8-2021

Educator Perceptions of Generational Poverty, Adverse Childhood Experiences and Student Learning

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Educator Perceptions of Generational Poverty, Adverse Childhood Experiences and Student Learning

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A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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by

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August 2021

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Keywords: generational poverty, adverse childhood experiences

ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine educators' perceptions of the effects of generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences on student learning and to understand the factors that might facilitate breaking the cycle of generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences with respect to student learning.

Data collection strategies included individual interviews and document review. Analysis of data occurred in three phases: categorization of data, building the explanation in narrative form and reexamination of the data. The analysis of the data was based on Payne's idea of generational poverty and the CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study.

The credibility of the analysis was protected by triangulation of data through multiple sources of evidence, establishment of a chain of evidence, and member checking. After interviews were conducted the following themes emerged as ways to break the cycle of generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences: tutoring/after school programs, mentors/peer buddies, educating educators, parent involvement, and accountability. The results are detailed in the study.

DEDICATION

The work is dedicated to my husband Brandon. He has supported me through years of education and through anything I have ever set my mind to. He encourages me to be my very best and supports me along the way. He has encouraged me to keep moving forward when I wanted to give up. He has made sure all my dreams come true.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There have been so many people who have helped me through this process. I want to thank the following people for their support:

- My children: Faith, Tucker, Molly Grace, Jack, and Hattie Joy- You have been amazing throughout this process. I love you all and could not be more proud of each of you.
- My family: Debra Hammonds, Faye Jackson, Joni and Ralph Cook, Hailee Hammonds, Justin and Rachel Cook-Without you I could not have completed this work. You have always supported me in anything I do. Thank you for your prayers, love, encouragement, and support.
- My Committee Members: Dr. Pam Scott, my chair; Dr. William Flora, Dr. Todd Griffith, Dr. Stephanie Barham. You have encouraged me and been so supportive of me throughout this work. I cannot thank you enough for all I have learned from you. You are wonderful!

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences are issues that exist throughout the United States and other countries. Teachers witness the daily effects of poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in education. The purpose of this research was to explore educator perspectives of generational poverty and ACEs and their effect on student learning and to identify educators' perspectives of what they identify as the needed components to break the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs for students.

Although there has been research on poverty in general, this study focused on generational poverty which may be perceived differently than situational poverty or poverty in general. In addition, this study is different due to the goal of understanding current educator perceptions of generational poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences and what current educators identify as the needed components to break the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs for students. Although research exists regarding poverty, specifically identifying educator perceptions regarding generational poverty and ACEs and their recommendations for breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs can be a powerful tool since they are with students each day.

Statement of Problem

Poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences are prevalent in schools across the nation. Child poverty is a global issue that affects around half the children in the world (McKinney, 2014).Children from low-income families often start school already behind their peers who come from more affluent families, as shown in measures of school readiness (Ferguson et al., 2007). The incidence, depth, duration and timing of poverty all influence a child's educational attainment, along with community characteristics and

social networks (Ferguson et al., 2007). Child poverty can be a barrier to children and young people accessing school education or achieving any form of success through participating in school education (McKinney, 2014). ACEs can provide toxic stress to children and their developing brain, causing a permanent change in brain chemistry (Smith, 2019). As stated by Chaundry and Wimer (2015), poverty is an important indicator of societal and child well-being, but poverty is more than just an indicator. Poverty and low income are causally related to worse child development outcomes, particularly cognitive developmental and educational outcomes (Chaudry & Wimer, 2015). As stated by Chaundry and Wimer (2015), the timing, duration, and community context of poverty also appear to matter for children's outcomes—with early experiences of poverty, longer durations of poverty, and higher concentrations of poverty in the community leading to worse child outcomes. No research was found on educator perceptions of generational poverty and ACEs and their effects on student learning.

Significance of Study

The results of this study may help educators determine how they can better serve and support students from generational poverty and ACEs by identifying their own perceptions around poverty and identifying factors that may aid in breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs. The recommendations for practice may serve as a model for schools to begin providing the support needed to combat generational poverty and ACEs and increase student learning.

This research plan is one that focuses on gaining understanding from educators that are in the schools and classrooms each day. The research questions are designed

to understand educators' perspectives of generational poverty and student learning and gain insight into what educators believe are the needed components to break the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs for students. By understanding how educators view the effects of generational poverty and ACEs and identifying what they believe are the needed components to break the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs for students, we may be able to better serve the students and families stuck in the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess educators' perceptions of the effects of generational poverty and ACEs on student learning and to identify educator perceptions of the educational factors that could facilitate breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning. The purpose of the study was also to identify educator perceptions of the educational factors that could inhibit breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning. The research may serve as a tool to open up conversations regarding poverty and ACEs and may provide the support needed to aid students in breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs within the school community.

Contextual Framework

The framework of the study is based on Payne's idea of generational poverty (2003) and around the CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. The Payne idea of generational poverty is one that is shaped around the basic ideas that individuals have eight resources which affect achievement. "Poverty is the extent to which an individual is without these eight resources" (Payne, 2003). According

to Payne, students from generational poverty come with a different set of rules and do not know the rules that govern the middle class. Language issues and the story structure of casual register cause some students to perform poorly on state tests. Direct teaching must occur to build cognitive structures. Finally, relationships are the key motivational factors for students from generational poverty. The Payne Framework for Understanding Poverty helps to guide the research to help identify the needed components to break the cycle of generational poverty in relation to education.

The CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study was conducted at Kaiser Permanente from 1995 to 1997. Over 17,000 individuals completed confidential surveys regarding their childhood experiences and their current health status and behaviors. The major findings of the research is that Adverse Childhood Experiences occur across all populations. The adverse childhood experiences identified by the CDC-Kaiser study are physical, emotional, sexual abuse, physical and emotional neglect, and household dysfunction such as mental illness, mother treated violently, divorce, incarcerated relative, and substance abuse.

Payne's idea of generational poverty and the CDC-Kaiser study come together to create the contextual framework for this body of research. Both Payne and the CDC-Kaiser study help to identify struggles that students may face in schools. The work helps identify students that may be at risk for low academic achievement. This study will help to examine educators' perceptions of the effects of generational poverty and ACES on student learning and to understand educators' perceptions of educational factors that might facilitate breaking the cycle of generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences with respect to student learning.

Research Questions

The research questions were designed to identify educator perceptions of generational poverty and ACEs. To identify educator perceptions of generational poverty and ACEs and to identify the components to break the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs to increase student learning the following questions guided the research:

1. What are educator perceptions of the effects of generational poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences on student learning?
2. What are educator perceptions of educational factors that would facilitate breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning?
3. What are educator perceptions of educational factors that would inhibit breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning?

Definition of Terms

Generational Poverty- occurs in families where at least two generations have been born into poverty. Families living in this type of poverty are not equipped with the tools to move out of their situations (Jensen, 2010).

Adverse Childhood Experiences- Adverse Childhood Experiences of ACEs are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years) (2019).

Limitations and Delimitations

The study is limited to educators serving students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Educator perceptions regarding generational poverty and ACES and the needed components to break the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs may vary based on their experience within specific grade levels. This study was limited to educator

perceptions of one county and cannot measure the perceptions of educators within other districts; however, the research could be extended to multiple counties and states.

Chapter Summary

For students living in generational poverty and struggling with Adverse Childhood Experiences they are filled with daily struggles which impact the learning that takes place within the school setting. The perceptions of generational poverty and ACES and the support offered in the school setting can play an important role in the lives of students for the future. This study is an examination of educators perceptions of generational poverty and ACEs and what they identify as the needed components to break the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs in an effort to increase student learning.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

The literature available regarding generational poverty and ACEs is extensive. There are numerous research studies that have been completed that suggests strategies for teachers to help students in generational poverty and struggling with ACEs. Many of these studies are based on the groundwork laid by Ruby Payne and the CDC-Kaiser study. There seems to be a gap in research that addresses educator perspectives and beliefs regarding generational poverty and ACEs in the classroom and what educators think are the needed components to break the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs. Generational Poverty and ACEs have the ability to negatively impact students as they move toward academic achievement. It is important to understand the link between generational poverty and ACEs to better understand how educators can effectively improve student achievement.

Those that lack the income needed to provide basic needs such as food, clothing or shelter are considered poor or living in poverty. Poverty has also been described as, “a chronic and debilitating condition that results from multiple adverse synergistic risk factors and affects the mind, body, and soul” (Jensen, 2009). Poverty, as described by Payne (2009), ...is the extent to which an individual is without resources: financial, emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, support systems, relationships/role models, knowledge of hidden rules, and formal register. Poverty directly impacts students across the United States. “Children start life on unequal economic footing, and this has important implications for their future well-being” (Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2012). Children living in poverty can lack the opportunities of those in middle or upper class, especially if they are in the cycle of generational poverty.

Generational poverty is poverty that existed for two or more generations and can be difficult to escape due to the idea that children often follow a similar path to their parents. “Social and economic deprivation during childhood and adolescence can have a lasting effect on individuals, making it difficult for children who grow up in low-income families to escape poverty when they become adults” (Wagmiller & Adelman, 2009). “Education is the brightest hope for breaking the cycle of multi-generational poverty. But, kids born to poor, undereducated parents aren't likely to succeed at school without help that targets their family situations, and that help is most needed during their earliest years” (Baker, 2012). The cycle of generational poverty can continue without early year intervention.

Researchers have provided numerous recommendations for breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs. One approach is the Two Generation Approach to breaking the cycle of generational poverty. The two-generation approach helps children and families get education and workforce training, social supports like parenting skills, and health care they need to create a legacy of economic stability and overall well-being that passes from one generation to the next (Boyd, 2018). One solution, authors argue, is to support more programs that address the needs of parents *and* children simultaneously (Wogan, 2014). By recognizing that the futures of both children and their parents are intertwined, the Two Generation approach is a framework that provides simultaneous resources to the different members of families. Another approach is the Whole Family Approach (Kidd, 2020). There is an indisputable connection between family stability and a child’s development. Key to stability is economic and financial support (Kidd, 2020). Whereas many programs tend to arrange parent-oriented and

child-oriented programs into separate silos, two-generation programs and policies seek to engage families in ways that knit together these services and address both groups simultaneously (Teague, 2015). Teague (2015) suggests, the idea behind the framework is that when opportunities for children and parents are approached jointly, the benefits may be greater than the sum of the separate parts. This approach often promotes joining together two types of programs to serve families. According to Teague (2015), one type includes early childhood development programs such as home visiting, Head Start/Early Head Start, and successful transition to elementary school. At the same time, the approach attempts to link these efforts to services such as postsecondary education and workforce development that focus on parents in their role as breadwinners (Teague, 2015). Teague (2015) indicates, promoting early education and supports for children along with tools to improve parents' economic situation, the two-generation approach expects that outcomes for both will improve.

Two-generation approaches also build on a core tenet of child development research findings, namely that parents are critical to children's healthy development (Teague, 2015). Teague (2015) states, children can also affect parents' ability to succeed. When children are sick or having difficulties at school or other problems, parents working in jobs without paid leave may not be able to fully attend to them without compromising their employment. Though more research is needed, there is some evidence that a two-generation approach can disrupt the cycle of poverty for families (Teague, 2015).

The Whole Family approach is similar to the Two Generation Approach. The Whole Family approach focuses on the family unit as a whole. If we want to address

poverty and the impact it has on children, we have to help increase the employment and education prospects of parents and break the inter-generational cycle that can plague poor families (Lombardi, 2016). The demographics of families in poverty around the world may be diverse, but parents' dreams for their children are similar everywhere: good health, a good education, economic stability and a better future (Lombardi, 2016). The Whole Family approach addresses the entire family unit. Rather than addressing the need of the service user or individual daily members in isolation, provision recognizes and focuses on shared needs and/or the strengths apparent in interrelationships and collective assets (Morris et al., 2008). Both the Two Generation and Whole Family approach to breaking the cycle of poverty focus on more than just the child recognizing that breaking the cycle of poverty starts with the adults in the child's life.

The little research that involves educator perceptions and recommendations in research are geared more toward poverty in general. From this research we know that poverty can have a huge impact on student learning. Another component of this study is to identify educator perceptions regarding Adverse Childhood Experiences and to identify the needed components to break the cycle of ACEs to increase student achievement.

Adverse Childhood Experiences are traumatic events that happen in the lifetime of a child that they remember into adulthood. ACEs can include physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, physical and emotional neglect, and household dysfunction such as mental illness, mother treated violently, divorce, incarcerated relative, and substance

abuse. ACEs have the ability to not only alter the experiences in youth but also have the ability to affect adulthood as well.

Poverty Defined

Poverty is defined as the extent to which someone does without needed resources (Payne, 2003). Family income has much stronger associations with achievement and ability-related outcomes for children than with measures of health and behavior (Duncan et al., 1998). Poor families are more likely to be headed by a single parent that often has low educational attainment, is unemployed, has low earning potential, and is young. Poor children suffer higher incidences of adverse health, development, and other outcomes than non-poor children. The effects of long-term poverty on measures of children's cognitive ability were significantly greater than the effects of short-term poverty (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997).

Despite a voluminous literature on poverty stretching over many centuries, there is little agreement about the definition, measurement, causes and solutions (Knight, 2017). Poverty is not a weakness of individual character but a problem of social structure and economic mismanagement (Knight, 2017). Far from simple, poverty is multidimensional in its symptoms, multivariate in its causes, dynamic in its trajectory, and quite complex in its relation to health. Conceptions of poverty are based upon societal values and norms (Mowafi & Khawaja, 2005). An important dimension of poverty is its persistence over time.

Family type has a significant bearing on poverty. In the United States, being in poverty is officially defined as having an income below a federally determined poverty

threshold. Poverty thresholds were developed in the 1960s and are adjusted annually to account for inflation.

Families headed by two parents are likely to have more resources than single-parent households making it less likely to be poor. Poverty rates also differ by age group. Working adults had lower poverty rates. Some families cycle in and out of poverty while others are consistently poor. Poverty can influence the life of both children and adults as they move forward in life.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been especially difficult for those living in poverty. For people of low socio-economic status (SES), a number of factors increase their exposure to COVID-19(Patel et al., 2020). First, economically disadvantaged people are more likely to live in overcrowded accommodation (Patel et al., 2020). Second, financially poorer people are often employed in occupations that do not provide opportunities to work from home (Patel et al., 2020). Third, those in low SES groups are more likely to have unstable work conditions and incomes, conditions exacerbated by the responses to COVID-19 and its aftermath (Patel et al., 2020). Such financial uncertainty disproportionately harms the mental health of those in low SES groups and exacerbates their stress (Patel et al., 2020). Fourth, people of low SES present to healthcare services at a more advanced stage of illness, resulting in poorer health outcomes (Patel et al., 2020). Finally, there is emerging evidence that hypertension and diabetes are risk factors for death from COVID-19(Patel et al., 2020). This is notable because poverty is itself a risk factor for these conditions (Patel et al., 2020). In summary, a combination of factors leaves the most economically disadvantaged particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 (Patel et al., 2020).

Income poverty is typically measured as whether a family's total annual income falls below a specified poverty line (Parolin et al., 2020). The Census Bureau's annual poverty estimates, for example, show the share of individuals whose total income in a given calendar year falls below the poverty line (Parolin et al., 2020). Poverty is most often measured on an annual basis according to a family unit's annual resources (Parolin et al., 2020). In October 2019, we estimate that the poverty rate was around 15 percent (Parolin et al., 2020). This is higher than annual estimates of poverty in recent years (11.7 percent in 2019), as expected given that the monthly measure only includes income received in the given month (Parolin, Curran et al., 2020). The 15 percent monthly poverty rate remained relatively stable through February 2020(Parolin et al., 2020). In March, as the COVID-19 crisis began to unfold in the U.S., unemployment rates increased from 3.5 to 4.5 percent; at the same time, a large share of families received their Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) transfers, contributing to a lower poverty level of around 12 percent in March (Parolin et al., 2020). In April, however, unemployment climbed to above 15 percent (Parolin et al., 2020). Findings suggest that rates of monthly poverty increased from around 15 percent in February 2020 to 16.7 percent in September 2020, even after taking the CARES Act's transfers into account (Parolin et al., 2020).

Rural Poverty

Rural Poverty occurs in nonmetropolitan areas with populations below 50,000. In rural areas, there are more single-guardian households, and families often have less access to services, support for disabilities, and quality education opportunities. Programs to encourage transition from welfare to work are problematic in remote rural

areas, where job opportunities are few (Whitener et al., 2003). Although rural is not synonymous with poverty, rural communities often suffer poverty's effects (Young, 2004). The nonmetro/metro poverty rate gap for the South has historically been the largest. Rural communities struggle not only with isolation and remoteness, but a significantly older and declining population, with less-educated and poorer citizens than in urban areas (Flores, 2010). Rural workers are twice as likely to make only minimum wage and more likely to be working, yet still poor. According to Flores (2010), rural poverty also tends to be more persistent and longer term than that found in cities. Poverty rates in rural areas can be as high or even higher than those in our major cities (Dudenhefer). Poverty is a social problem that is both universally recognized and personally experienced by all too many people in rural and urban areas (Tickamyer et al., 2017). Poverty has a strong relationship to geography in the United States. The rural or non-metro poverty rates are higher than those of metro areas. People living in poverty tend to be clustered in neighborhoods, regions, or counties instead of being spread out across the nation. This is the same with rural poverty. The metro and non-metro poverty rate is based on certain regions in the country. Some regions may have a higher non-metro poverty rate and lower metro poverty rate whereas it could be opposite in other areas of the country. Nonmetro counties with the highest rate of poverty are primarily in the South. Only two of those counties were metro. An important dimension of poverty is its persistence over time. A community with higher poverty rates for multiple years in a row face a higher rate of challenges than if poverty was only high for one year. Poverty rates for rural Americans are higher than in urban areas. Rural communities struggle not only with isolation and remoteness, but a significantly older

and declining population, with less- educated and poorer citizens than in urban areas (Flores, 2010). Poverty rates for children in rural areas are consistently higher than children in urban areas. One in five poor children lives in a rural area (Flores, 2010). In addition, rural workers are twice as likely to be working but making minimum wage and still considered poor. According to Flores (2010), rural poverty also tends to be more persistent and longer term than that found in cities.

Urban Poverty

Urban poverty occurs in metropolitan areas with populations of at least 50,000 people. The urban poor deal with complex stressors such as crowding, violence, and noise and are often dependent on large-city services. Studies consistently show that concentrated poverty exacerbates the challenges of being poor, as residents face higher crime rates, underperforming schools, poor health outcomes, and substandard housing options. The effects are particularly hard on children, who face increased levels of stress that can lead to emotional and behavioral problems (Ross, 2013). Families living in urban poverty often experience crime, affordable housing shortages, public transportation difficulties, job loss, and segregation. According to Ross (2013), poverty is a problem that is not limited by geography, but rather is impacted by it. Urban poverty entails many of the same challenges that rural poverty does, including transportation barriers and shortages of affordable housing (Callahan et al., 2018).

There are many problems that face those living in urban poverty. Crime, affordable housing, public transportation, and segregation. Crime is a problem that particularly affects people living in concentrated poverty which is more frequent in urban settings than in rural or suburban areas (Ross, 2013). Affordable-housing shortages can

be an issue for those in urban poverty. The number of low income renters exceed the number of affordable rental units available (Ross, 2013). According to Ross, the affordable-housing crisis is complicated by the fact that housing tends to be more expensive in areas with good public transportation. Low income people tend to live in neighborhoods in cities where transportation is unreliable. Segregation is an issue in urban poverty. In fact, poor whites and Latinos are more suburbanized than poor blacks, who are still mainly concentrated in urban areas and may face barriers to pursuing suburban jobs (Ross, 2013). It is important to remember the links between race, poverty, and geography as we ensure policies and interventions are in place to help those in need.

Relative Poverty

Relative Poverty refers to the economic status of a family whose income is insufficient to meet its society's average standard of living. Relative poverty means low income or resources in relation to the average. Relative poverty is when people's standard of living is much lower than the general standard in the country or region in which they live so that they struggle to live a normal life and to participate in ordinary economic, social, and cultural activities (Knight, 2017). Relative poverty is concerned with how worse off an individual or household is with respect to others in the same society (Mowafi & Khawaja, 2005). Relative poverty is changeable based on the economic growth of the country. Relative poverty means people are not living in total poverty but they are not experiencing the same standard of life of others in the country. They could be missing out on a healthy environment or education. Relative poverty can

also be permanent meaning some families are trapped in a low income status. It means being excluded from what is considered normal daily life. Relative poverty is about people not having the same chance to enjoy the same living standard as others.

Absolute Poverty

Absolute Poverty, which is rare in the United States, involves a scarcity of such necessities as shelter, running water, and food. Families who live in absolute poverty tend to focus on day-to-day survival. Absolute Poverty is a lack of sufficient resources with which to meet basic needs (Knight, 2017). Those living in absolute poverty lack the set of resources a person must acquire to maintain a minimum standard of living for survival. It depends not only on income but also on access to services. It is a matter of acute deprivation, hunger, premature death, and suffering (Mowafi & Khawaja, 2005).

Situational Poverty

Situational poverty exists for a shorter time and often caused by circumstances like death, illness, or divorce (Payne, 2003). Other events causing situational poverty may include environmental disasters, divorce, or severe health problems. “Short term poverty was also associated with more behavior problems, though the effects were not as large as those for persistent poverty (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Situational poverty is generally caused by a sudden crisis or loss and is often temporary. Events causing situational poverty include environmental disasters, divorce, or severe health problems (Jensen, 2009). Poverty involves a complex array of risk factors that adversely affect the population in a multitude of ways (Jensen, 2009). According to Jensen (2009), there are four primary risk factors afflicting families living in poverty:

emotional and social challenges, acute and chronic stressors, cognitive lags, and health and safety issues. Compared with well-off children, poor children are disproportionately exposed to adverse social and physical environments (Jensen, 2009). Currently there are numerous families experiencing situational poverty due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Generational Poverty

Generational Poverty occurs in families where at least two generations have been born into poverty (Jensen, 2009). For someone in Generational Poverty they may have never owned land, never known anyone who benefited from education, may be highly mobile, and may focus on making it through the day. According to Jensen (2009), families living in this type of poverty are not equipped with the tools to move out of their situations. Generational Poverty is when a family's economic level remains low for two or more generations.

Generational Poverty has its own culture, hidden rules, and belief systems (Payne, 2019). Unfortunately, what is often part of the culture of generational poverty is instability, violence, food insecurities, unemployment, unaddressed health issues, addiction, homelessness, crowded housing, incarceration, under education, limited knowledge bases, and death (Payne, 2019). There are often certain patterns of behavior associated with generational poverty including background noise, importance of personality, significance of entertainment, importance of relationships, matriarchal structure, oral-language tradition, survival orientation, identity for men tied to lover/fighter role, identity for women tied to rescuer, martyr role ,ownership of people, negative orientation, discipline, belief in fate, polarized thinking, sense of humor, lack of order, living in the moment (Payne, 2019).

According to Payne (2019), education is the key to getting out and staying out of generational poverty. Individuals leave generational poverty for one of four reasons: a situation that is so painful anything else would be better, a goal or vision of something they want to be or have, a specific talent or ability that provides an opportunity for them, or someone who sponsors them such as a role model to show them a different way (Payne, 2019).

Hopelessness creates a bondage for an individual. Many people are unaware they can improve their condition. Under the condition of hopelessness people often leave planning out of the thought process.

There are three key factors related to generational poverty: hopelessness, surviving vs. planning, and values and patterns. They are simply focused on the issue of the day. They do not think forward into the future. The values of those in Generational Poverty center more on survival and short term outcomes. Middle class families are more focused on work, education, and being a productive member of society. Generational Poverty is passed down from generation to generation. It's a combination of hopelessness, scarcity mindset and toxic stress (Flores, 2020). Almost all the psychological issues with generational poverty are centered around finances (Flores, 2020). Education is the most effective way to break generational poverty. Education can help families find hope and it provides them with a path to reach their dreams.

Poverty at Home and School

Although childhood is generally considered to be a time of joyful, carefree exploration, children living in poverty tend to spend less time finding out about the world around them and more time struggling to survive within it (Jensen, 2009). Children in poverty also have fewer cognitive-enrichment opportunities. They have fewer books at home, visit the library less often, and spend considerably more time watching TV than their middle-income counterparts do (Kumanyika & Grier, 2006). Children living in poverty often come from single family homes and their parents may be less responsive. Poverty includes numerous risk factors that can affect families and students in numerous ways. The four primary risk factors affecting families in poverty are: emotional and social challenges, acute and chronic stressors, cognitive lags, and health and safety issues. A number of studies have found that a child's home environment- opportunities for learning, warmth of mother-child interactions, and the physical conditions of the home- account for a substantial portion of the effects of family income on cognitive outcomes in young children. In one study, differences in the home environment also seemed to account for some of the effects of poverty status on behavioral problems (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Chronic socioeconomic deprivation can create environments that undermine the development of self and the capacity for self-determination and self-efficacy (Jensen, 2009). Common issues in low-income families include depression, chemical dependence, and hectic work schedules all factors that interfere with the healthy attachments that foster children's self-esteem, sense of mastery of their environments and optimistic attitudes (Jensen, 2009).

Social and economic deprivation during childhood and adolescence can have a lasting effect on individuals, making it difficult for children who grow up in low-income families to escape poverty when they become adults (Wagmiller & Adelman, 2020). Individuals who grow up in poor families are more likely to be poor in early adulthood. The chances of being poor in early adulthood increase as their time spent living in poverty during childhood increases (Wagmiller & Adelman, 2020).

In 2019, the year with the most recently available data, 14% of children under age 18, or 10.5 million children, were living in poverty, down from 22%, or 16.3 million, in 2010 (Thomas & Fry, 2020). All major racial and ethnic groups saw declines since 2010, but the greatest decreases were in the shares of Black and Hispanic children living in poverty (Thomas & Fry, 2020). About two-in-ten Hispanic children (21%) were living in poverty in 2019, down from 35% in 2010 (Thomas & Fry, 2020). According to Thomas and Fry (2020), in 2019, 26% of Black children were impoverished, dropping from 39% in 2010. Even so, Black and Hispanic children were still about three times as likely as Asian (7%) and White (8%) children to be living in poverty (Thomas & Fry, 2020).

Poverty is harmful for children because it harms the brain and other body systems, creates and widens achievement gaps, leads to poor physical, emotional, and behavioral health, poor children are more likely to live in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty which is associated with numerous social ills, and poverty can harm children through the negative effects it has on their families and the home environment (Murphey & Redd, 2014). Children who experience poverty have an

increased likelihood of numerous chronic illnesses and a shortened life expectancy extending into adulthood. Starting in infancy, gaps begin to widen for children in poverty. Gaps are evident in the key aspects of learning, knowledge, and social-emotional development (Murphey & Redd, 2014). Poor children are more likely to drop out of school and less likely to obtain post-secondary education. According to Murphy and Redd (2014), growing up poor increases the likelihood that children will have poor health including poor emotional and behavioral health. Research has found that growing up in neighborhoods where they are exposed to environmental toxins and other physical hazards, including crime and violence has been linked to negative academic outcomes, more social and behavioral problems, and poorer health and physical fitness outcomes (Murphey & Redd, 2014). The strengths of poor families are often overlooked as parent's experience numerous challenges that can affect parents emotional wellbeing as well as that of the children. Poor parents report higher stress, aggravation, and depressive symptoms than do higher income parents (Murphey & Redd, 2014). Children experiencing poverty at home have higher than a 90% chance of having 1 or more problems with speech, learning, and/or emotional development.

Compared with well-off children, poor children are disproportionately exposed to adverse social and physical environments (Jensen, 2009). Low income neighborhoods likely have less resources available and have a higher rate of crime and less safety. Poor children's' households are more crowded and contain greater safety hazards. According to Jensen (2009), poor children have fewer less supportive networks than their more affluent counterparts do live in neighborhoods that are lower in social capital; and, as adolescents, are more likely to rely on peers than adults for social and

emotional support. Poor children have fewer cognitive-enrichment opportunities as well. Often, poor children live in chaotic, unstable households (Jensen, 2009). Single parent homes strains resources and correlates to lower grades and poor school attendance. Chronic socioeconomic deprivation can create environments that undermine the development of self and the capacity for self-determination and self-efficacy (Jensen, 2009). Compared with their more affluent peers, low SES children form more stress-ridden attachments with parents, teachers, and adult care givers and have difficulty establishing rewarding friendships with children their own age (Jensen, 2009). Jensen (2009) states, common issues in low income families include depression, chemical dependence, and hectic work schedules- all factors that interfere with the healthy attachments that foster children's self-esteem, sense of mastery of their environment, and optimistic attitudes. Poor children often feel isolated which can then start the downward spiral of unhappy life events.

In 2017 42.9% (464, 569*)* of Tennessee Students received free and reduced lunch. That means 21.1% (313,432.) of Tennessee children live in poverty. (Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, 2019). The more impoverished a person is during childhood, the more likely that person is to receive public assistance as an adult (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Parents who are poor are likely to be less healthy, both emotionally and physically, than those who are not poor (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Attendance problems often indicate negative parent attitudes toward school. Educational attainment is well recognized as a powerful predictor of experiences later in life (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). For low-income children, a 10,000 increase in mean family income between birth and age 5 was associated with nearly a full-year

increase in completed schooling (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Poverty is generally understood to have a negative effect on school achievement (Young, 2004).

Poverty affects school achievement. Childhood poverty rates are higher in the United States than in any other industrialized country, and this rate is on the rise (Parrett & Budge, 2015).

Schools have the ability to help reduce the negative effects of poverty. Successfully educating all students to high standards is critical to ultimately eliminating poverty (Parrett & Budge, 2015). Although improvements in public education alone will not eliminate poverty, such improvements are an important part of the solution (Parrett & Budge, 2015).

Poverty Rates and Economically Disadvantaged Percentages

The official poverty rate in 2017 was 12.3 percent, down 0.4 percentage points from 12.7 percent in 2016. In 2017, there were 39.7 million people in poverty, not statisti-cally different from the number in poverty in 2016 (US Census Bureau, 2019). In 2017, nearly 40 million people lived below the poverty line in the United States. The official poverty rate in 2019 was 10.5%, a decrease of 1.3 percentage points from 11.8% in 2018 (US Census Bureau, 2020). Since 2014, the poverty rate has fallen 4.3 percentage points, from 14.8% to 10.5% (US Census Bureau, 2020). The 2019 poverty rate is the lowest rate observed since estimates were produced in 1959. The number of people in poverty in 2019 was 34.0 million, 4.2 million fewer people than 2018 (US Census Bureau, 2020). Between 2018 and 2019, poverty rates declined for all major race and Hispanic origin groups (US Census Bureau, 2020). According to the US Census Bureau (2020), the poverty rates for whites decreased by 1 percentage point to

9.1%. The poverty rate for Blacks decreased 2 percentage points to 18.8% (US Census Bureau, 2020). The poverty rate for Asians decreased 2.8 percentage points to 7.3% (US Census Bureau, 2020). The poverty rate for Hispanics decreased by 1.8 percentage points to 15.7% (US Census Bureau, 2020). Between 2018 and 2019, poverty rates for children under the age of 18 decreased 1.8 percentage points, from 16.2% to 14.4% (US Census Bureau, 2020).

Adverse Childhood Experiences Defined

A questionnaire about adverse childhood experiences was mailed to 13,494 adults who had completed a standardized medical evaluation at a large HMO; 9,508 (70.5%) responded. Seven categories of adverse childhood experiences were studied: psychological, physical, or sexual abuse; violence against mother; or living with household members who were substance abusers, mentally ill or suicidal, or ever imprisoned. The number of categories of these adverse childhood experiences was then compared to measures of adult risk behavior, health status, and disease. Adverse childhood experiences include childhood emotional, physical, or sexual abuse and household dysfunction during childhood. The categories are verbal abuse, physical abuse, contact sexual abuse, a battered mother, household substance abuse, household mental illness, incarcerated household members, and parental separation or divorce (Brown et al., 2010).

Experiencing many ACEs, as well as things like racism and community violence, without supportive adults, can cause what's known as toxic stress (2020). This long term stress can cause long lasting wear and tear on the brain and body. ACEs research shows the correlation between early adversity and poor outcomes later in life (2020).

There is strong evidence linking ACEs and poor outcomes in adulthood both in terms of mental and physical health (Steptoe et al., 2019). ACEs are potentially traumatic events that occur before a child reaches the age of 18(Bradford, 2020). Such experiences can interfere with a person's health, opportunities and stability throughout his or her lifetime and can even affect future generations (Bradford, 2020).

Family income correlates to academic success. Due to issues of transportation, health care, and family care, high tardy rates and absenteeism are common problems among poor students (Jensen, 2009). Absenteeism is most closely associated with drop-out rates. Attendance problems often indicate negative parent attitudes toward school (Jensen, 2009). Poor children are also more likely to attend poor schools. Kids raised in poverty are more likely to lack -and need-a caring, dependable adult in their lives, and its teachers to whom children look for that support (Jensen, 2009).

Gaps in both the evidence base and research priorities still exist...when it comes to ACEs (Steptoe et al., 2019). These include understanding how to identify and assess risk in children who have experienced ACEs, and also the development and, importantly, the evaluation of interventions (Steptoe et al., 2019). Outstanding gaps include whether there are sensitive periods during childhood, the role of resilience/protective factors, the causal relationships, biological mechanisms and relative risk of ACEs for particular negative outcomes (Steptoe et al., 2019). ACEs affect individual children differently and chronic exposure appears to increase the risk of poor outcomes in adulthood, meaning interventions should also be tailored to the individual children, families and communities (Steptoe et al., 2019).

Generational Poverty, ACES and Negative Health Outcomes

Increased exposure to ACEs has demonstrated a dose-response relationship to a host of behavioral, health, and mental health problems (Kessler et al., 2002). Poverty is a strong reinforcing factor in the accumulation of ACEs and subsequent toxic stress correlated with unfavorable health outcomes in adulthood, childhood poverty, chronic stress, self-regulation, and coping (Evans, 2013). Being poor is associated with so many childhood adversities that it may be considered an ACE in itself, more pervasive and persistent than all others (Hughes & Tucker, 2018). Evidence indicates that poverty is highly related to ACE exposure and that children living in poverty are more likely than their peers to experience frequent and intense adversities (Steele & Steele, 2016). In the absence of protective factors, toxic stress can change a child's neural architecture and result in emotional disorders and cognitive deficits (Shonkoff & Garner, 2012).

A variety of childhood adversities have a root cause in family economic insufficiency including childhood poverty, chronic stress, self-regulation, and coping(Evans, 2013). Poverty may likely be the first adversity that many children experience (Hughes & Tucker, 2018). The ongoing longitudinal Adverse Childhood Experiences Study of adults has found significant associations between chronic conditions; quality of life and life expectancy in adulthood; and the trauma and stress associated with adverse childhood experiences, including physical or emotional abuse or neglect, deprivation, or exposure to violence (Bethell et al., 2014). The deleterious impact of ACEs may be confounded with frequently co-occurring social disadvantage (Nurius et al., 2012). The effects of long-term poverty on measures of children's

cognitive ability were significantly greater than the effects of short-term poverty (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997).

Poverty is a strong reinforcing factor in the accumulation of ACEs and subsequent toxic stress correlated with unfavorable health outcomes in adulthood Childhood poverty, chronic stress, self-regulation, and coping (Evans, 2013).

Being poor is associated with so many childhood adversities that it may be considered an ACE in itself, more pervasive and persistent than all others (Hughes & Tucker, 2018). A growing body of evidence indicates that poverty is highly comorbid with ACE exposure and that children living in poverty are more likely than their peers to experience frequent and intense adversities (Steele et al., 2016).

In a study completed using data from 52, 250 US adults from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) found that experiencing childhood physical, verbal, or sexual abuse, witnessing parental domestic violence, experiencing parental domestic violence, experiencing parental divorce, and living with someone who was depressed, abused drugs or alcohol, or who had been incarcerated were associated with one or more of the following health outcomes: self-rated health, functional limitations, diabetes, and heart attack (Monnatt & Chandler, 2015).

Available trend data on ACEs from the 20th century show multi-decade declines in parental death, parental illness, sibling death, and poverty, but multi-decade increases in parental divorce, parental drug abuse and parental incarceration (Finkelhor, 2020). More recent trend data on ACEs for the first fifteen to eighteen years of the 21st century show declines in parental illness, sibling death, exposure to domestic violence, childhood poverty, parental divorce, serious childhood illness,

physical abuse, sexual abuse, physical and emotional bullying and exposure to community violence (Finkelhor, 2020). Two 21st century ACE increases were for parental alcohol and drug abuse (Finkelhor, 2020). Overall, there appear to have been more historical and recent improvements in ACEs than deteriorations (Finkelhor, 2020). But the US still lags conspicuously behind other developed countries on many of these indicators (Finkelhor, 2020).

Inequalities and a Call for Reform

For many living in poverty basic human rights are out of reach. Adverse Childhood Experiences have been linked to adult health problems and are the leading cause of morbidity and mortality. A series of retrospective studies conducted over the past 20 years have shown a consistent and strong relationship between the cumulative number of ACEs and several common chronic medical and behavioral health conditions including cardiovascular disease, depression, and substance abuse (Halfon et al., 2017).

ACEs can affect health and development across the life course. ACEs have been found to be important contributors to negative health outcomes throughout the lifespan (Ceprek et al., 2019). Birth to 5 years represent a critical period for brain development impacting cognitive, emotional, and social competencies (Ceprek et al., 2019). Despite a general understanding that adversity is associated with lower income, we know less about how ACEs manifest at different income levels and how these income-related patterns affect children's health and development (Halfon et al., 2017). Although identifying and treating ACE exposure is important, prioritizing primary prevention of ACEs is critical to improve health and life outcomes throughout the lifespan and across

generations (Merrick et al., 2014). Adversity is often associated with different levels of income (Halfo et al., 2017).

Creating successful environments for learning in high poverty schools involves providing support for families as well as care and challenges for students.

Assuring the healthy development of all children is essential for societies seeking to achieve their full health, social, and economic potential (Metzler et al., 2016).Understanding the potential impact of early adversity across the life course is critical to breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty (Metzler et al., 2016). Given that the consequences of ACEs in early adulthood may lead to later morbidity and mortality, increased investment in programs and policies that prevent ACEs and ameliorate their impacts is warranted (Mersky et al., 2013).

Resources that Influence Achievement

Resources that influence achievement are financial, emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, support systems, role models, and knowledge of hidden rules (Payne, 2009).

Financial

Financial resources are described as the money to purchase goods and services. This is an internal resource and shows itself through stamina, perseverance, and choices. These are external resources. For low-income children, a 10,000 increase in mean family income between birth and age 5 was associated with nearly a full-year increase in completed schooling (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). The ability to leave poverty is more dependent on other resources than it is on financial resources.

Financial Resources are important for families; however, it is also important to look at the financial funding of public school. On average, children from low-income

families have lower test scores and rates of high school and college completion, and eventually lower earnings than their peers from higher income families (Rothstein et al., 2018). Addressing these disparities is key to breaking the cycle of poverty and inequality across generations (Rothstein et al., 2018). School resources play a major role in student achievement and can show major reductions in inequality between high and low income schools (Rothstein et al., 2018).

As hard as it is to believe, the perception that funding makes little or no difference in student success persists (Barrett, 2018). Barrett (2018) states, right now in many states, schools with the highest-need students receive fewer resources than those serving the most affluent, which translates to less experienced teachers, larger classes, and, ultimately, lower graduation rates and lower achievement levels. Aggregate per-pupil spending increases student outcomes in every situation, an effect that was larger in some studies than others, and mattered more for low income students (Barrett, 2018). A specific study cited by Baker showed that a "21.7% increase in per-pupil spending throughout all 12 school-age years for children from low-income families is large enough to eliminate the education attainment gap between children from low-income and non-poor families (Barrett, 2018). Money matters for smaller class sizes, additional instructional supports, and early childhood education outcomes (Barrett, 2018). These critical resources improve outcomes dramatically, especially for poor and minority students (Barrett, 2018).

Emotional

Emotional Resources are the ability to choose and control emotional responses, particularly to negative situations, without engaging in self-destructive behavior (Payne,

2003). Poor children suffer from emotional and behavioral problems more frequently than do non poor children (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). This is an internal resource and is gained through perseverance, stamina, and choices. We learn to act and react through the socialization process. Especially if you have no role-models to follow. Emotional Poverty is when the brain is unregulated, when inner-self is underdeveloped, attachment is insecure, and external environment about less than and separate from (Payne, 2009).

The few studies of emotion and achievement have largely focused on anxiety, but there has been scant theoretical and empirical attention devoted to the treatment of other emotions (Valiente et al., 2012). It is suggested that considering the moderated and indirect effects of students' emotions on their academic functioning may provide an understanding of whether and under what circumstances emotions are related to achievement (Valiente et al., 2012). Findings linking situational and dispositional negative or positive emotions to academic achievement and suggests that researchers can learn much about relations between emotions and achievement by considering the potential moderating role of effortful control, as well as considering the mediating roles that cognitive processes, motivational mechanisms, and classroom relationships play in linking emotions and achievement (Valiente et al., 2012).

Mental

Mental Resources are the necessary intellectual ability and acquired skills, such as reading, writing, and computing, to deal with everyday life. Parents who are poor are likely to be less healthy, both emotionally and physically than those who are not poor. Some studies have established that parental mental health accounts for some of the

effect of economic circumstances on child health and behavior (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Studies over the last 20 years indicate a close interaction between factors associated with poverty and mental-ill health (Patel, 2001). Common mental disorders are about twice as frequent among the poor as among the rich (Patel et al., 1999).

People living in poverty lack basic resources to maintain simple living standards. Lack of employment due to mental disorder can drive people further into poverty and prevent them from receiving the treatment they need. 9.8 million adults had serious mental illness in 2015. Nearly 25% of these individuals lived below the poverty line.

There is a connection between mental illness and poverty. Sohn (2026) states, as data builds to connect tough economic circumstances with mental struggles, scientists are still trying to answer a trickier question: Which causes which? Poverty can be one factor that interacts with genetics, adverse life events or substance abuse (Sohn, 2016). Mental illness and poverty interact in a vicious cycle that has an impact throughout the lifespan (Lund, 2020).

Spiritual and Physical Resources

Spiritual Resources is described as a belief in divine purpose and guidance. This is a powerful resource because individuals do not see themselves as hopeless and useless, but rather as capable and having worth and value (Payne, 2019). For many, believing that there is a God that will take care of you can be a very powerful resource. When this belief is combined with a fellowship of likeminded people there can be a very valuable resource to help a person keep moving forward. Community is the reason we

must focus not only on the material, but also the social, spiritual, and psychological aspects of poverty as we help the poor (Feliciano, 2017).

Physical Resources are health and mobility. Poor parents are constrained in their choice of neighborhoods and schools. Low income may lead to residence in extremely poor neighborhoods characterized by social disorganization and few resources for child development (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Income is strongly associated with morbidity and mortality across the income distribution, and income related health disparities appear to be growing (Chokshi, 2018). Poor health contributes to reduced income, creating a negative feedback loop sometimes referred to as the health-poverty trap (Chokshi, 2018).

Support Systems

Support systems are friends, family, backup resources and knowledge bases one can rely on in times of need. A number of studies suggest child adjustment and achievement are facilitated by certain parental practices. There is some evidence that poverty is linked to lower-quality parent- child interaction and to increase use of harsh punishment (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Parents living in poverty worry about fulfilling children's needs and recognize the value and drawbacks of public benefits (Kruglaya, 2018). They express concern about being unable to provide both basic needs and culturally enriching activities, and they say the stresses of poverty affect their parenting abilities (Kruglaya, 2018).

Role Models

All individuals have role models. The question is the extent to which the role model is nurturing or appropriate (Payne, 2019). Because about one half of the effect of

family income on cognitive ability is mediated by the home environment, including learning experiences in the homes, intervention might profitably focus on working with parents (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997).

Academics can be a struggle for children living in poverty. Teachers partner with parents to ensure children get to school on time, that homework is completed, and that studying and reading are a priority (Foster, 2015). Many parents in poverty struggle to provide basic needs at home, much less for academic success. By providing under-resourced families with strong, enduring, one to one relationships with caring, responsible adult mentors for their children, we have the opportunity to change these children's lives for the better, forever (Foster, 2015). Research has proven that formal mentoring programs like Big Brothers Big Sisters have a powerful and positive impact on the children we serve including improved attitudes toward school, improved relationships with peers and family, and lower likelihood of skipping school and initiating drug and alcohol use (Foster, 2015). By adding stability and consistency to a child's life, particularly in the form of an adult mentor, children have a greater sense of pride and responsibility (Foster, 2015). The presence of a positive role model in a child's life has a lasting, life changing impact (Foster, 2015).

Knowledge of Hidden Rules

Hidden rules exist in poverty. Hidden rules are about the salient, unspoken understandings that cue the members of the group that a given individual does or does not fit (Payne, 2019). According to Payne (2019), there are hidden rules about possessions, money, personality, social emphasis, food, clothing, time, education, destiny, language, family structure, worldview, love, and driving force.

In poverty, people are considered possessions. Money is to be used. Personality is for entertainment. Social emphasis is inclusive of people they like. Quantity is important with respect to food. Clothing is valued for individual style and expression of personality (Payne, 2019). The present time is most important for people living in poverty. Decisions made for the moment based on feelings or survival (Payne, 2019). For those living in poverty, education is not viewed as a reality. Destiny is based off a belief of fate. Language is based on survival. Family structure tends to be matriarchal (Payne, 2019). World view is seen based on the local setting. Love is based upon whether the individual is liked (Payne, 2019). The driving force for those living in poverty is survival, relationships, and entertainment.

Language and Formal Register

Language and formal register is an acquired skill and constitutes the vocabulary and sentence structure necessary for navigating school and work (Payne, 2019). Socioeconomic status affects a variety of mental and physical health outcomes, such as language development (Perkins et al., 2013). Indeed, with poverty, disparities in the development of language processing are arguably among the most consistently found- with decreases in vocabulary, phonological awareness, and syntax at many different developmental stages (Perkins et al., 2013). Fifty years of research has revealed the sad truth that children of lower-income, less-educated parents typically enter school with poorer language skills than their more privileged counterparts (Carey, 2013). By some measures, 5-year-old children of lower socioeconomic status score more than two years behind on standardized language development tests by the time they enter school (Carey, 2013). The vast difference in vocabulary between children of different income

levels relates to their exposure to varied vocabulary at home (Harkness, 2020). According to Harkness (2020), in the span of one year, children from poor families are exposed to 250,000 utterances at home, while children from wealthy families hear four million.

Formal Register of language is standard business and educational language. The casual register consists more of language between friends and is characterized by a 400-800-word vocabulary.

School wide Supports for Students from Generational poverty and with Adverse Childhood Experiences

Our findings suggest that building resilience—defined in the survey as “staying calm and in control when faced with a challenge,” for children ages 6–17—can ameliorate the negative impact of adverse childhood experiences (Bethell et al., 2014). In addition, measuring childhood adversities during childhood, rather than later, may offer other improvements to the ACE Study's early life predictors of health outcomes (Finkelhor, 2013). Understanding the potential impact of early adversity across the life course is critical to breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Assuring the healthy development of all children is essential for societies seeking to achieve their full health, social, and economic potential (Metzler et al., 2016). Our understanding of the most harmful childhood adversities is still incomplete because of complex interrelationships among them, but we know enough to proceed to interventional studies to determine whether prevention and remediation can improve long-term outcomes (Finkelhor, 2013). Given that the consequences of ACEs in early adulthood may lead to later morbidity and mortality, increased investment in programs and policies that prevent ACEs and

ameliorate their impacts is warranted (Mersky et al., 2013). Effective and widely available preventative interventions are needed to counteract the long-term consequences of ACEs (Giovanelli et al., 2015).

Trauma Informed Schools

Early prevention and intervention are essential considerations for programs designed to be responsive to trauma-affected children (Walkley & Cox, 2013). Positive experiences in early childhood are the building blocks for lifelong learning and health (Walkley & Cox, 2013). In trauma informed schools, all personnel have an understanding of trauma and how it affects student learning and behavior. Trauma-informed schools respond to the needs of trauma-exposed students by integrating effective practices, programs, and procedures into all aspects of the organization and culture (Overstreet & Chafouleas). In trauma informed schools there is safety, trustworthiness and transparency, peer support and mutual self-help, collaboration, empowerment, voice, and choice, consideration, recognition and provision for cultural, historical and gender issues.

There are two categories of trauma informed approaches: trauma -informed systems approaches and trauma-specific treatment interventions. Being a trauma-informed school means being informed about and sensitive to trauma, and providing a safe, stable, and understanding environment for students and staff (McInerney & McKindon). There are seven key elements of Trauma-Informed systems: screen routinely for trauma exposure and symptoms; implement culturally appropriate, evidence-based assessments and treatments for traumatic stress and symptoms; provide resources to children, families, and providers on trauma, its impact, and

treatment options; build on the strengths of children and families impacted by trauma; address parent and caregiver trauma; collaborate across child-serving systems to coordinate care; support staff by minimizing and treating secondary traumatic stress, which can lead to burnout (McInerney & McKindon).

ACEs are a common and pervasive problem. There is a positive correlation between ACEs and difficulties across the lifespan (Plumb et al., 2016). Unlike healthy forms of stress, ACEs have a detrimental impact on the developing brain (Plumb et al., 2016). There are three types of trauma: acute, chronic, and complex (Plumb et al., 2016). Most ACEs are considered complex trauma, the result of abuse by caregivers over time (Plumb et al., 2016). The effects of complex trauma are not always visible and may manifest in several ways, including behavioral issues at school (Plumb et al., 2016). Piecemeal community-based interventions and current educational policy do not adequately address the problem of ACEs and children are left to suffer the impacts of trauma (Plumb et al., 2016). Trauma sensitive schools understand the impact of trauma on the developing brain and provide support so that students can thrive in the classroom environment (Plumb et al., 2016).

Evidence supporting trauma-informed approaches is continuing to grow, but few studies have been published to date on the effectiveness of this approach in schools (McInerney & McKindon).

Whole Child Approach

A whole child approach ensures that each student is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. The whole child approach focuses on all aspects of student growth, not just academic achievement.

Recent research in neuroscience, developmental and learning sciences, education, sociology, and many other fields confirms that a “whole child” approach is not only desirable but necessary to ensure that children learn well (Flook, 2019). A whole child approach to education is one which focuses attention on the social, emotional, mental, physical as well as cognitive development of students (Elias, 2013). At its core such an approach views the purpose of schooling as developing future citizens and providing the basis for each child to fulfill their potential (Elias, 2013).

School Counseling

School Counselors play a significant role in Trauma informed Schools. They have the unique ability to identify students in need and provide support and resources needed as well. In a trauma informed school all students should feel safe. School Counselors have the unique ability to work with students regarding trauma but also play an important role in helping educate staff to create a shared understanding of trauma informed care.

School based mental health services for children in poverty can capitalize on schools’ inherent capacity to support development and bridge home and neighborhood ecologies (Capella et al., 2008). School based prevention and intervention initiatives, mental health centers, and full service schools are increasingly common methods for integrating mental health and education (Capella et al., 2008). Given the multiple challenges facing schools in poor communities, mental health resources are urgently needed to support the potential of schools to promote children’s positive development (Capella et al., 2008).

School counselors bring special skills to educating low-income children. A review of literature on poverty and social class as correlates of student success, teacher expectations, and parent involvement provides a rationale for school counselors expanding their leadership roles in high poverty schools by serving as cultural broker among students, their families, and school staff; partnering with staff to design more culturally responsive instruction; and developing a more family centric school environment (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007). School counselors play an important role in ensuring that students have excellent educational experiences (Marrero, 2019). They are part of the school support team who provide essential social-emotional support in addition to academic support (Marrero, 2019).

Effective Leadership

Leaders in high-poverty schools have to monitor instruction, assessment and student achievement closely (Suber, 2011). There are numerous steps a school leader should take to create trauma informed schools including: getting to know the community and schools you serve, build teacher and parent capacity for understanding the effects of trauma, use data to drive interventions, engage community partnerships, and make space and time for wellbeing (Anderson, 2019). New research from the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research found that principals most influenced student learning by fostering safe and supportive learning environments with high, consistent, and clear expectations of students (Initiative, 2018). Creating trauma informed schools can greatly impact the school's culture. Leaders should balance action and reflection, develop a shared vision, tap into the power of community, foster collaboration, and value inquiry (Initiative, 2018). In order to achieve successful outcomes in the face of

high levels of student poverty, school leaders must often confront significant challenges, such as poor nutrition, inadequate health services, high rates of illiteracy, and criminal activities that include drug and substance abuse (Jacobson, 2020).

Principals have multiple roles in K-12 schools. Principals are expected to be school managers and instructional leaders along with understanding and knowing policies, rules, and practices of the organization (Spaulding, 2016). Effective leaders have goals such as building and sustaining a school vision, sharing leadership, leading a learning community, using data to make instructional decisions, and monitoring curriculum and instruction (Stronge et al., 2008).

Effective leaders build and sustain a school vision. A successful principal must have a clear vision that shows how all components of a school will operate at some point in the future (Stronge et al., 2008). Effective school leaders spend time in the classroom and balance other needs such as safety and parent relationships. Successful principles understand that it is important to establish clear learning goals and garner school wide-even communitywide-commitment to these goals (Stronge et al., 2008).

Effective leaders share leadership and tap the expertise of teacher leaders. A key responsibility of school leaders is to sustain learning, and this can best be accomplished through leading learning endeavors that are focused on long-term outcomes rather than short term returns (Stronge et al., 2008). Effective leadership sets the direction and influences members of the organization to work together toward meeting organizational goals (Stronge et al., 2008). In sharing leadership, principals collaborate with teachers to evaluate issues related to curriculum, instruction and assessment (Stronge et al., 2008). As part of this collaborative process, teacher leaders

provide valuable insight and ideas to principals as they work together toward school improvement (Stronge et al., 2008).

Effective principals lead a learning community through principles as learners and teachers as learners. Learning needs to occur throughout an organization, and principals need to become participants in the learning process in order to shape and encourage the implementation of effective learning models in their schools (Stronge et al., 2008). Principals should ensure staff is informed about current research and practice and create a school learning community.

Data should be used as a tool to make instructional decisions. Without meaningful data it is impossible to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of school initiatives (Stronge et al., 2008). Effective principals skillfully gather information that determines how well a school organization is meeting goals and use that information to refine strategies designed to meet or extend the goals (Stronge et al., 2008).

Effective leaders must monitor curriculum and instruction. This can be accomplished by visiting classrooms and monitoring the curriculum. Principles must monitor how the curriculum is taught and participate in how it is developed (Stronge et al., 2008). According to (Stronge et al., 2008), nothing in the principal's role is more important for ensuring successful student learning than effective instructional leadership.

Restorative Practice

Restorative Justice Practices build on relationships that bring together all parties affected by a negative behavior. School-based restorative justice is characterized by its focus on relational rehabilitation (Karp & Breslin, 2001). Restorative practices are based

on social support rather than control. Restorative justice requires a shift in philosophy away from authoritarian controls because they effectively deny offenders and victims a meaningful role in the sanctioning process (Karp & Breslin, 2001). According to Karp and Breslin (2001), without having a participatory role, the resolution is much less likely to become a learning experience for the offender and an opportunity for him or her to develop a sense of personal responsibility. Restorative justice practice in schools is often seen as building on existing relationships and complementary with other non-discipline practices, such as peer mediation or youth courts (Gonzalez, 2012).

For a growing number of districts using restorative justice, the programs have helped strengthen campus communities, prevent bullying, and reduce student conflict (Davis, 2015). Adopting districts have seen drastic reductions in suspension and expulsion rates and students say they are happier and feel safer (Davis, 2015). Restorative practices can dramatically improve the school climate and strengthen the social and emotional skills of young people and adults (McClure, 2016).

Social Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the capacity to recognize and manage emotions, solve problems effectively, and establish positive relationships with others, competencies that clearly are essential for all students (Zins & Elias, 1997). SEL is the process of acquiring and effectively applying the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to recognize and manage emotions; developing caring and concern for others; making responsible decisions; establishing positive relationships; and handling challenging situations capably (Zins & Elias, 1997). Students learn these skills by

positively engaging in activities inside and outside the classroom which are designed to help them practice social and emotional learning skills.

There are five key components to effective SEL: self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self- management, and relationship skills (Zins & Elias, 1997). Self-awareness involves understanding one's own emotions, personal goals, and values (Weissberg, 2016). Social awareness involves the ability to understand, empathize, and feel compassion for those with different backgrounds or cultures. Responsible decision making involves learning how to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse settings (Weissberg, 2016). Self-management requires skills and attitudes that facilitate the ability to regulate one's own emotions and behaviors (Weissberg, 2016). Relationship skills help students establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships, and to act in accordance with social norms (Weissberg, 2016). Social Emotional learning includes many benefits such as positive attitudes towards self and others, more positive attitudes toward others, less behavior problems, less emotional stress, and improved test scores, attendance, and grades. Benefits of SEL include more positive attitudes toward oneself, others, and tasks including enhanced self-efficacy, confidence, persistence, empathy, connection and commitment to school, and a sense of purpose; more positive social behaviors and relationships with peers and adults; reduced conduct problems and risk-taking behaviors; decreased emotional distress; improved test scores, grades, attendance (Weissberg, 2016).

Mentoring

Traditional mentoring theory encompasses skill-based, goals-oriented learning passed down through generations (Fletcher & Mullen, 2012). Mentoring is a journey that includes both parties. The learning is open-ended, creative, and uncertain as well as subject to unknowns (Fletcher & Mullen, 2012). Mentoring can be for both students and educators. School based mentoring programs operate on the school campus, mentoring relationships are for the duration of the school year, students are referred by teachers, counselors, and other school staff, it is not just a tutoring program (Jucovy & Garringer, 2007). However, tutoring programs can be beneficial to students. When students participate in afterschool tutoring programs they are likely, over time, to begin showing positive changes in behavior and performance (Isik, 2015).There are numerous benefits of a school based mentoring model including engaging volunteers, operates at a low cost, and it produces many positive outcomes for youth. Mentoring programs can improve academic performance, improve quality of classwork, increase the number of assignments turned in, reduce serious school infractions, reduce skipping classes, increase students' perceptions of scholastic competence (Jucovy & Garringer, 2007).

Chapter 3. Research Methods

This research plan focuses on gaining an understanding from educators that are in schools and classrooms each day. The research questions are designed to understand educator perspectives of generational poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences and how it impacts student learning and gain insight into what educators believe are the needed components to break the cycle of generational poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences for students. By understanding how educators view the effects of generational poverty and ACEs on student learning and identifying what they believe are the needed components to break the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs for students, we may more effectively serve the students and families impacted by poverty and ACEs.

Research Questions

In order to assess school educators perceptions of generational poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences and to identify what are the needed components to break the cycle of generational poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences to increase student learning the following questions will guide the research:

1. What are educator perceptions of the effects of generational poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences on student learning?
2. What are educator perceptions of educational factors that would facilitate breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning?

3. What are educator perceptions of educational factors that would inhibit breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning?

Research Design

Qualitative research is aimed at gaining an understanding of a phenomenon in a population. Qualitative research evaluates real-world situations and organizes data into themes. It can include data based on personal experiences and evaluates processes. Qualitative research analyzes data from direct fieldwork observations, in-depth, open-ended interviews, and written documents (Patton, 2005). Qualitative research consists of many methodologies such as Ethnography, phenomenology, narrative analysis, action research, and grounded theory. Qualitative research seeks to develop theory, uncover reasons, motivations and trends of smaller populations. The purpose of qualitative research is to seek to understand. “The aim of qualitative research is to understand the social reality of individuals, groups and cultures as nearly as possible as its participants feel it or live it. Thus, people and groups are studied in their natural setting” (McLeod, 1970). A phenomenological approach to qualitative research describes the meaning of a lived experience such as educators’ experience with students and families in the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs. A qualitative phenomenological approach will be used in this study and will focus on understanding educator perspectives of how generational poverty and ACEs impacts student learning and identifying needed components to break the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs for students.

Site Selection

The site selected for the research is Hinton County Schools. Hinton County school is located in Middle Tennessee and is home to Summers Elementary and Valley Elementary. Summers Elementary currently serves 686 students. Valley Elementary serves 750 students. Summers Elementary and Valley Elementary are Kindergarten through 5th grade schools with two administrators, one principal and one assistant principal. There is one guidance counselor for each school. Summers Elementary has 18% of students receiving free and reduced lunch. Valley Elementary has 19% of students receiving free and reduced lunch.

Population and Sample

Qualitative research is generally based on a small sample size that is selected based on a purpose. Determining adequate sample size in qualitative research is ultimately a matter of judgment and experience in evaluating the quality of the information collected against the uses to which it will be put, the particular research method and purposeful sampling strategy employed, and the research product intended (Sandelowski, 2007). Purposeful sampling is the most common sampling strategy in qualitative research. In this type of sampling, participants are chosen based on the research question. For this study the sample population will be 15 current K-12 educators from Hinton County, Tennessee.

Participants

The 15 participants in the study are educators that serve at Summers and Valley Elementary. The participants will be educators in the k-5 schools. Participants will be volunteer to be part of the study.

Data Collection Strategies

Permission will be obtained from the Superintendent of Schools to inform educators of their opportunity to actively participate in the research. If permission is granted, consent will be obtained from the participants and individual, open-ended interviews lasting 45 minutes to 60 minutes will be conducted. The interviews will be conducted via Zoom. It will be necessary to have a quiet environment free from disruption. The interviews will last approximately one hour. The interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and will have member checks.

Data Collection will be in the form of semi-structured interviews in which 15 educators will be asked questions in an effort to gain insight into educator perspectives and solutions to generational poverty and ACEs for students. Semi- structured interviews is a verbal interchange where one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person by asking questions (Clifford, 2016). Data collection and analysis happen at the same time in qualitative research. Field notes will be taken to supplement interviews. Research questions are open-ended and do not direct the participant to the answer. In qualitative research, the questions may change as data is collected and the questions will likely begin with “how” and “what.” The educators will be K-12 current school educators.

Data Analysis Strategies

After interviews are conducted, responses will be transcribed, member checked, coded and organized into themes. Finally, the themes will be tied together to provide an overview of educator perceptions of generational poverty and ACEs on student learning and what teacher’s identify as the needed components to break the cycle of

generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning and what educator perceptions of factors that would inhibit breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning.

Assessment of Quality and Rigor

In qualitative research, trustworthiness comes called into question due to the bias that can easily make its way into research questions and methods. Bias is the influence that the researcher can have on the results of the study without intending to influence the results. The trustworthiness of qualitative research is often challenged; however, credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability can all help to establish a trustworthy study. According to Guba (1989), there are four points to be examined while pursuing a trustworthy qualitative study: credibility-...confidence in the 'truth' of the findings. Transferability- can the findings be transferred to other contexts. Dependability-could the findings be repeated. Are the findings consistent? Confirmability which can be described as neutrality. Triangulation and member checks can be used to help produce a trustworthy study. This study will be used to allow readers to gain a better understanding of educator perceptions of generational poverty and ACEs and to understand educator perceptions of factors that will facilitate or inhibit breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs in respect to student learning.

Triangulation in qualitative research involves using multiple data sources to produce a better understanding of the phenomenon. Triangulation refers to the use of multiple measures to capture a construct (Heath, 2001). There are four types of triangulation: Methods triangulation (examining the consistency of data by using multiple data collection methods), triangulation of sources (examining the consistency of data

sources with the same method), Analyst Triangulation (using multiple observers and analyst to review data), Theory/perspective triangulation (using multiple perspectives to analyze the data). Triangulation in qualitative research involves using multiple data sources to produce a better understanding of the phenomenon such as asking the same research questions to multiple participants and using multiple data sources and methods to address the research questions. Member checks occur when the researcher verifies information collected with the participant. This helps any gaps to be filled and helps to eliminate any perceived information. Member checks and triangulation of sources will be used in this study.

Ethical Considerations/Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher will be to attempt to access the thoughts and feelings of study participants (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The researcher will seek to understand the perceptions of participants in an effort to improve student learning. Confidentiality and identity protection of the school and members are upheld throughout the study. Names of the school, county, or participants will not be shared. Other identifying factors such as role or position will not be shared.

Chapter Summary

Although poverty is an issue that exists all across the world, educators have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of those struggling through poverty. By identifying educator perspectives of generational poverty and ACEs and what educators identify as the needed components to break the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs for students we will be another step closer to providing hope for students in poverty. In addition, we will be providing educators that are in classrooms and schools each day

the opportunity to be the experts. Educator perspectives may provide a level of relevancy needed to continue to move forward proactively in an effort to combat generational poverty and ACEs.

Chapter 4. Findings

An assessment of educator perceptions regarding generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences was conducted. Educator perceptions were obtained in the form of semi-structured interviews in which educators were asked questions regarding their perceptions of generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences. The interviewees were fifteen kindergarten through fifth grade educators with varying levels of experience. The interviews were conducted and themes emerged.

Interview Responses

The research questions were designed to identify educator perceptions of generational poverty and ACEs. To identify educator perceptions of generational poverty and ACEs and to identify the components to break the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs to increase student learning the following questions guided the research:

1. What are educator perceptions of the effects of generational poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences on student learning?
2. What are educator perceptions of educational factors that would facilitate breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning?
3. What are educator perceptions of educational factors that would inhibit breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning?

Research Question 1:
What are educator perceptions of the effects of generational poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences on student learning?

Based on educator response the following factors emerged. Educator perceptions regarding student learning was addressed throughout the interviews. Multiple participants stated lack of background knowledge, lack of supplies, and security affected student learning for students struggling with generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences. Participant A stated, “The poor backgrounds, they really can’t tell what you are talking about whereas children who have been well traveled can make connections and understand.” Participant K stated, “prior background knowledge, as some of my other students don’t have certain life experiences that other children may have.” In addition, multiple participants stated the lack of supplies impacted student learning. Participant I stated, “And then also sometimes just providing things for them, whether it’s school supplies, having those things ready and available. “Finally, self-esteem and security was a factor participants stated affected students. Participant D stated, “Self esteem which can affect learning.” Participant I stated, “Whenever a student doesn’t feel secure and comfortable in the classroom your academics suffer.” Participant G stated, “The learning part is secondary. They’re not really focused on the learning unless they have that safe feeling in the classroom with a teacher or knowing someone’s trying to help them be better then they might be able to learn better.”

Research Question 2:

What are educator perceptions of educational factors that would facilitate breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning?

Participants identified numerous factors that would facilitate breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning. The factors are relationships and resources to help families. One factor that was repeated throughout

the research was the importance of relationships. Participant K stated, “I try to be mindful about fostering relationships between other students, like student to student, because you know I can just tell some of my kiddos need a little push when it comes to interacting with peers.” Participant E stated, “...building relationships with those families; building relationships with those adults, probably assisting them with whatever their needs are.” Participant N stated, “I think that teachers that form relationships with students before they worry about what they are learning. If they have a relationship with the child, you can teach them a lot more.” Participant O stated, ”I think just establishing a good, solid relationship where they feel safe and comfortable talking to a grown up.” Participant K stated, “relationship building is huge”. Giving them a leg up is making sure they have a safe, stable adult relationship that they know they can go to.” Participant O stated, “teachers establishing relationships with the kids as best they can you know to kind of reach out to them and let them understand I’m here for you.”

Another factor that was repeated in the research was the idea of resources to help families. Participant J stated, “I think having a real system and having the family resource center like we do in our district. Having a counselor that’s very connected to that and very connected to our families. I think open communication is huge.” Participant B stated, “They need to have a lot of support and a lot of additional help. There needs to be counseling for them. Not just counseling, there needs to be some like group counseling where kids can see that they are not by themselves.” Participant K stated, “Students should be familiar with our school counselor and build a positive relationship with her. I think that’s another huge factor.” Participant J stated, “It’s not only taking care of the kids and teaching them regulation and helping them feel safe but

it's reaching out to those families and connecting them to community resources to help them better stabilize their families, so the kids can come to school."

Research Question 3:

What are educator perceptions of educational factors that would inhibit breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning?

There were numerous factors that were indicated by participants that would inhibit breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning. They were: desire to learn and mindset and class size. Participant I stated, "I think a lot of it has to be self efficacy, where the student has to have that self motivation, that self desire. It's difficult for kids to do." Participant K stated, "Mindset you can tell they come into class with a certain mindset where they think they won't ever change. They have very much a fixed mindset. That significantly impacts their learning because if they believe they won't learn or they believe they can't accomplish it, then that is a huge stumbling block for them. So mindset is definitely a huge thing." Participant L stated, "it's that inner motivation that's really going to kick somebody over the edge and their desire." Participant M stated, "I think if you can help them with their self-esteem here at school and make them see they are worthy of anything they can do anything they want to do." Participant N stated, "Those in generational poverty have a poor mindset that causes frequent poor financial decisions that maybe aren't the best."

Another factor that was frequent was the idea of class size. Participant O stated, "sometimes just being in a large group they sometimes feel they can't always be heard, because they may be a little more reserved or shy or the opposite of that end they may

act out. “They don’t learn well in large groups. They are easily lost in large groups.” Participant J stated, “We need smaller classes. The smaller the classes the more the teacher can tune into individual kids and families, so class size is a big piece.” Participant C stated, “I definitely think using small groups to work with them. Where you get to work with those kids one on one or in a very small group to deal with just their needs and try to help them.”

Themes

After the interviews were conducted and member checks and coding occurred, the following themes emerged: tutoring, mentors, educating educators, parent involvement, and accountability.

Table 1

Number of Participants for each Theme

Participant	Tutoring	Mentors	Educating Educators	Parent Involvement	Accountability
A		x			
B		x			
C					
D	x		x		
E			x		
F					
G	x			x	
H					
I					x
J			x		
K		x			

L			x	x	
M					x
N					
O				x	

Tutoring and After School Programs

Tutoring and after school programs emerged as a theme. Participant D stated, “We have tutoring for them after school. It’s a free service to them. Tutoring could be expanded to not just include McKinney Vento but to other students as well.” Participant I stated, “Most teachers provide before school tutoring. I beg kids to come in and let me help them during this time.” Participant G stated, “I think having tutoring available to them if they need it and communication with the families.”

Mentors

Mentors emerged as a theme. Participant K stated, “Adult mentors outside of my room, so they have an adult mentor in the school. Relationships like mentors of students who are kind of in the same position, maybe older students who come from the same background. Because I’m thinking of a few of my kids and I think it would just be helpful for them to see someone who has been in their position and you know continued to grow and learn despite where they have been.” Participant A stated, positive role models are very important…because if their family is not modeling a good lifestyle should be like then they are really looking toward the teachers and workers at the school. They start looking at friends and going into friends’ homes they see, they watch and hopefully that starts planting seeds. Hopefully they have mentors in the school that help guide them to make good decisions about what to do after school, so they can start

earning a living and making a nice life for themselves." Participant B stated, "I think they should partner with Cumberland University and get some of those students in the education department to come into the schools and be peer buddies with those kids. It's really neat to see the younger kids mentored by the older students."

Educating Educators

Educating educators emerged as a theme. Participant D stated, "Helping teacher understand what the poverty stricken students might be facing all the adversities they have versus other students or schools." Participant E stated, "I think primarily educating educators. I think a lot of people in general don't understand generational poverty. I think you can educate the educators on what those children are experiencing." Participant J stated, "I think first of all it is training educators to understand the issues that families are dealing with and that students are dealing with. The more we can be educated on experiences outside of our realm so that we can better understand and better support families. I really think the more we can train our teachers to know what's out there and to look for and to know how to handle those kids." Participant L stated, " I think just more education for teachers to help them understand what it looks like and feels like to be in that situation. I think that would really help kids for sure."

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement emerged as a theme. Participant G stated, "Communication can make a difference." Participant L stated, "Just getting their parents educated on how to help their kids and how to break the cycle." Participant O stated, "I think more parent involvement where they can include both the child and the parent. I think if we were able to implement some kind of program where it was whole family type."

Accountability

Accountability emerged as a theme. Participant I stated, “Teaching responsibility has to be a huge part of breaking the cycle.” “...taking responsibility for the opportunities they have.” Participant M stated, “Hold them accountable for what they are doing because you know they are not being held accountable.”

Summary

Analysis of the data concerning educator perceptions of generational poverty yielded several themes. Concerning perceptions of generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences, educators were able to identify the effects of generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences on student learning. Educators identified lack of background knowledge, lack of supplies, and security all affected student learning for students struggling with generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences.

In addition, participants identified numerous factors that would facilitate breaking the cycle of generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences. Participants stated relationships and resources can help students break the cycle of generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences. Resources to help families were described as counseling, financial resources, and transportation.

Educators discussed factors that would break the cycle of generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences. The educators identified desire to learn and class size as having an impact on student learning. Finally, the following themes emerged: tutoring, mentors, educating educators, parent involvement, and accountability.

Chapter 5. Summary of Findings and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to assess educator perceptions of generational poverty. The qualitative study was conducted by interviewing fifteen educators in the elementary grades Kindergarten through fifth. The researcher sent an e-mail to all educators at school A and B requesting volunteers to participate (see Appendix B). Participants agreed to participate and a protocol was used to conduct the fifteen individual interviews (See Appendix C).

School A and B are located on the outskirts of Nashville, Tennessee in Hinton County. Participants were obtained from two schools in the district. School A consisted of 750 students with 18% qualifying for free and reduced lunch and school B consisted of 642 students with 19% qualifying for free and reduced lunch. A study was required to learn educator perceptions of generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences to improve student learning.

Statement of Problem

Poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences are prevalent in schools across the nation. Child poverty is a global issue that affects around half the children in the world (McKinney, 2014). Children from low-income families often start school already behind their peers who come from more affluent families, as shown in measures of school readiness (Ferguson et al., 2007). The incidence, depth, duration and timing of poverty all influence a child's educational attainment, along with community characteristics and social networks (Ferguson et al., 2007). Child poverty can be a barrier to children and young people accessing school education or achieving any form of success through participating in school education (McKinney, 2014). ACEs can provide toxic stress to

children and their developing brain, causing a permanent change in brain chemistry (Smith, 2019). Poverty is an important indicator of societal and child well-being, but poverty is more than just an indicator (Chaudry & Wimer, 2015). Poverty and low income are causally related to worse child development outcomes, particularly cognitive developmental and educational outcomes (Chaudry & Wimer, 2015). The timing, duration, and community context of poverty also appear to matter for children's outcomes—with early experiences of poverty, longer durations of poverty, and higher concentrations of poverty in the community leading to worse child outcomes (Chaudry & Wimer, 2015). No research was found on educator perceptions of generational poverty and ACEs and their effects on student learning.

Conclusions from Research Questions

Research Question #1

1. What are educator perceptions of the effects of generational poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences on student learning?

Background Knowledge

Based on educator response the following factors emerged. Educator perceptions regarding student learning was addressed throughout the interviews. Ten participants stated lack of background knowledge, lack of supplies, and security affected student learning for students struggling with generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences. Four participants stated background knowledge could be an issue that impacts student learning. Based on participant responses, lack of background knowledge can be described as a student’s lack of understanding of experiences the majority of students have such as going on vacation or seeing a waterslide. Lack of

supplies are things such as pencils, paper, colored pencils. Basic supplies students need to participate in the day to day activities of school. Security is the safety a student feels in the classroom with the teacher, students, and environment in the classroom.

Based on participant responses, students struggling with generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences face adversity that impacts student learning. Students struggling with adverse childhood experiences and generational poverty may lack background knowledge that other students may have. The lack of background knowledge may come from a lack of resources such as the ability to travel or participate in extracurricular activities such as playing sports.

Supplies

Three participants stated lack of supplies could be an issue that affects student learning. Lack of supplies are things such as materials to be successful in school: paper, pencils, books.

Security

Three participants brought up self-esteem and security as something that impacts student learning. Self-esteem is the way a student feels about himself or herself. Are they confident in who they are? Security can be described as does the student feel safe in the classroom and school environment. Do they have someone to talk to? Lack of background knowledge, supplies, and security can impact student learning for students struggling with generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences.

Conclusion from Research Question #2

2. What are educator perceptions of educational factors that would facilitate breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning?

Relationships

Participants identified numerous factors that would facilitate breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning. The factors are relationships and resources to help families. Four participants stated the importance of relationships. Relationships pertain to student to teacher relationships and student to student relationships. Four participants stated relationships were an important factor to break the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs. Resources to help families are resources such as counseling, financial resources such as money to pay bills, and transportation to school and jobs.

Participants stated educational factors that would facilitate breaking the cycle of generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences were fostering relationships with other students, building relationships with families, and building relationships with students. The relationships can facilitate breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACES by providing support to the student in need.

Resources

Another factor that was repeated in the research was the idea of resources to help families. Three participants state resources can facilitate breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACES for students. Resources to help families can be

described as financial support, emotional support such as counseling, and providing basic needs to the family such as transportation.

Participants stated having resources is an important factor to breaking the cycle of generational poverty. Counseling was brought up as a tool that could be used to help break the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs. Also, connecting families to resources in the community that can aid in breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs.

Tutoring and After School Programs

Tutoring and after school programs emerged as a theme. Tutoring and afterschool programs are activities that take place to support students academically. Tutoring was described as tutoring by the teacher before or after school. After school programs were described as programs that students participated in that offered academic support.

Tutoring and afterschool programs emerged as a theme. Ten participants stated that tutoring and afterschool programs could help break the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs. Tutoring and afterschool programs could occur at the school or they could be separate from the school itself. The tutoring and afterschool programs would provide academic support for students based on student needs.

Mentors

Mentors emerged as a theme. Mentors are partnerships with adult educators (mentors) that provide ongoing behavior and academic support to students. They offer encouragement and advice as needed to ensure the success of the student. Peer buddies are peer relationships where one student is higher achieving or in a higher

grade than another student. The higher achieving student or older student can help support the lower achieving student through providing support to the lower achieving student.

Mentors and peer buddies can serve the unique role of providing support to students struggling with generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences. Eleven participants stated mentors and peer buddies would be useful in breaking the cycle of generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences. Participants stated mentors could be adults or older students. Mentors help guide students in making positive choices that benefit their life.

Educating Educators

Educating educators emerged as a theme. Educating educators can be described as providing ongoing training and support to those educators directly supporting students such as teachers and counselors. Educating educators can occur through ongoing professional learning such as workshops and training.

Educating Educators emerged as a theme. Four participants stated that educating educators could aid in breaking the cycle of generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences. Educating educators would allow educators to understand what those who are struggling with generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences are going through. When educators understand where a child is coming from they better know how to help that child.

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement emerged as a theme. Parent involvement can be described as the amount of involvement or participation a parent has in a child's school career.

Four participants stated parent involvement was important in breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs. Communication with parents was brought up as a tool to help keep parents involved. Also, implementing whole family programs where we are including both the parent and the families to increase student success in the school.

Accountability

Accountability emerged as a theme. Accountability can be described as how a student is held responsible for their learning and behavior. Accountability takes place in the classroom and is led by student actions. Five participants stated accountability was an important factor in breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs. It is important for students to be held accountable but it is also important for the teacher to teach responsibility.

Conclusion from Research Question #3

3. What are educator perceptions of educational factors that would inhibit breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning?

There were two factors that were indicated by participants that would inhibit breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning. Three participants stated desire to learn and mindset and class size can inhibit breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs. Desire to learn and mindset can be described as the attitude a student has regarding school. For example: Does the student have the motivation and mindset to learn?

Desire to Learn and Mindset

The desire to learn and mindset of students can determine whether or not students are successful in the classroom and can break the cycle of generational

poverty and adverse childhood experiences. Mindset and desire to learn can determine how much effort a student puts into learning which can then affect the results of the instruction itself.

Class Size

Another factor that was stated three times by participants was class size. Class size can be described as whether or not the class is large or small. This can be based on several factors such as the number of adults in the classroom, the number of students in the classroom and the size of the room itself.

Large class sizes can negatively impact student learning for students in generational poverty and with adverse childhood experiences. Based on three participant responses, students struggling with generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences learn better in smaller groups. They can become lost in large groups. Class size is an important factor that can inhibit breaking the cycle of generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences.

Data Collection Methods

Fifteen educators from two kindergarten through fifth grade schools were interviewed. The interviews were conducted via Zoom. The interviews lasted approximately an hour. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and member checked. Data Collection was in the form of semi-structured interviews in which 15 educators were asked questions in an effort to gain insight into educators' perspectives and solutions to generational poverty and ACEs for students.

Implications for Practice

Implications and recommendations for practice based on the findings from this study.

Implications to Break the Cycle of Generational Poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences

1. Develop Relationships with Students and Families

   Positive experiences in early childhood are the building blocks for lifelong learning and health (Walkley & Cox, 2013).Trauma sensitive schools understand the impact of trauma on the developing brain and provide support so that students can thrive in the classroom environment (Plumb et al., 2016). By providing under-resourced families with strong, enduring, one to one relationships with caring, responsible adult mentors for their children, we have the opportunity to change these children's lives for the better, forever (Foster, 2015). Developing relationships between students, teachers, and families is a necessary component to break the cycle of generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences. Schools should ensure there are strong lines of communication between student, teacher, and families to ensure that a positive relationship is built.

2. Recommend Resources

   School based mental health services for children in poverty can capitalize on schools' inherent capacity to support development and bridge home and neighborhood ecologies (Capella et al., 2008). School counselors play an

important role in ensuring that students have excellent educational experiences (Marrero, 2019). Schools should ensure that families have resources to rely on such as mental health services and counseling. Resources can aid students in breaking the cycle of generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences.

3. Provide Tutoring and Afterschool Programs

When students participate in afterschool tutoring programs they are likely, over time, to begin showing positive changes in behavior and performance (Isik, 2015). Tutoring and afterschool programs are a great resource to support students in breaking the cycle of generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences. Schools should implement afterschool programs and tutoring or provide resources to connect families to after school programs and tutoring.

4. Implement Mentors for Students

Mentoring can be for both students and educators. School based mentoring programs operate on the school campus, mentoring relationships are for the duration of the school year, students are referred by teachers, counselors, and other school staff, it is not just a tutoring program (Jucovy & Garringer, 2007). By adding stability and consistency to a child's life, particularly in the form of an adult mentor, children have a greater sense of pride and responsibility (Foster, 2015). Mentoring programs can improve academic performance, improve quality of classwork, increase the number of assignments turned in, reduce serious school infractions, reduce skipping classes, increase students' perceptions of scholastic

competence (Jucovy & Garringer, 2007). Schools should incorporate mentors for students struggling with generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences.

5. Educate Educators

   Assuring the healthy development of all children is essential for societies seeking to achieve their full health, social, and economic potential (Metzler et al., 2016). A whole child approach to education is one which focuses attention on the social, emotional, mental, physical as well as cognitive development of students (Elias, 2013). There are numerous steps a school leader should take to create trauma informed schools including: getting to know the community and schools you serve, build teacher and parent capacity for understanding the effects of trauma, use data to drive interventions, engage community partnerships, and make space and time for wellbeing (Anderson, 2019). Educating educators is a necessary component schools should engage in regarding generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences. Educators must understand the students they teach.

6. Increase Parent Involvement

   Because about one half of the effect of family income on cognitive ability is mediated by the home environment, including learning experiences in the homes, intervention might profitably focus on working with parents (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Schools should focus on involving parents in the school

community to aid in breaking the cycle of generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences.

7. Hold Students and Families Accountable

   Teachers partner with parents to ensure children get to school on time, that homework is completed, and that studying and reading are a priority (Foster, 2015). By adding stability and consistency to a child's life, particularly in the form of an adult mentor, children have a greater sense of pride and responsibility (Foster, 2015). Schools should ensure students are held accountable for their academic success by setting high expectations for students. Schools should work with families to ensure they are being held accountable for their children's success as well.

Possibilities for Future Research

The following provides possibilities for further research that stem from the findings of this study:

1. Educator perception could be expanded to include middle and high school educators. The same study could be implemented but with different grade levels.
2. A similar study could just examine one type of educators perceptions such as guidance counselors, administrators, or teachers.
3. A study could be conducted to examine implicit or explicit educator bias for students in generational poverty with ACEs.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to assess educator perceptions of the effects of generational poverty and ACEs on student learning and to identify educator perceptions of the educational factors that could facilitate breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning. The purpose of the study was also to identify educator perceptions of the educational factors that could inhibit breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning. The research may serve as a tool to open up conversations regarding poverty and ACEs and may provide the support needed to aid students in breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs within the school community.

Data collection from interviews suggests that there are numerous recommendations to break the cycle of generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences and improve student learning. The implications for practice align with the research conducted for the literature review. Students struggling with generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences need numerous supports to break the cycle of generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences. The results of this study are presented as a plan of action for schools needing to combat generational poverty and adverse childhood experiences.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Educator Perceptions of Generational Poverty, Adverse Childhood Experiences and Student Learning Interview Questions

Research Questions:

1. What are educator perceptions of the effects of generational poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences on student learning?
2. What are factors that would facilitate breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning?
3. What are factors that would inhibit breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning?

Interview Questions

Could you describe your understanding of generational poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences?

Do you think students in generational poverty with Adverse Childhood experiences face adversity?

Think about the experiences you have had with students from generational poverty and struggling with Adverse Childhood Experiences. What are the effects of generational poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences on student learning?

Describe the factors that would facilitate learning experiences for students breaking the cycle of generational poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences?

Describe the factors that are in place in your school that facilitate learning opportunities for students of generational poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences?

What factors could be implemented in the school that would facilitate breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning?

What classroom factors inhibit learning experiences for students of generational poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences?

What factors exist in your school that inhibit learning experiences for students of generational poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences?

How can student learning be improved for students in generational poverty struggling with Adverse Childhood Experiences in the school?

What specific strategies can be implemented in the classroom to improve student learning for students in generational poverty struggling with Adverse Childhood Experiences?

Appendix B: Recruitment Letter

Hello!

My name is Rachel Cook and I am a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University. I am conducting research for my dissertation. The purpose of this study is to assess educators perceptions of the effects of generational poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences on student learning and to identify educator perceptions of the educational factors that could facilitate breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning. The purpose of the study is also to identify educator perceptions of the educational factors that could inhibit breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs with respect to student learning. The research may serve as a tool to open up conversations regarding poverty and ACEs and may provide the support needed to aid students in breaking the cycle of generational poverty and ACEs within the school community.

For data collection I need to interview educators in Wilson County, TN. The interview should take about 45 – 60 minutes. It will occur via zoom. Please email me if you are interested in participating in this study. If you have questions, please contact me at cookrm@etsu.edu or 615-415-6233.

VITA

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