureau.* Retrieved from http://www.census.gov/program.acs.

Barton, P. E. (2004). Why does the gap exist? *Educational Leadership, 62*(3), 8-13.

Brackenreed, D. (2010). Resilience and risk. *Canadian Center of Science and Education, 3*(3), 111-121.

Brooks, R. B., & Goldstein, S. (2001). *Raising resilient children: Fostering strength, hope and optimism in your child.* New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Burney, V. H. (2006). Impoverished Students with Academic Promise in Rural Setting: 10 Lessons from Project Aspire. *Gifted Child Today, 29*(2), 14-21.

Clasen, D. R. (1989). Breaking the brain-nerd connection. *Newsletter of the National Center of Effective Secondary Schools, 4*, 2-4.

Convay, E., & Carbonaro, W. (2010). After the Bell: Participation in Extracurricular Activities, Classroom Behavior, and Academic Achievement. *Sociology of Education, 83*(1), 20-45.

Cotton, K. (1996). School size, school climate, and studen performance. *(School improvement Research Series Close up #20).*

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches.* (I. SAGE Publications, Ed.) California: Thousands Oaks.

Danvill, D. (2014). Student Interest and Engagement in the Classroom: Relationships with Student Personality and Developmental Variables. *Southern Communication Journal, 79*(3), 201-214.

Doll, B., & Lyon, M. A. (1998). Risk and Resilience: Implications for the delivery of educational and mental health services in schools. *School Psychology Review, 27*(3), 348-363.

Downey, J. A. (2008). Recommendations for Fostering Educational Resilience in the Classroom. *Preventing School Failure, 53*(1), 56-.

Dunifon, R. (2013). The Influence of Grandparents on the Lives of Children and Adolscents. *Child Development Perspectives, 7*(1), 55-60.

Ellis, W. T. (2010). Against the odds: Academic resilience among high-ability African-American adolescents living in rural setting. (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3420977)

Evans, G., & English, K. (2002). Multiple stressor exposure, psychophysiological stress, and socioemotional adjustment. *Child Development, 73,* 1238-1248.

Fergus, S., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2005). Adolescent Resilience: A Framework for Understanding Healthy Development in the Face of Risk. *Annual Review Public Health, 26*, 399-419. doi:10.1146/annurev.publheath.26.021304.144357

Flashman, J. (2012). Academic Achievement and Its Impact on Friend Dynamics. *Sociology of Education, 85*(1), 61-80.

Foster, T. (2013). An exploration of academic resilience among rural students living in rural poverty. (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3560885)

Fowler, W. J., & Walberg, H. J. (1991). School size, characteristics, and outcomes. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 13*(2), 189-202.

Fram, M. S., Miller-Cribs, J., & Horn, L. V. (2007). Poverty, race and the contexts of achievement: Examining the educational experiences of children in the U.S. south. *Social Work, 52*(4), 309-319.

Garmezy, N. (1985). Stress-resilient children: The search for protective factors. *Recent research in developmental psychopathology, 4*, 213-233.

Grossman, F., Beinashowitz, J., Anderson, L., Sakurai, L., & Finnin, F. M. (1992). Risk and Resilience in Young Adolscents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 21*(5), 529-550.

Hanewald, R. (2011). Reviewing the Literature on "At-Risk" and Resilient Children and Young People. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 36*(2), 16-27. Retrieved from http://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol36/iss2/2

Hardre, P. L., & Reeve, J. (2003). A motivational model of rural students' intentions to persist in, versus drop out of, high school. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 95*(2), 347-356.

Harrison, M. (2009). *Organizational diagnosis. In L. Bickman & D. Rog (Eds.), Applied social research methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Haycock, K. (2001). Closing the achievement gap. *Educational Leadership, 58*(6), 6-11.

Irvin, M. (2012). Role of student engagement in the resilience of African American adolescents from low-income rural communities. *Psychology in the Schools, 49*(2), 176-193. doi:10.1002/pits.20626

Khanlou, N., & Wray, R. (2014). A Whole Community Approach toward Child and Youth Resilience Promotion: A Review of Resilience Literature. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction, 12*(1), 64-79. doi:10.1007/S11469-013-9470-1

Lee, S. M., & Kushner, J. (2008). Single-parent families: the role of parent's and child's gender on academic achievement. *Gender and Education, 20*(6), 607-621. doi:10.1080/09540250802415132

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (2006). *Designing qualitative research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Masten, A. (2011). Resilience in children threatened by extreme adversity: Frameworks for research, practice, and translational synergy. *Development and Psychopathology, 23*, 493-506. doi:10.1017/S0954579411000198

Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary Magic: Resilience Processes in Development. *American Psychologist, 563*, 227-238. doi:10.1037//0003-066X.56.3.227

Masten, A., & Obradovic, J. (2006). Competence and Resilience in Development. *Annals New York Academy of Sciences,* 13-27. doi:10.1196/annals.1376.003

Masten, A., & Tellegen, A. (2012). Resilience in developmental psychopathology: Contributions of the Project Competence Longitudinal Study. *Development and Psychopathology, 24*, 345-361. doi:10.1017/S095457941200003X

Masten, A., Hubbard, J., Gest, S., Tellegen, A., Garmezy, N., & Ramirez, M. (1999). Competence in the context of adversity: Pathways to resilience and maladaptation from childhool to late adolescence. *Development and Psychopathology, 11*, 143-169.

McCubbin, L. (2001). Challenges to the definition of resilience.

Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Moody, J. (1999). *The Structure of Adolescent Social Relations: Modeling Friendship in Dynamic Social Setting.* Dissertation, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.

Morales, E. E. (2010). Linking Strengths: Identifying and Exploring Protective Factor Clusters in Academically Resilient Low-Socioeconomic Urban Students of Color. *Roeper Review, 32*, 164-175. doi:10.1080/02783193.2010.485302

Murray, C. (2003). Risk factor and high incidence disabilities. *Remedial and Special Education, 24*(1), 16-26.

Payne, R. (2008). Nine Powerful Practices. *Educational Leadership, 68*(7), 48-52.

Payne, R. K. (2005). *A Framework for Understanding Poverty (Revised Edition).* Baytown, TX: R FT Publishing.

Powell, C. (2010). *School Resilience as perceived by resilient and non-resilient students: A case study*.

Reeves, E. (2012). The effects of opportunity to learn, family socioeconomic status, and friends on the rural mathematics achievement gap in high school. *American behavioral scientist, 56*(7), 887-907. doi:10.1177/0002764212442357

Reeves, E. B. (2012). The effects of opportunity to learn, family socioeconomic status, and friends on the rural math achievement gap in high school. *American behavioral scientist, 56*(7), 887-907. doi:10.1177/0002764212442357

Rutter, M. (2006). Implications of Resilience Concepts for Scientific Understanding. *Annals New York Academy of Sciences,* 1-12. doi:10.1196/annals.1376.002

Rutter, M. (2012). Resilience as a dynamic concept. *Development and Psychopathology, 24*, 335-344. doi:10.1017/S0954579412000028

Rutter, M., Maughan, B., Mortimore, P, & Ouston, J. (1979). *Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary schools and their effects on children.* London: Open Books.

Ryan, R. &. (2000). Self concept determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivaiton, social development and well-being. *American Psychologist, 55*(1), 68-78.

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research.* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Shin, H., & Ryan, A. (2014). Friendship Networks and Achievement Goals: An Examination of Selection and Influence Processes and Variations by Gender. *Journal of Youth Adolescence, 43*, 1453-1464. doi:10.1007/s10964-014-0132-9

Sieber, J. E. (2009). Planning ethically responsible research. In L. Bickman & D. Rog (Eds.), Applied social research methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Solomon, J., & Marx, J. (1995). To grandmother's house we go: Health and school adjustment of children raised soley by grandparents. *The Generontologist, 35*, 386-394.

Split, J., Hughes, J. N., Wu, J., & Kwok, O. (2012). Dynamics of Teacher-Student Relationships: Stability and Change Across Elementary School and the Influence on Children's Academic Success. *Child Development, 84*(4), 1180-1195. doi:10.111/j.1467-8624.2012.01761.x

Start, H. (2011). *Head START.* Retrieved from ECLKC: http://eclkc@ohs.acf.hhs.gov

Stevens, T., Morash, M., & and Park, S. (2011). Late-Adolescent Delinquency: Risks and Resilience for Girls Differing in Risk at the Start of Adolescence. *Youth & Society, 43*(4), 1433-1458.

Taylor, R., Chatters, L., & Celious, A. (2003). Extended Family Households Among Black Americans. *African American Research Perspectives, 1*, 133-151.

Virginia Department of Education. (2013, July 10). *Standards of Learning (SOL) Testing*. Retrieved from Virginia Department of Education: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/index.shtm

Wang, M., Haertel, G., & Walberg, H. (1997). Fostering Educational Resilience in Inner-City Schools. *Children and Youth, 7,* 119-140.

Weaver, D. (2009). The Relationship between Cultural/Ethnic Indentity and Individual Protective Factors of Academic Resilience.

Werner, E. (1990). Protective Factors and individual resilience. In S.J. Meisels & J.P. Shonkoffs (Eds.). (N. New York, Ed.) *Handbook of early childhood intervention*, pp. 97-116.

Werner, E. (1993). Risk,resilience, and recovery:Perspective from the Kauai Longitudinal Study. *5*, 503-515.

Werner, E. E. (2004). Journeys from childhood to midlife: Risk, resilience and recovery. *Pediatrics, 114*(2), 492.

Werner, E. E. (2005). Resilience and Recovery: Findings from the Kauai Longitudinal Study. *Research, Policy and Practice in Children's Mental Health, 19*(1), 11-14.

Werner, E. E., & Smith, R. S. (1992). *Overcoming the Odds: High risk children from birth to adulthood.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Wolin, S., & Wolin, S. (1993). *The resilient self: How survivors of troubled families rise above adversity.* New York: New York : Villard.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A IRB TRAINING CERTIFICATE

APPENDIX B IRB APPROVAL LETTER

VirginiaTech

Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120, Virginia Tech
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-4606 Fax 540/231-0959
email irb@vt.edu
website http://www.irb.vt.edu

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 31, 2015

TO: Carol S Cash, Laquiche Renee Parrott

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires July 29, 2020)

PROTOCOL TITLE: Academically Resilient Elementary Students in one Virginia school division: Identifying and Exploring Protective Factors

IRB NUMBER: 14-723

Effective August 31, 2015, the Virginia Tech Institution Review Board (IRB) Chair, David M Moore, approved the Continuing Review request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:

http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm

(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved As:	**Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 5,6,7**
Protocol Approval Date:	**September 29, 2015**
Protocol Expiration Date:	**September 28, 2016**
Continuing Review Due Date*:	**September 14, 2016**

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

APPENDIX C SUPERINTENDENT LETTER

LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENT

December 10, 2014

Division Superintendent's Name
School Division
Address

Dear (Superintendent):

I am a doctoral candidate at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and request to conduct research in your school division. The title of my dissertation is "Academically Resilient Elementary Students in one Virginia school division: Identifying and Exploring Protective Factors." My study focuses on students that meet the definition of academic resilience and rural residence on academically successful elementary students. Research indicates that rural living as a risk factor that can impact school performance of students. Despite this and other challenges, many students experience success. I am interested in hearing from those students in our school division that have reached academic success in our elementary schools despite risk factors to include rural residence. I would like to know what they contribute to their academic success in their family, community and school.

The results of this qualitative research will provide information to educators that may be used in understanding the concept of resilience, identifying protective factors in students, designing programs and initiatives that support the development of resilience in elementary students. As part of my research, I would like to individually interview ten fifth grade students from the elementary schools in our school division to gain insight on the self-identified protective factors found in their family, community and elementary school experiences. I will record the interview and take observation notes. The interviews will be transcribed by me for further data collection. I will conduct semi-structured interviews at the subjects' elementary school or an agreed upon public establishment. All information collected will be stored by me in a secured location until successful defense of the study.

Upon gaining permission from your office, minor assent and parental consent will be requested. I would like the permission to access the student records of 5th grade students using the criteria below:

- Passing reading and mathematics scores on the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments
- Definition of academic resilience (Morales, 2010, p. 164): "the process and results that are part of the life story of an individual who has been academically successful, despite obstacles that prevent the majority of others with the same background from succeeding."

All information received will remain confidential and will be reported in such a matter that all participants remain anonymous. Students asked to participate in the study will be contacted individually and consent will be obtained for the minor subjects to participate in the

interviews in writing by their parent(s) and minor assent will be collected. Parents and minor subjects will both sign and agree to for participation in the study. Participants will be reminded that they can withdrawal from the study for any reason before its completion.

I have received permission from the Institutional Review Board of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University to conduct research. A copy of the IRB approval is attached as well as the interview protocol. With your written permission, I will contact school principals to receive student participants and data that meet the criteria noted above. Students will be selected by school and gender to participate in the study. If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact either my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Carol Cash at ccash48@vt.edu or myself through email at lparrott@vt.edu or by phone at (757) 268-6688.

Virginia Tech IRB Chair: David Moore (540) 231-4991

Sincerely,

LaQuiche Parrott

Note: *In some situations, it may be necessary for an investigator to break confidentiality. If a researcher has reason to suspect that a child is abused or neglected, or that a person poses a threat of harm to others or him/herself, the researcher is required by Virginia State law to notify the appropriate authorities. If applicable to this study, the conditions under which the investigator must break confidentiality must be described.*

APPENDIX D LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

Letter to Principals

December 10, 2014

LaQuiche Parrott
15 Alexander Drive
Hampton, VA 23664
lparrott@vt.edu

Dear Elementary School Principal,

I am doctoral candidate at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. As part of my dissertation study, I am researching protective factors identified by elementary academic successful students. My study focuses on the impact of poverty and rural residence on the academically successful elementary students. Research indicates that rural residence as a risk factor that can impact school performance of students. Despite this and other challenges, many students experience success. I am interested in hearing from those students in our school division that meet the definition of academic resilience in our elementary schools despite the risk factor of rural residence. I would like to know what they contribute to their academic success in their family, community and school.

The results of this qualitative research will provide information to our local administrators and teachers that may be used in understanding the concept of resilience, identifying protective factors in students, designing programs and initiatives that support the development of resilience in elementary students. As part of my research, I would like to individually interview two fifth grade students from your school to gain insight on the self-identified protective factors found in their family, community and elementary school experiences

based on criteria determined by me (see attached). Once you have identified two academically resilient students that match the criteria provided, I will seek consent from both the parent and student to participate in the study. I would like permission to interview students at their home base elementary school and the interviews should take no more than an hour. The informed consent will also give me permission to access the student's cumulative record to allow for additional data related to the purpose of the study. All information received will remain confidential and will be reported in such a matter that all participants remain anonymous. Students asked to participate in the interviews will be contacted individually and consent will be obtained for the student to participate in the interviews in writing by their parent(s). Parent and student will both sign and agree to the consent of participation in the study.

I have received permission from the school division Superintendent to conduct the interviews as well as permission from the Institutional Review Board of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Your participation will include the selection of two 5th grade students that match the criteria provided; I will contact the student and parent (s). If you would like the results of the study when it is completed or have questions regarding this study, you may contact either my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Carol Cash at ccash48@vt.edu or myself through email or by phone.

Thanks,

LaQuiche Parrott

APPENDIX E PARENT CONSENT FORM

Parent Consent Form

Title of the Project: Academically Resilient Elementary Students in one Virginia school division: Identifying and Exploring Protective Factors

Researcher: LaQuiche Parrott lparrott@vt.edu/ 757-268-6688

I. Purpose of this Research Study

The purpose of the study is to learn from fifth grade students what has helped them become good students. I would like to meet with you and your child to discuss the study. We can meet at your child's elementary school or an agreed upon public place. I will not provide transportation to the meeting place.

I am requesting that we meet and talk about the study. I am not telling you that you must let your child participate in the study. Your decision to have your child participate or not participate will not make a difference in the relationship you have with the school division. No compensation will be earned for participating in the study.

Your child met the criteria for the study based on the information provided from your child's principal based on grade level, gender and school:

- Passed Standards of Learning (SOL) tests for the past two years in reading and mathematics.
- Met definition of academic resilience as defined: "the process and results that are part of the life story of an individual who has been academically successful, despite obstacles that prevent the majority of others with the same background from succeeding" (Morales, 2010, p.164).
- A child that lived in a rural area.

II. Procedures

At the meeting, we will discuss the following:

- The topic of the study.
- Permissions needed for participation in the study.

Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board Project No. 14-723
Approved December 8, 2014 to September 28, 2015

- Parental rights during and after the study.
- Student rights during and after the study.
- Any questions you or your child may have about the study.

Once permission is given, the following will take place:

- An interview is scheduled for your child at their elementary school or an agreed upon public place.

During the interview, the following will take place:

- An interview guide will be used to gain your child's feelings on the topic of study.
- A fake name will be used to protect your child's privacy.
- Interview notes and audio recordings will take place.

After the interview, the following will take place:

- I will secure all information collected during the interview.
- I will destroy all information after successful completion of the study.
- All information collected will be destroyed if removed from the study prior to completion.

III. Risks

What are the risks of being in the study?

- There are no expected risks.

IV. Benefits

What are the benefits of being in the study?

- There are no expected benefits. No promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage you or your child to participate.

V. Extent of Confidentiality

How will confidentiality be kept?

- A fake name of your child's choice will be used during the interview and study.
- Your child's real name, the name of your school, and the name of your school division will not be used in this study.
- I will keep research notes (including audio recordings) in a safe place.
- I will destroy all research notes (including audio recordings) after successful completion of the study.
- I will be the only person who will see and use the research notes (including audio recordings) except for my advisor and other Virginia Tech staff who may see my notes and recordings, because they are responsible for reviewing research.

VI. Questions or Concerns

Who can I contact if I have questions?

- You can call me, LaQuiche Parrott, the researcher at (757) 268-6688 or email me at lparrott@vt.edu.
- If you have general questions about giving permission or your rights as a human participant, you may contact Dr. David Moore, Chair Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board at (540) 231-4991 or email: moored@vt.edu.

VII. Subject's Consent

Statement of Consent:

- I have read the contents of the content form and conditions of this study.
- I have been encouraged to ask questions.
- I have received answers to all my questions.
- I give my voluntary consent to take part in this study.

Parent signature	Date	Parent printed name	Date
_____	_____	_____	_____

APPENDIX F MINOR ASSENT FORM

Minor Student Assent Form

Dear Child and Parent (s):

Introduction

- You are being asked to take part in a study to find out why some elementary students are successful in school despite risk factors.
- This study is part of my coursework at Virginia Tech.

Why have I been asked to take part in the study?

- You are a fifth grade student.
- You passed reading and mathematics Standards of Learning (SOL) tests for the past two years.
- You met the definition of academic resilience as defined by Morales, 2010.
- You live in a rural area.

What do I do first?

- Please read (or have read to you) this letter.
- Please ask any questions that you may have.

What is the study about?

- What elementary students believe helped them become successful in school.

Who will participate in the study?

- Ten fifth grade students. Five boys and five girls in the school division.

If I agree to participate, what will I be asked to do?

- Your parent needs to give me written permission so you can participate.
- You will need to give me written permission so you can participate.
- Answer 21 questions. It should not take more than an hour.
- Allow me to audio-record the interview.
- Allow me to take notes during the interview.
- Meet with me at your elementary school or an agreed upon public place for the interview.

How will things I say be kept private?

- A fake name of your choice will be used during the interview and study.
- Your real name, the name of your school, and the name of your school division will not be used in this study.
- I will keep research notes (including audio recordings) in a safe place.
- I will destroy all research notes (including audio recordings) after successful completion of the study.
- I will be the only person who will see and use the research notes (including audio recordings) except for my advisor and other Virginia Tech staff who may see my notes and recordings, because they are responsible for reviewing research.

Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board Project No. 14-723
Approved December 8, 2014 to September 28, 2015

- I will also share your interview responses with your parent (s) if they want them.

What if I choose not to take part in the study or want to leave the study?

- At any time, you may leave the study.
- You do not have to help with this study, if you do not want to.

What are the risks of being in the study?

- There are no expected risks.

What are the benefits of being in the study?

- There are no benefits of being in the study.

Who can I contact if I have questions?

- You can call me, LaQuiche Parrott, the researcher at (757) 268-6688 or email me at lparrott@vt.edu.
- If you have general questions about giving permission or your rights as a human participant, you may contact Dr. David Moore, Chair Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board at (540) 231-4991 or email: moored@vt.edu.

Statement of Consent:

- I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this form.
- I have been encouraged to ask questions.
- I have received answers to my questions.
- I give my permission to take part in this study.
- I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

Child Signature	**Date**	**Parent Signature**	**Date**
_____	_____	_____	_____

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

LaQuiche Parrott
Doctoral Candidate
Virginia Tech

Note: ***In some situations, it may be necessary for an investigator to break confidentiality. If a researcher has reason to suspect that a child is abused or neglected, or that a person poses a threat of harm to others or him/herself, the researcher is required by Virginia State law to notify the appropriate authorities. If applicable to this study, the conditions under which the investigator must break confidentiality must be described.***

Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board Project No. 14-723
Approved December 8, 2014 to September 28, 2015

APPENDIX G SELECTION OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION PROTOCOL

Selection of Student Participants Protocol

Study: *Academically Resilient Elementary Students in one Virginia school division: Identifying and Exploring Protective Factors*

Dear Elementary School Principal,

Please use the below criteria to randomly select a current Fifth grade girl and boy. Once completed, please notify me and I will retrieve this information and then contact the families. Criteria for selection of students:

- Free or Reduced lunch status during the 2012-2013 & 2013-2014 school terms
- Passing reading and mathematics scores on the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments during the 2012-2013 & 2013-2014 school terms

Gender/ Name	Phone Number (s)	Parent Name (s)	Reading SOL Score 12-13	Reading SOL Score 13-14	Mathematics SOL Score 12-13	Mathematics SOL Score 13-14
Boy:						
Girl:						

Additional Boy Information:

_____

_____

Additional Girl Information:

_____

_____

Thank you for your participation. Again, please call or email following the random selection of the student participants. Contact information: lparrott@vt.edu (email).

LaQuiche Parrott, Principal and VT Doctoral Student

APPENDIX H INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Protocol (Student)

Researcher Opening Script: I appreciate your help me with my research study. I am trying to find out what things help students be successful when they live in a rural area, like _____. Your ideas are very important to me. To make sure that I hear everything you say, I am going to take some notes and record our interview. No one else will hear the recording. After we talk, I'll transcribe the recording. Then I'll have a written copy of everything we talk about. I'll let you and your parent read that when I'm finished, if you would like. Here is a copy of the questions that I'm going to ask. You can read along as we go. I'll take some notes on my copy here.

Remember, your information will be kept private. No one will be able to read my notes and connect you with it. I will not mention _____, your school name or any other specific thing that would connect you to my study. I won't be using your name at all. I would like you to choose a name for me to use. This is called a pseudonym—like writers and movie stars sometimes use. Be thinking about what name you would like me to use. You can tell me when we read back through your interview in a couple of weeks. If you can't think of anything, then I can choose a name for you.
Do you have any questions before we start?

Interview Protocol: Student

Opening

1. Can you describe an experience or situation for me when you were aware that you were a good student (academically successful)?

Family

2. Please describe your family make-up (dynamics). Please name your family members.
3. How have your parents or any other family member helped in your elementary school education?
4. Please describe any close relationships that you have had with adults outside of your family that have helped your elementary education? For example: outside sports, Boys and Girls Club, etc.
5. Describe any influence these adults may have had regarding your elementary school education?

Community

6. How long have you lived in _____(community)? How long have you lived in your house?
7. If you knew someone who was going to move here, how would you describe _____ to him or her?
8. Please describe any ways in which living in _____ has helped you or has been supportive of your academic success in elementary school.
9. Who do you consider your friends at school? Do you know why they are your friends?
10. In what ways have your friendships impacted your learning at school?

School

11. How would you describe your K-5 elementary schooling?
12. What has helped you become a good student?
13. How comfortable do you feel in your elementary school?
14. Are there some academic (subjects) where you feel more successful than others? Why?
15. In what ways do you learn best?
16. If you could create the ideal classroom for yourself, what would it look like?
17. Based on what you described, have any of your elementary school classrooms look liked this in anyway?
18. Is there a favorite teacher and/ or other school staff member in your elementary school?
19. How did he/she help you become successful?
20. Describe your elementary school in one word?
21. Is this the same word you would use to describe your favorite teacher? Why?