TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND BEST
PRACTICE TEACHING STRATEGIES REGARDING IMPOVERISHED STUDENTS

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the effects that poverty has on children through the eyes of educators and their perception on the effective instructional strategies when working with students from an impoverished background. The data were gathered from four schools, including various grade levels in a school district in west Tennessee, composed of 26 schools and 13,000 students. For informational purposes, English Language Arts testing scores were examined and those labeled economically disadvantaged were compared to those labeled non-economically disadvantaged. The data used in the qualitative study were collected through questionnaires sent to the four schools and semi-structured interviews conducted during three meetings with four teachers. The findings of this study included establishing a list of themes and connections noted from the data, questionnaire, and focus group interviews. This list of teacher perceptions of these students includes: lower overall achievement, different mindset and social skills, trend of special education, trend of misbehaving and ethnic group, parental support and extra-curricular activities. The list of teacher perceptions of best instructional practices used with these students includes: visuals, class size and grouping, building relationships, and classroom resources and differentiating instruction.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to all of the children who are less fortunate than others. I will never understand why some have unforeseen hardships, go to bed hungry, or do not have a place to lay their head at night. It is proven that poverty is not going to be your only struggle in life. However, know that there are plenty of people on your side, knowing that you can make a better life for yourself. You can do it, and you can beat the odds. Ignore the negative people in your life and focus on the positive. God has blessed you with talents. Use them to honor Him.

So many of you opened my heart to this topic and my eyes to a whole new world I didn't know existed. You are each a blessing and an encouragement to myself and many others around you. Thank you for being an inspiration to so many. Here is to you beating the odds.

I would like to also dedicate this study to the educators encouraging these young people from such diverse backgrounds. As you know teaching is not all about instruction, but encompasses much more. As a teacher, you often become a parent or a friend to someone who might not have had one before. You wear many hats and can multi-task better than anyone I know. Although the days may seem long, know that you are making an impact on the life of a child. Thank you for all that you do that so often goes unnoticed.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background Information

Many students are presented with challenges when striving to achieve academic success (Wery & Thomson, 2013). Students from low-income backgrounds are already at a disadvantage in regard to child development (D'Aoust, 2008). Consistent poverty has critical effects on socio-emotional functioning, cognitive functioning, and academic achievement. The timing and duration of poverty can have a crucial impact on a child's educational success. Low socioeconomic status in the first five years of life negatively affects educational achievement more than poverty during middle childhood and adolescence (McLoyd, 1998; Smith, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1997). Educational achievement is linked to adult poverty, which is simultaneously correlated with children living in poverty. All aspects of a child's development are influenced by social, financial, cultural, and community-level factors, or the environmental background in which they grow up. Poverty's impact is complex and stretches across various settings associated with family, home, neighborhood, and school (D'Aoust, 2008).

Poverty is something that nations worldwide have struggled with for an extensive period. In the United States, a War on Poverty was declared, and the Civil Rights Act became into law in the 1960. President Lyndon Johnson declared this war and hoped that it would ultimately prevent poverty. From this war, the Social Security Amendments of 1965 were put into place. These amendments provided Medicare and Medicaid and added Social Security benefits for many through higher tax rates. The Food Stamp Act of 1964, which implemented the food stamps program permanently, was also a result of the war. The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 was created to implement the Job Corps and the VISTA program. During this time, the Elementary

and Secondary Education Act was signed into law in 1965, launching the Title I programs into school districts with a large amount of students living in poverty (Matthews, 2014). The Civil Rights Act of 1964, also put into law by President Johnson, was put into place to end segregation. After this act was signed, Congress passed additional legislation, striving to bring equality to African Americans, such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (History, n.d). The federal government is fully aware that child poverty is still a major issue (Best Start, 2010). In 1989, the Canadian House of Commons universally determined to abolish child poverty by the year 2000 (Conference Board of Canada, 2009, Campaign 2006). Although many years have passed, poverty still exists. Although it has fluctuated, there has not been a critical reduction (Campaign 2008). Too many younger children still lack the fair chance to become successful in America. In America, nearly 13 million children live below the poverty line, while one-third of all children will be poor at some point throughout their childhood. Nevertheless, public schools are seen as their one opportunity and greatest hope of escaping the cruel life of poverty. Without the opportunity to obtain an education, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably succeed in life. The opportunity to obtain an education shapes an individual's place of employment, salary, and entire well-being. At the same time, the lack of an education often contributes to poverty (Children's Defense Fund, 2015).

Poverty is a broad dilemma with a variety of alarming impacts on families with young children ages zero to six. Many of these families face numerous obstacles due to living in poverty (Best start, 2010). Research from the Children's Defense Fund (2015) provides numerous alarming statistics regarding what a quality education may mean for a person. For example, between 1979 and 1995, those with less than a high school diploma saw their mean family income decline by 14%, while the mean income of those who graduated from college rose

14%. Furthermore, those with a college degree will earn nearly twice as much over their lifetimes as those with a high school degree, and those with professional degrees can earn almost four times as much. Those that obtain a bachelor's degree are twice as likely as those without high school diplomas to be considered in good health. Unequal educational opportunities are associated with social problems, such as drug abuse and crime. In addition, high school dropouts are three times as likely to be on welfare as those who complete high school. Regarding crime, 30% of federal prison inmates are high school dropouts (Children's Defense Fund, 2015).

Poverty is linked to negative consequences for children. Childhood poverty is associated with school dropout rates, low academic attainment, teenage pregnancy, poor mental and physical health, crime, and unemployment later in life (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997). Studies prove that children who live in persistent or chronic poverty have less favorable cognitive and social development and poorer physical and mental health (Bolger, Patterson, Thompson & Kuppersmidt, 1995). Poverty that exists during early childhood (birth to three years old) is more harmful than poverty in late childhood (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Those who live in sustained poverty are linked to having detrimental outcomes (McLoyd, 1998). Those children who live in poverty for an extensive period suffer the most detrimental outcomes. The timing, duration, and severity of poverty all play a vital role in the various child outcomes, specifically for academic attainment. If poverty is experienced throughout preschool, children have lower rates of completing school than children who experience poverty only later in life. (McLoyd, 1998). Specific studies imply that interventions are a vital role in reducing poverty's negative impacts on children (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997)

Chronic poverty affects children's intellectual development and socioemotional well-being due to the increase of negative life experiences and stressors. These events often produce

psychological distress that cause parents of poverty to use ineffective parenting styles (McLoyd, 1998). Poor families are not able to invest the necessary funds that provide stimulating experiences for their children (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Consequently, parents in poverty are restricted to their choice of living and limited to only certain schools because of the location of their home. Low-income leads to a home in a poorer neighborhood and fewer resources for child development (Brookes-Gunn & Duncan, 1997) Children who are exposed to poverty usually have poorer educational outcomes than their wealthier peers (Lippman et al., 1996).

Research from the Children's Defense Fund (2015) has proven that a well-educated child plays a critical role in preventing poverty. Statistics revealed a strong correlation between educational attainment and economic well-being. If children are given a comprehensive and high-quality education, they are less likely to live in poverty and instead are able to find employment. Students from wealthier backgrounds already perform higher academically than children that come from low-income families. Children in poverty are trapped due to their economic circumstances and attempt to escape a life out of poverty. Such children achieve at lower levels when compared to their wealthier peers. Of those on free and reduced lunch, only 42% of those who were eligible can write on grade level. In math, only 46% of fourth graders eligible for free and reduced lunch perform on grade level. Students from backgrounds of poverty often drop out of school. Research shows that these students drop out at six times the rate when compared to their more affluent peers. Furthermore, evidence also reveals that these dropouts are usually unemployed, in jail, and remain in poverty (Children's Defense Fund, 2015).

The Children's Defense Fund (2015) proved that is apparent that many students are in need of a strong education. In the current economic status of the United States, the financial

strength is dependent on its citizen's ability to achieve a quality education. A rigorous education

is critical for students of poverty. How the government responds to public education determines

the entire outcome of a child's life (Hanover Research, 2014). Between 1929 and 1982, an

estimation of 14% of the nation's economic growth is attributable to improvements in education.

From 1973 to 1980, a one percent increase of spending on education was linked to a .72 %

increase in total employment in 48 states. According to a state report card assessment by the

Corporation for Enterprise Development, a state's investment in areas such as education is linked

to their economic performance. In addition to education playing a positive role for children,

especially those of color, education also plays a critical role in maintaining equality. Over the

last half-century, the educational necessities of students of color have continued to be unmet. As

a result, too many children of color are not prepared for society and cannot come out of poverty

from their childhood. (Children's Defense Fund, 2015).

Even though there is a known social-class gap between the rich and the poor, there have

been findings explaining the financial factors that cause this alarming gap (Anyon, 1997; Kozol,

1991; Stiglitz, 2012; Weis, 2008). The main hope to help close this gap is an effective education

system. Education is the great equalizer, and an education system that works for every student is

desired by most. Many want to believe that schools give all students a fair chance even when the

odds are stacked obviously against them (Gorski, 2014). Teachers and educators struggle with

changing their perceptions towards low-income students. Gorski (2014) believes that schools can

make a significant impact on the lives of students, and educators play a vital role in this process.

Research Problem

Children of poverty are not offered the quality non-maternal care that they require.

However, children with higher quality non-maternal childcare tend to have better development

skills early on in life (National Institutes of Health, 2006). Children who enter school at higher levels of readiness have a better chance of success later in life. They are less likely to go to jail and more likely to be healthy. The United States has become aware of this and has made efforts to expand the high-quality, early childhood education. Currently, the federal government invests over five billion annually in regard to childcare. Over 40 states have state-funded preschool programs. (The economics of early childhood interventions, 2014). Although test scores seem to rise immediately after these childhood programs, studies prove that these gains often fade throughout elementary school (Circirelli, 1969; McKey et al., 1985). Researchers have debated that low-quality schooling or teaching could be a key factor in this decline (Currie and Thomas, 2000).

The Children's Defense Fund (2015) shared a Charles Darwin quote that stated, "If the misery of the poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin." (p. 88). The highest performing educational systems give children the opportunities for a good quality education, combined with equity. If a school fails a child, that child is penalized for a lifetime, leaving him or her with fewer life opportunities. Not only is a failed education detrimental to a child's education, but it is also a high cost on society, damaging social unity and mobility. Evidence proves that a quality education can strengthen a student's capability to respond to recession and contribute to the financial growth and their own social well-being. Students who receive a quality education are more likely to become successful citizens. (OECD, 2012).

According to an article in the Children's Defense Fund (2015), a considerable amount of negative impact comes from segregation and inequity that persistently bring down the quality of public education. The Children's Defense Fund (2015) reveals the following statistics from the

National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP): Of all of the nation's fourth graders, around 40% of whites are reading on grade level as compared to around 15% of Hispanic and black students. Black and Hispanic 12th graders remain on a similar reading and math level as white eight graders. A black student is at least twice as likely to be behind grade level as a white student. Once a black child is in school, he or she continues to fall further behind. A Hispanic child is much more likely to be behind a grade level than a white child. In regard to math, around 40% of white eighth graders perform at grade level as compared to around 10% of Hispanics and around 5% of blacks. In regard to absenteeism in school, black and Hispanic children are usually more likely to be absent than whites. White students are more likely to be in programs for the gifted and talented. White children are less likely to be labeled mentally retarded or emotionally disturbed. Children of color and of low economic status are less likely to graduate from college. In 2003, around 35% of white people, around the ages of 25-29, had earned a bachelor's degree or higher. However, only around 20% of blacks, 10% of Hispanics, and 60% of Asians, in the same age range, had earned a bachelor's degree. At 24, almost half of young adults brought up in wealthy families have graduated from college, as compared to only seven percent who were raised in a lower socio-economic household. If those brought up in low-income families are able to reach post-secondary education, they still have a hard time graduating on time. In 2001, over 70% of economically stable post-secondary students had received college degrees. Whereas, only around 50% of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds had received college degrees. Of black children, one of every three that attends a school has a 90% or more minority enrollment. Around 50% of blacks and 50% of Hispanic students are in schools where 75% or more of the children are poor (Children's Defense Fund, 2005). Poor and minority children often underachieve, not only because they enter behind grade level, but because the schools that are

serving them are often lacking in numerous vital areas (Peske, H. & Haycock, K., 2006).

Peske and Haycock (2006) declared that schools that experience teacher shortages and high-quality teachers are often schools with a large population of black and Hispanic students. In many school districts, white students are much more likely to attend private schools than black students. Nevertheless, studies reveal that in order to improve student achievement and close the achievement gap, access to quality teaching is a necessity (Children's Defense Fund, 2015). Working with children of poverty is often extremely challenging due to the unique and complex needs of the students. Educators must often be creative in dealing with the pressing problems families living in poverty often face (Best Start, 2010). However, quality teaching for the poor and minorities is often hard to find due to multiple factors. For starters, beginning teachers are often at schools with the highest percentages of minorities and low-income students. Statistics prove that in low-income schools, 20% of the teachers have three or less years of teaching experience. Also in lower income schools, more than 75% of teachers are teaching classes in a field in which they did not major. In the high-poverty schools, teachers are more likely to leave due to numerous factors. In these schools, there are often worse working conditions, less resources, and less educational leadership support. Consequently, there is a high turnover rate of teachers in high-poverty schools. Also in these schools, there is not the availability to offer lower student to teacher ratio, which is linked to higher academic performance (Children's Defense Fund, 2015).

The U.S. Department of Education did a study to show that courses with rigor often enhance the learning opportunity. In a rigorous educational setting, students are expected to use their higher-level thinking skills and to later apply what they have learned. Schools that promote rigor ensure that their students are engaged in inquiry and that they are given content that helps

ensure this learning is taking place (Larson, 2016).   However, these advancements in the curriculum are not offered to all students. The National Research Council found that black and Hispanic students are half as likely be placed in gifted programs as whites are. In addition to the gifted courses, there are gaps in which students are able to take advanced math and science. Only 30% of black students have taken pre-calculus, calculus, trigonometry, and other advanced math courses. Public schools often face the significant struggle of overcrowding. The problem has become worse as public schools are continuing to grow and enrollment has reached historically high levels. Furthermore, the obstacle is even worse for high-minority, lower-income schools. There is much more of a chance of schools being overcrowded with students of minorities and lower incomes. Where there are at least 70% of students with low-income, students are more than twice as likely to be in an overcrowded school. As a result, overcrowding often leads to school violence and unfortunately is becoming worse (Children's Defense Fund, 2015).

In this generation, students require access to the new improvements in technology. However, poor and minority children have less opportunity to use technology. Studies show that students from impoverished backgrounds rely on the computers and Internet at their schools. Unfortunately, these students usually do not attend schools with high-quality technology.

Students are often faced with challenges that cause a great need for school counselors. These counselors help provide support for numerous struggles that students are faced with on a day-to-day basis. Statistics even reveal the correlation between mental health problems and dropping out of school, showing that nearly two-thirds of the students who drop out have some sort of behavior or emotional problem. Although the need of these counselors is a necessity, high-poverty schools have less of an opportunity for school or community-based counseling services (Children's Defense Fund, 2015).

Through all of the obstacles that educators face, Edmonds (1979) recommends that all urban schools teaching poor children must have strong leadership and a high expectation set for all students. Ineffective schools are attributing to children's lack of reading and math skills. In a more effective school, children of poverty are often impacted in great measures (Edmonds, 1979). Nevertheless, the statistics show that the schools are still having the obstacle of making gains with students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Children's Defense Fund, 2015).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to analyze the effects that an impoverished background has on children through the eyes of educators and their perception on the effective strategies when working with these students. This study will be measured through school achievement scores, teacher and principal questionnaires, and a focus group. Research already proves that a low socioeconomic background has a direct impact on children in numerous ways. This study will reveal the educators' perceptions of how impoverished students are affected in the classroom and what strategies are beneficial for these students.

Research Questions

1. What are educators' perceptions of the impact of low socioeconomic status on student learning?

2. What are educators' perceptions of instructional best practices regarding impoverished students?

Rationale for the Study

Numerous studies have revealed that low socioeconomic status often negatively impacts children and leads to struggles in the school environment (Children's Defense Fund, 2005). However, the aspect of how to positively influence impoverished children has not been clearly

studied. This study will give a clearer illustration as to why these students struggle and what educators can do to make their educational experience more of a success.

The Researcher

The researcher has the opportunity of working in an educational leadership position in an urban school district as a Special Education Consulting Teacher. Through this position, the researcher works in various school settings with students of various types of backgrounds, and observes a diversity of students, as well as teachers. Being in the field of special education, the researcher is often linked to students of all learning styles and backgrounds. In the reviewing of files and records through special education and transitioning students, the often-unfortunate background information of these students is quickly revealed to the researcher. The researcher was able to quickly notice that the majority of the students in special education did not come from a successful, wealthy family, but instead the researcher observed a correlation in the disadvantaged students and special education.

Limitations and Delimitations

The data was gathered from a school district in one urban West Tennessee school district. It was limited to only the teachers of this specific school district. This limits what the responses of both the questionnaires and the interview questions may be. The study is also limited to the student population in the school district where these educators are implementing the best strategies for impoverished students. The limited geographical sample affects the ability to simplify the responses of this study in comparison to larger populations. The target population only included educators in this West Tennessee school district. Since poverty varies across the world, the perception of poverty and its effects in the classroom may differ from those educators in other regions of the United States.

Definition of Terms

- Sociocultural: A common method that influences the society that one lives in and the learning process (Sociocultural Approach, 2017).

- Behaviorism: An approach in psychology that focuses on scientific and objective methods of investigation, stating that all behaviors are learned through interaction with the environment (McLeod, 2007).

- Socioeconomic Status: The social standing of an individual or group, measured by income, education, and occupation (American Psychology Association, 2017).

- Impoverished students: Students who lack the basic necessities and have an uncertainty as to where they might get their basic needs (Carlock, 2013).

- Student achievement: Measurement of the amount of academic content a student learns in a set amount of time (Carter, 2017).

Summary

All year, a great amount of children enter school significantly behind for a variety of different reasons. Regardless of the reason, many students entering the classroom without the knowledge and skills they need to succeed are classified as low-income and minority children (Peske, H. & Haycock, K., 2006). Research reveals various obstacles among the education system today, with one being high-poverty schools. Many factors often impact students' achievement in school. Teachers, administrators, and parents are faced with the obstacle of helping improve the education system. Gender, race, culture, home life, and socioeconomic status all play a vital role in student success (Children's Defense Fund, 2005). This qualitative study investigates teachers' perceptions of how students from impoverished backgrounds are

affected regarding their learning and which specific strategies are identified to reach these

students and help them become more successful in the school environment.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Poverty in the United States

Hutson (2010) defined poverty as a lack of income or economic hardship. The word "poverty" can describe many various life situations. Each of these experiences shape expectations, wisdom, confidence, and experience for gaining an education. There are various types of poverty that give different life experiences. Generational poverty describes a family who has never owned their own property, never knew anyone who benefited from education or had a respected job, and their focus is on making it through the day. Working class poverty describes a family who is working but rarely has money for any extras. They do not own property and usually live paycheck to paycheck. Immigrant families of poverty have little or no resources and usually face language or culture challenges. Finally, situational poverty describes families surrounded by people who are educated and usually attend school regularly. However, they experience an unexpected crisis, and their income drops drastically (Educating Students Who, n.d.).

Gunn & Duncan (1997) described poverty as the state in which one does not have the financial resources for daily necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter. Sadly, it has become a normal routine for many to have their normal daily procedures altered for lack of resources and capital that are necessary for daily life (Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Even among wealthy countries, child poverty is prevalent. The United States has high child poverty rates, around 20% in 2009, as well as high-income inequality. Various policies were created and implemented to address child poverty in the U.S. Early intervention was created to improve the health and development of young children, and employment-based financial incentives and work supports were also put into place for low-income parents (Hutson, 2011).

Annual income is used as the standard for measuring poverty within and across nations. The federal poverty threshold was originated in 1963 and acts as an estimate of the minimum income needed by an individual or family to avoid substantial hardship. The threshold estimates the minimum food budget required for an adequate nutrition and then uses the assumption that food contributes to about one-third of a family's expenditure. This number will vary depending on the family size and is adjusted based on inflation. In 2009, $22,050 was the threshold for a family of four people (Hutson, 2011).

The percentage of children living in families with incomes below the poverty line declined until 1969 and then increased in the 1980s and again in the 1990s. In 2009, 20% of U.S. children were considered poor. Although income is unstable and often unpredictable, with families fluctuating in and out of poverty, many families remain in chronic poverty over many years. Households composed of both single mothers and families of color (both African American and Latino) represent the chronically poor households (Hutson, 2011). As of 2013, 15% of the American population lived in poverty (Gabe, 2015). Petrilli (2013) reported that the suburban rate was smaller at 11.3% poverty. Gabe (2015) reported that in 2013, 16 million of the 45 million people living in poverty were children (Ballew, 2017). This number of the population of children in the United States has increased from 20% in 1990 to 21.9% in 2013 (Scherer, 2013). Compared to the poverty rates during the time the War on Poverty was declared, these were higher. Alarming statistics state that the United States ranked first in childhood poverty (Ballew, 2017). In addition to gaps between student achievement, studies also correlated poverty to violence, death, conflict, and disability (Beloion & Peterson, 2000). Hardy (2006) reported that one out of seven U.S. schools had over 80% minority with 75% of these schools being economically disadvantaged minorities. According to Kahlenberg (2006), at least 50% of

elementary students attended a school with an economically disadvantaged population of over 50% (Ballew, 2017).

Neumon (2013) states that the recent decline and increase in unemployment rates leads to a depressing future and a realization that economic inequality is a reality and it is growing, placing low-income and high-income children on separate paths throughout school. Rothstein (2013) recognizes that the change of wealth has divided the middle class and created a larger inconsistency among citizens of the United States. In other words, according to Hans Ballew (2017), "The rich have gotten richer and the poor have gotten poorer. The hope of the American dream is vanishing before its citizens' very eyes" (p. 23). Altogether, it has been proven that out of all the factors, including race, socioeconomic status has the strongest correlation to "cognitive scores." Studies revealed that family income serves as the main predictor of school success. Furthermore, these students often attend schools of lower quality, continuing the negative improvement pattern (Hanover Research, 2014).

The urban and educational literature has focused on the increase of poverty concentrated in inner-city neighborhoods and the educational failure of youth often associated with living within these areas. Studies examined this issue by identifying which characteristics within these neighborhoods influence educational achievement and what means facilitate these suggestions. Using the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 linked to 1990 census information at the neighborhood level, the study found that neighborhood characteristics predict educational outcomes. When looking at how neighborhood characteristics impact educational outcomes, theorists have suggested several processes, which include the following: collective socialization, social control, social capital, perception of opportunity, and institutional characteristics. (Ainsworth, 2002). One characteristic that stands out in many poor neighborhoods is the schools

that there are often characterized by poor performance in terms of attainment and other measures (Bramley & Karley, 2005).

Poverty across the World

While the United States used their own definition of poverty, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) used a definition based on some percentage of the median income in the country. Cross-national comparisons of income poverty, in 2000 in 24 OECD countries, defined poverty as family income lower than 50% of the median income. It declared that the lowest rates are in Denmark and Finland (less than 3%), and the highest rate is in the United States (22%). Australia and the United Kingdom were rated 12% and 17%. In 17 of the 24 developed countries, child poverty rates went up from 1990 to 2000 (UNICEF, 2005). The rates of child poverty declined in the United Kingdom during the period of 1998-2008 (Waldfogel, 2010).

The World Bank gave information from around the world on extreme poverty today and establishes the International Poverty Line. Revised in 2015, the poverty line reveals that an individual is considered to be in extreme poverty if they live on less than 1.90 international dollars per day. The basis for this measurement is the dollar amount of how much a person consumes. As described by the World Bank, extreme poverty, living on $1.90, is extremely challenging. In the last 200 years across the world, evidence leads one to believe that the population living in extreme poverty has declined. The global population of those in extreme poverty declined from 80% in 1820 to 10% in the most recent estimates (Roser & Ortiz-Ospina, 2017).

From the 19th century of almost 100% living in extreme poverty to 10.7% in 2013, there is definitely a decrease in the numbers of extreme poverty. However, there is still a poverty rate

of 10.7%, which is a total of 746 million people. With Africa having the largest number, 383 million of their people living in extreme poverty, the numbers lessen to 0.7 million in Europe. North America ranks right in the middle of Africa, Asia, South America, Oceania, and Europe, with a population of 13 million in extreme poverty. India is the country with the largest number of people living in extreme poverty at 218 million people. Nigeria and Congo are following behind with 86 and 55 million people (Roser & Ortiz-Ospina, 2017).

Despite the fact that the number of undernourished people has decreased, there are currently 795 million people in the world without enough to eat. The majority of the world's undernourished people live in developing countries, with 60 percent being women who are hungry. Furthermore, 50 percent of pregnant women lack adequate maternal care, resulting in 300,000 maternal deaths a year from complications related to childbirth. In developing countries, 17% of infants are born with a low birth weight. Nearly half of all deaths in children under five are contributed to under-nutrition, which results in the loss of around three million young lives a year. A child dies from hunger-related diseases every 10 seconds. Around 22,000 children die daily due to impoverished conditions. (Know your world, n.d.).

Causes of Poverty

Conger and Donnellan (2007) argue there are two areas in which the causes of poverty fall: social selection and social causation. When referring to the social selection hypothesis, individuals either achieve success or failure in regards to climbing the attributes such as ability, skills, motivation, and mental and physical health. Since these children are from families that lack certain characteristics, there is a result of both genetic and environmental influence that they inherit from their parents. The social causation hypothesis argues that economic and social organizations offer opportunities and challenges that lead to poverty. For example, if there is a

shortage of jobs that pay higher wages or that require specialized skills, there is a likelihood that there will be a great amount of poor individuals (Conger and Donnellan, 2007).

Several nations that have historically always had high poverty rates were former colonies where slaves and resources were steadily removed. For many of these former colonies, colonialism helped implement the policies that keep many from having access to land, capital, education, and other adequate necessities. Williams (2017) labeled war and political instability as one cause of poverty. Many of the poorest nations in the world have dealt with civil war and political turmoil in the 20th century. Of these nations, many have ineffective governments that cannot protect people from the violence. High debt is another cause of poverty in the world. Many poor nations have great debt because of a reliance on other nations' monetary resources. On average, poorer nations owe around $2.30 in debt for every $1 obtained in grant assistance. Another cause of poverty is the exposure to national disasters. Reoccurring catastrophic natural disasters can create a great challenge to eliminating poverty, especially in regions of the world that are already lacking resources. In many cases, poor people often lose what little they have and are forced out of their living communities to become dependent on others in order to survive (Williams, 2017).

Richmond (2017) similarly lists the causes of poverty as: warfare, backward agricultural, natural disasters, a centralized corrupt government, discrimination and social inequality, and environmental degradation. When referring to warfare, millions of people are displaced, losing their jobs, homes, and even families, leading to a life of poverty. In these times, a country's productivity drops, and there are less investments within the country. Access to necessities, such as health, education, and even drinking water are no longer available. Richmond emphasizes that the agricultural sector makes up a great part of the economy. However, the price of agricultural

goods remains low, putting farmers below the poverty line. Already mentioned from previous research, Richmond also declares that many countries are not prepared to face the aftermath of a natural disaster. This leads to a long recovery from these horrific events and often a path of crisis. Centralization happens when political leaders do not delegate power at regional and local levels. This results in having a small group of people ruling over unfamiliar places, leading to neglect in significant duties and corruption. Discrimination is another main cause of poverty, as many are discriminated because of their age, race, religion or gender. This prejudice leads to some not having the same opportunities as the privileged have, leading to living below the poverty line. Richmond ends by emphasizing how the poor often rely on natural resources for subsistence. Nevertheless, the lack of water sources, contamination, and deforestation often threaten the wellness of those who are depending on them for survival (Richmond, 2017).

Work-based Policies

In order to improve the poverty issue, the U.S. government has created numerous work-based policies to benefit those living under the poverty threshold. Many of the abilities in the United States regarding poverty are based on social selection and intended to change the skills and behaviors of those who are poor or who may become poor. Poverty and welfare policies designed for adults are created to improve individual's skills, motivation, and effort, thus increasing their employment opportunities. Such policies decrease "dependence" on welfare and encourage marriage and financial responsibility for children. Many of the policies are for young children and are created to increase early developmental skills and support, "school readiness." There are also policies that emphasize living wage and anti-discrimination. These such laws are intended to improve job opportunities, assure appropriate wages for work, prevent race and gender discrimination, and assure developmental and educational opportunities for all. Two U.S.

policies, seen as widely effective and accepted, are the early childhood intervention and employment-based welfare for low-income parents. Both policies strive to produce great improvements in children's lives but do not overcome the great inequalities between the poor and those who are not poor. (Hutson, 2011).

A more popular major support system for the impoverished families is the United States Welfare Program that began in the 1930s during the Great Depression. This program was created as a response from the U.S. government to the numerous families and individuals in need of aid. Over the next 61 years, the U.S. welfare system was controlled by the federal government, where many Americans were displeased with the system. Many claimed that many participants abused the program and did not apply for jobs, and had more children in order to get more aid, and stayed single in order to obtain additional benefits (Welfare Info, 2017). Welfare altogether became more and more politically unpopular, as many of the recipients were seen to the general public as being lazy and undeserving. In addition, race was a major factor, as the public image was an urban African American woman with numerous children born out of wedlock (Quadagno, 1994).

President Clinton signed a reform law passed by the Republican Congress in 1996 that gave control of the welfare system back to the states. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) created significant changes in the federal welfare policy, focusing on obtaining jobs and limiting welfare benefits to a total of five years in a parent's lifetime (Hutson, 2010). The Federal government provides assistance through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which is a grant given to each state to manage their own welfare program. This grant requires that all recipients of welfare must obtain

a job within two years of receiving the benefits. Recipients could lose the benefits if they fail to comply with the work requirements (Welfare Info, 2017).

Many, who were the intended beneficiaries of public funds for low-income parents, had questions about how the welfare system affected children. The Next Generation Project was intended to take advantage of the various policies and the impacts of the features on children's development (Hutson, 2011). The studies featured job training, limits on the amount of time one is eligible for cash benefits, earnings supplements and enhanced childcare assistance. They demonstrated that simply going from welfare to having a job did not make a family's income go up on average. In other words, work alone did not move families out of poverty (Bloom & Michalopoulos, 2001). Throughout the Next Generation studies, it was expected to see differences in parents' sense of wellbeing to be a vital pathway for effects on children. Much literature supports the idea that the negative effects of poverty on children's psychological wellbeing are determined by the stress level of the parents (Conger & Donnellan, 2007; McLoyd, Aikens, & Burton). In the policy experiments, parent's wellbeing depended on how old their children were. Parents who had preschool-aged children showed an increase in depression symptoms when they were in programs that required employment. However, those who had children who were school-aged reported lower levels of depression, and their children's social behavior also improved (Morris, 2008; Walker, Hutson, & Imes, 2010). Overall, those with preschool children had more struggles with their family procedures than those with school-aged children, ensuring that the impact of welfare on children varies by the age of the child. For pre-school aged children (3-5 years old), studies showed the most positive long-term effects of increased income and effective childcare to show later achievement and intellectual development. For the middle childhood (6-11 years old), positive effects on children's social

behavior also occurred. However, for adolescents, mother's obtainment of employment led to negative impacts on these children and ultimately affected their behavior and them staying in school (Gennetian, Duncan, Knox, Vargas, & Clark-Kauffman, 2004).

A New Hope was another experiment in the Next Generation group of studies but had different goals and philosophy than the welfare studies. It was a program out of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, built on the assumption that public policy should provide work supports for poor people because of their desire to work. It was designed to provide benefits that would pull full-time workers' incomes over the poverty threshold and provide the basic work assistance in order to maintain employment. It offered earning supplements for those who worked fulltime that would increase their income above poverty level. It offered access to community service jobs that paid minimum wage, if a participant was unable to find a full-time job. Applicants were required to be at least 18 years old, have earnings below 150% of the poverty threshold, reside in the target areas of Milwaukee, and be willing to work full time in order to qualify. Studies were done over eight years on the progress the children had from the adult participants in the program. Hutson (2010) declared that the results showed that New Hope produced moderate improvements in family incomes, decreasing the likelihood that the family would be officially labeled "poor." It also proved that the program increased parents' use of child care of younger children and out-of-school activities for older children. Ultimately, this provided more positive care environments, which led to the promotion of positive development. One major component that data revealed was that New Hope provided respectful and useful services from the staff. When compared to the welfare office, participants noted that the New Hope office always returned calls, offered useful information, and wanted one to succeed (Hutson, 2010). Overall, the study showed that children in New Hope Families had higher achievement, increased levels

of positive social behavior, and fewer behavior problems (Hutson et al., 2001).

From these studies, the experiments that examined policies in which employment was a requirement revealed very little damaging effects on children. However, the policies did very little to improve the poor child's wellbeing. On the other hand, the experiments did show that employment-based policies can make a difference in the lives of children. However, the family must move out of poverty and children must be sent to good childcare or out-of- school activities in order for these improvements to become effective. In this case, the mother has time to make the changes in family responsibilities, and the caseworkers provide effective feedback and support. From these studies' results, policy changes were already happening in the 1990s. From 1995 to 2000, there has been a decline in those receiving cash assistance and poverty among single mothers, while the rates of employment among single mothers increased. Some argued that these patterns can be contributed to the changes in the welfare laws, but it is difficult to single out one cause.

Early Childhood Interventions

In addition to work-based policies, early childhood interventions were created and implemented to improve the quality of life for those living under the poverty threshold. For at least 50 years, researchers studying children have consistently noticed how important it is for them to have many positive experiences in the first few years of life. This includes the prenatal period, for children's long-term health and development. During the first three years of life, the neurological structure of the brain is formed through a detailed set of interactions between both genes and experience. It became apparent in the 1960s to legislators and the public that children of poverty entered school at age five with fewer abilities than their wealthier equivalents. In the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—data was collected on a sample of 11,000 children born in

2001 in the U.S. The Bayley Cognitive Assessment, which measures the overall level of development, was given at nine months and again at 24 months. At nine months, children in low-income families were somewhat behind, but by 24 months, the difference was much greater (Halle et al., 2009). Only about 30% of the children in low-income families obtained a score at or above the average as compared to those that came from families that were more prosperous. There are various reasons for these differences, but the main point is that the differences do exist, and there is a distinct developmental disadvantage by the age of two.

Due to their environments, children in poverty are affected not only early in their developmental progress but also on their intelligence level development later in life. The early years have strong and lasting effects and are knowns as the "sensitive period" for environmental influences. Low income families during the first five years of life is more detrimental for intellectual development than poverty is later on in life (Hutson, 2011). In one large, longitudinal study, family poverty during early childhood predicted low academic performance in the school years (ages 6-12). However, once early childhood income was considered family income during the school years was unrelated to achievement (Votruba-Drzal, 2006). The Panel Study of Income Dynamcis (PSID) established even longer lasting effects when a longitudinal study was done on families since 1968. Poverty during the first five years of life indicated low academic performance throughout the school years as well as low adult educational attainment (Duncan, Ziol-Guest, Kalil, 2010). There is less evidence to prove that poverty effects social behavior, both positive and problem behavior, during a particular period. Income in both the early years (0-5) and middle childhood (ages 6-12) had a collective impact on behavior problems at ages 7-12 (Votruba-Drzal, 2006). In PSID, adolescent poverty indicated adult psychological anguish, even if the early poverty was controlled (Duncan, et al., 2010). Shonkoff (2010) introduced a

developmental model which incorporated various types of early environments—human relationships, physical, chemical and built environments and nutrition.

Early Intervention Programs

Head Start began in 1965 in the United States as a large federal program to enrich the experiences of children prior to entering. Since it was established, Head Start is the only national, high quality early education program that provides support in education, health and nutrition for the neediest children. This program continues to provide these opportunities 45 years later. Since 1965, Head Start has served more than 22 million children. Congress funded Head Start at $6.78 billion dollars in 2004. It is administered at the local level and allows the diverse needs of the community to be met according to their needs. At least 90% of these families have to be at or below the federal poverty line to qualify. Infants, toddlers, and pregnant women are served through the program. It focuses not only on the intellectual ability of the child but the whole child. Head Start understands that low socioeconomic status families have various critical needs, and they aim to bridge the gap in school readiness skills (Children's Defense Fund, 2005).

Precise, intense interventions can create improvements in academic achievement and social behavior. Various studies reviewed showed that school achievement for children in the intervention programs was much greater than the achievement by a control group of children. The Perry Preschool Project and the North Carolina Abecedarian Program were carefully studied and showed a lasting impact on educational attainment, labor market participation, and reduced crime well into adulthood (Karoly et al., 2005). Head Start produced more modest positive effects, and there is a debate about how long the advantages produced by the program last. In the National Head Start Evaluation Study, applicants for Head Start were randomly assigned to be admitted to a Head Start program or to be in a control group. By the end of the year, the Head

Start children had better language and literacy skills, fewer behavior problems and better health, and received less harsh parenting than the control group children. However, most of the differences were no longer evident by the end of first grade (Administration for Children and Families, 2010). Some researchers argued that these findings show that Head Start is ineffective, but others indicate that the study design was not reliable because many children in the control group attended preschool programs that were not a part of the study.

The Abecedarian study in North Carolina is one of the most effective demonstration programs where children were given high-quality, full-time childcare from the age of six weeks to kindergarten entry (Campbell et al., 2008). Positive impact, particularly for children's health and social-emotional wellbeing, can often be produced by large-scale interventions using combinations of parent education and preschool programs for children from birth to three. In the United Kingdom, there is a community-based intervention called Sure Start that provides a broad range of services to families of poverty. Recent evaluations showed that 3-year-olds in Sure Start communities exhibit better social behavior and independence, and their parents reveal better parenting strategies (Melhuish, Belsky, Leyland, & Barnes, 2010). Similarly, the Early Head Start program in the U.S. provides a parallel mixture of services. An early evaluation revealed the positive impact on children's progress and the quality of the family environment; however, the program must be fully implemented to show these improvements (Love et al, 2005).

Many have been led by this evidence to believe that early interventions are a good investment due to their positive benefits of reducing disadvantages related to poverty during the first five years of life. In 2006, James Heckman concluded the argument by describing the investment in underprivileged young children as a rare public policy initiative. Heckman believed that early interventions have a greater impact on these children than many of the other

policies and supports put into place. Although early interventions do prove to have great benefits, they are not the answer to all of the problems related to poverty. They are not designed to reduce poverty but instead to eliminate some of its effects on children's intellectual, behavioral, and health problems, with hopes of reducing the likelihood of poverty in the next generation (Hutson, 2010).

Hutson (2010) described the early intervention and work-based programs for adults with low incomes as the most successful anti-poverty policies. They are both research-based and supported by extensive policy research that reveals their positive impact on children's development. Nevertheless, as the experiments showed, the success was not a great deal. Although effective early interventions do make a difference on school performance by an impressive number, it does not essentially close the poverty gap. Programs, such as Head Start, decreased the income gap in performance on pre-reading skills by about 45% (ACF, 2005), but this gain did not stay maintained. New Hope produced about one-fourth of a standard deviation improvement in school achievement, but again, gains did not sustain (Hutson, 2010).

Sociocultural Approaches

Sociocultural approaches to learning and development were first structured and applied by Vygotsky and his coworkers in Russia in the 1920s and 1930s. They are designed around the idea that human activities take place in cultural contexts. When starting an activity, learners depend on others with more experience. Over time they take on increasing responsibility for their own learning and participation in joint activity. Human development begins with dependence on caregivers. The developing individual depends on in depth shared pool of transmitted experience of others (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

Nasir and Hand discuss both sociocultural theory and the studies on race, culture, and

learning. They found that a sociocultural lens could possibly provide insight and suggests new lines of research on issues of race, culture, and learning (Nasir & Hand, 2006). Behaviorism is a worldview that operates on a principle of "stimulus-response." All behavior can be explained without considering internal mental states or consciousness. Behaviorism is a worldview that assumes a learner is essentially submissive, responding to environmental stimuli. Behavior is shaped through positive or negative reinforcement. Both will increase the probability that the antecedent behavior will reoccur. Learning is therefore defined as a change in behavior in the learner (Behaviorism, 2017).

Vgotsky: Sociocultural Theory

Even before early intervention theories, classroom strategies, and work-based programs were implemented, many psychologists were discovering theories that easily relate to children in poverty. Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky has influenced both the fields of educational psychology and most important education altogether (Mamour, 2008). Vgotsky argues that sociocultural factors are indispensable for elementary natural processes to develop. Vgotsky studied a wide variety of topics while attending Moscow State University where he graduated with a law degree. However, in 1924 he began a more formal study in psychology when he attended the Institute of Psychology in Moscow. He wrote six books on psychology and was interested in many topics but often focused on issues of child development and education. In the 1920s, Vgotsky became best known for his sociocultural theory, which easily relates to the impact of low socioeconomic status on student learning. He believed that social interaction played a vital role in children's learning. However, he believed that culture greatly influenced the entire process (Cherry, 2017). Vgotsky proclaims that this theory is based on the idea that human activities occur in cultural contexts and that learners depend on others with more experiences

(John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Vgotsky's theory strives to prove that the sociocultural setting stands as the primary and determining factor in developing children (Mamour, 2008).

Skinner: Behaviorism Theory

Burrhus Frederic Skinner became very interested in writing while attending Hamilton College. However, after Hamilton, he enrolled at Harvard University to study psychology. Skinner developed many theories and is known as one of the most controversial figures in psychology. Skinner explored how negative and positive reinforcement effected behavior. Skinner argued that his theory of radical behaviorism states that internal insights are not based on a psychological level of consciousness but instead on an individual's own physical body (Good Therapy, 2017). Skinner believed it is more useful to study observable behavior rather than the mind. He understood behavior by looking at the results and its consequences, which he called operant conditioning. Skinner also believed that positive reinforcement might strengthen a behavior by providing a rewarding consequence. Behavior is developed through either positive or negative reinforcement. These will both indicate that the antecedent behavior will reoccur (Behaviorism, 2017). However, he believed that an unpleasant reinforcer could also strengthen behavior, which is known as negative reinforcement. When discussing punishment, Skinner noted that it does not guide one toward the desired behavior but simply tells one what not to do. Punishment also creates fear that can maintain undesirable behaviors (McLeod, 2007). Behaviorism is portrayed as an opinion that discloses a learner as ultimately passive, responding to environmental stimuli. Ultimately, Skinner describes behaviorism as the philosophy of that science, not the science of human behavior (Skinner, 2011)

Skinner: Behavior Modification

Skinner studied numerous techniques that could be used in the classroom with all

students. Behavior modification is one of those techniques in which the main principle includes

changing environmental events that are ultimately related to the behavior. Primary reinforcement

is when a reward is given to strengthen a behavior. Examples of behavior modification are things

that teachers have used and continue to use today: token economy and behavior shaping. Token

economy is a system where tokens reinforce the targeted behaviors. Tokens are given for

positive behavior and then traded for rewards at the discretion of the teacher. They could be in

the form of stickers, buttons, and/or fake money. Rewards could vary based on the desires of the

student to things such as privileges, snacks, or activities. In addition to the token economy,

another easy way to shape behavior that Skinner suggested is to give students' feedback based on

their performance. For example, while a teacher is encouraging a student to answer questions,

they should praise them along the way. On the other hand, inappropriate behaviors could be

ignored by the teacher, rather than reinforced by attention (McLeod, 2007).

Home life and Poverty

Researchers studied home environments of children living in extreme poverty. Studies

proved that a child's daily exposure contributes to various academic factors. Children who are

read to and have access to books in their home gain a greater vocabulary at a more rapid rate

than children who don't have these experiences (Bradley et al, 2001). Children from low

socioeconomic backgrounds cannot afford the same resources and opportunities as those with a

greater income. This is a significant reason as to why vocabulary and reading skills are linked to

socioeconomic statuses. Families with low incomes struggle with obstacles due to their

economic situation, such as a lack of resources and additional stress that comes with poverty

(Ford, 2011). A child's home life can be significantly impacted because of being poor. Response

of parents, teaching of parents, and quality all coordinate with socioeconomic status (Bradley et al, 2001).

Academic Effects of Poverty

Ford (2011) revealed that inadequate reading skills in childhood can have damaging effects on reading in the future and intellectual development. Exposure to language and reading in the home is attributed to much of a child's vocabulary. On the other hand, vocabulary learned in a school setting accounts for only a limited amount of vocabulary. Reading to a child on numerous occasions throughout childhood accounts for a greater knowledge of reading later in childhood (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2001). Previous research has revealed that children of low-income families perform at a lower level academically. The U.S. Department of Education's Early Childhood Longitudinal Study proved that before students enter kindergarten, the average intellectual ability of children from wealthier background was 60% higher than those of from a low-income family (Lee & Burkam, 2002). Research also concluded that black students scored around 20% lower than white students. Lee and Burkam (2002) proved that race and ethnicity are linked to socioeconomic status as shown by the following statistics: 34% black children and approximately 30% Hispanic children are in the lowest quintile of socioeconomic status as compared to only 10% of white children.

Economically Disadvantaged Students

Many of the students whose families live in poverty often believe that they do not belong or that something is wrong with them. They are frequently taught that no one cares, everyone seems smarter, people are better than them, they don't belong, and there is no one to help them (Beegle, n.d.). Many of these students often show several symptoms that are really just cries for help from the stress of their impoverished background. Some misbehave with actions that make

learning difficult, being loud and boisterous. Educators often punish these behaviors by suspending the student, which ultimately causes the student to fall behind even more. Realistically, these students are acting out to deal with the challenges of poverty. On the other hand, students from a low socioeconomic status backgrounds may withdraw and strive to be invisible within the classroom. These students are the ones that often wear a sweatshirt with the hood pulled tight over their head, curl up with their head down on a desk, or go to the corner of the room and do not disturb anyone. These are behaviors they may be doing at home to avoid being hurt by their drunken caretaker or abuser. These students are also often chronically absent (Izard, 2016).

Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds come from an environment where they hear more discouraging words than encouraging words. The parents of these students are often stressed from their own experiences and respond to their child with anger and short temper. Much of this causes blame on the child themselves and lowers their self-esteem altogether. Poverty can influence emotions, how the brain processes things, cognitive capacity, and feelings. It can also lead to depression as the students hold on to a lack of hope. Teen pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and mental illnesses are all linked to poverty (Izrad, 2016). Students who have dealt with poverty often misbehave, resulting in removal from the classroom and possibly the school (Izrad, 2016).

Gunn & Duncan (1997) declare that there have been numerous studies that have observed the extreme effects of poverty on children's well-being. Despite what has been done to improve the quality of life of those living below the poverty threshold, historically, students of low socioeconomic status have not performed as well on state achievement tests as their peers coming from higher socioeconomic status (Reardon, 2011). Coleman (1966) proved that low

socioeconomic status is continuously correlated to low academic achievement, and it has been

proven that low socioeconomic status declines a child's ability to be ready for school through

well-being, home life, education, and throughout the community (Ferguson, Bovaird, & Mueller,

2007, p. 701). Hanover Research (2014) implies that socioeconomic status has the greatest

relationship to student achievement. Ballew (2017) described one specific study that found that

three year olds from an impoverished household knew 600 fewer words than middleclass

children of the same age. Additional studies found that even on the first day of kindergarten, the

income achievement gap was significant and would even increase through the student's school

career (Reardon, 2013; Coleman, 1996-CN Paper). According to Ballew, King Dickman (2013)

found that learning decreases by high school graduation for low socioeconomic students with a

gap in literacy as large as four years. Teachers often struggle with instructing students altogether,

because usually lower-class children are two or three grade levels below their middle-class peers

(Ballew, 2017). Even in a higher-performing teacher's classroom, the lower income students

would still reveal lower achievement than middleclass students' scores (Reardon, 2011). Thus,

this epidemic is affecting the schools, as teachers are having difficulty finding effective strategies

to close these large gaps (Blank, 2011; Budge, 2010). In the last 30 years, the achievement gap

for economically disadvantaged has grown (Reardon, 2011). Hanover Research (2014) shows

that achievement gaps in 2001 were 30 to 40 % higher than what they were in the 1970s.

Students in poverty rarely had appropriate areas where they could study in their homes (Ballew,

2017). Furthermore, these children did not receive the assistance when needed. Although many

received resources to aide in obtaining food during the school year, they did not receive those

resources throughout the summer (Ballew, 2017). Edelman and Jones (2004) reported that over

nine million U.S. children were without healthcare in 2004. Ballew (2013) reported that this

often led to more absences, ultimately leading to the achievement gap. High school dropout rates have also been linked to economically disadvantaged, which could have an impact on potential generations and continue the series of poverty (Hawkins, 2011). Kindergarteners, who were impoverished, score approximately one-half of a standard deviation below the national average in reading achievement. This gap has grown to two standard deviations by the time they leave elementary school and enter middles school. Mathematics showed a similar result as that in reading. Impoverished students who were unable to develop the initial theories in mathematics were less likely to be able to enter upper-level mathematics classes. Impoverished students from high-poverty schools did not perform as well in college as economically disadvantaged students from economically united schools. Student disciplinary actions have been linked to disadvantaged neighborhoods and rundown buildings. Research also reveals that African Americans who live in more affluent neighborhoods performed better academically. (Ballew, 2017). Altogether, students who are economically disadvantaged perform lower on most measures of academic success (Reardon, 2011).

No Child Left Behind was designed to close these student achievement gaps by giving children a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. By 2014, all students were expected to meet or exceed state standards in reading and math. Schools have attempted to close the income achievement gap by implementing high-quality teaching strategies. The overall focus of No Child Left Behind was to close the achievement gaps for those including the impoverished students. Edelman & Jones (2004) have proved that the gap between the rich and the poor is growing. Nevertheless, the gap is clear at the beginning of school and keeps steadily growing by each grade levels (Coleman, 1966). Students of low socioeconomic status at four years old are behind as much as 60% in comparison to their

wealthier peers. Regrettably, once they fall behind, they stay there. Sadly, many of the high

school students are going straight from school to jail (Edelman & Jones 2004). In regards to life

after high school, research found that only seven percent of the very low-income students are

able to earn a bachelor's degree by age 26 (Ballew, 2017). Researchers have proven that the

reading achievement gap between those of low and high socioeconomic status is considerable

and consistent. Scholars declared summer as being a huge setback for those of low

socioeconomic status, stating that they lost two or three months in reading level over the summer

as compared to their more wealthy peers who stayed the same (Ballew, 2017). Rothstein (2013)

stated that many schools with a high percentage of economically disadvantaged population had

less academic opportunities, fewer summer programs, and low-quality after-school enhancement.

Poverty and Diversity

With immigration becoming more and more prevalent in the U.S., schools have become

more diverse since the early 1900s. Between 1989 and 2009, the increase of students of color in

the U.S. went from 30% to 45% (Aud, Hussar, Kena, Blanco, Froholich, Kemp, & Tahan, 2011).

As the trends continue, students of color will exceed the white students in the U.S. public schools

within one or two decades. In 2009, immigrant children made up around seve percent of students

in kindergarten through the 12th grade (Perez, 2011).

Language and religious diversity amongst the low socio-economic status of students is

also rampant in the U.S. Approximately 20% of students spoke something other than English in

their homes. To understand these different diverse and often poorer backgrounds, the

Multicultural Education Series (MES) was created for all educators (Banks, 2012). Banks (2012)

created this handbook to provide research and common knowledge about behaviors and learning

characteristics of students of color, minority, and low-income students that may help improve the academic achievement gap amongst such students.

Poverty and Location

Gorski (2014) declares that all poverty rate inequalities are increasing. In the past, poverty was seen as an inner-city problem. However, this view of poverty was never seen completely accurate. Kathleen Miller and Bruce Weber (2014) affirmed that although high rates of poverty are in many cities, poverty is also fairly distributed between rural areas, such as part of Appalachia and the Missisippi Delta. The U.S. stereotype is that poverty is not necessarily an urban issue, but also a people of color issue, creating a negative perception of the urban communities of color (Milbourne, 2010). Marty Strange (2011) states that about 15 million racially diverse students are in schools located in rural areas, with a higher poverty rate in those areas than the national average. For the first time in U.S. history, poverty rates are consistently increasing in suburban areas (Freeman, 2010). Gorski (2014) states that in the past families go to the suburbs to escape the poor communities, but currently, more people are bringing poverty to the suburbs. Poverty is everywhere, even in schools with upper middle class students (Gorski, 2014).

Poverty and Foster Care

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Study of Early Child Care examined information on social capability and problem behavior and the relations between them in nonmaternal care through the first four and a half years of life and how the child adjusted. The study found that the more time spent with nonmaternal care across the first 4.5 years of life, the more issues with adults they established at 54 months of age and in kindergarten. Without maternal care, these children also predicted at-risk levels of problem

behavior and aggression (Child Development, 2003). Students receiving this nonmaternal care often enter the foster care system, usually with medical, mental health, or developmental problems, due to the lack of care from their caregivers (Simms, Dubowitz, & Szilagyi, 2000).

Poverty, homelessness, and unemployment are some of the main contributing factors to why children are moved in foster care. Children are born in to these circumstances that set the course for the rest of their lives (SOS Children's Villages Illinois, 2017). Many of America's child welfare systems are in disarray - and children can suffer serious harm as a result. Some will be separated from their siblings. Others will be moved from one foster care home to another, never knowing when they could be moved again next. Many are often abused in the systems that are actually supposed to protect them. Instead of being safely reunified with their families-or moved quickly into adoptive homes-many will suffer for years in foster homes or institutions. Currently, there are nearly 428,000 children in foster care in the United States. In 2015, over 670,000 children spent time in U.S. foster care. On average, children remain in state care for nearly two years, and six percent of children in foster care have remained there for five or more years. Despite the misperception that the majority of children in foster care are very young, the average age of kids in care is around nine. While most children in foster care live in family settings, a substantial minority - 14% - live in institutions or group homes. In 2015, more than 62,000 children – whose mothers' and fathers' parental rights had been legally terminated – were awaiting adoption. In 2015, more than 20,000 young people aged out of foster care without eer having permanent families. Research has shown that those who leave care without being linked to forever families have a higher likelihood than youth in the general population to experience homelessness, unemployment and incarceration as adults. While states should work hastily to find safe ,permanent homes for kids, on any given day, children available for adoption have

spent around two years waiting to be adopted since their parent's rights were terminated (Children's Rights, 2017).

Poverty and Crime

Epstein (2016) declares that around 4,300 young people were examined in the Edinburgh Study to gain an understanding of how these young people transition from childhood to adult hood. The researchers looked at the effect of childhood poverty on teenage violence and observed how it impacted them beyond early adulthood. The study used both data from the young people themselves and other official sources (McAra and McVie, 2016). The study revealed that poverty had a substantial effect on the likelihood that one would be involved with violence at age 15. This was even after behavior strategies were put into place to support these students. Children who were living in a home where the head of the home did not work or who grew up impoverished were at a much greater risk to engage in violence. From this research, there were two crucial interaction effects in the analysis of poverty and violence. Girls from economically disadvantaged families were at a higher risk of being involved in violence than all other young people. Furthermore, those who came from an economically disadvantaged background had a higher risk of participating in violent activity. This leads the research to believe that many types of young people, living in a low economically disadvantaged household escalates their possibility of acting in violence beyond what is expected, even with all other factors staying the same. Girls are less likely to be involved in violent acts than boys and people who have a low risk profile are less likely to be involved in violent acts than those with a higher risk profile. From the study, the evidence clearly states that poverty is the aggravating factor that increases the chance of such young people being involved in violent acts. For young people coming from a low socioeconomic background, violence provides an identity in which they

grasp onto during the early years. It often empowers them and creates a status amongst their peers (Rona Epstein, 2016).

Risks associated with Poverty

Jensen (2017) argues that genes begin the process in child development. However, DNA only accounts for about 40% of behaviors, whereas environment accounts for about 60 %. The nine months a child spends in the mother's womb are critical, even in regards to IQ. Prenatal care, exposure to toxins, and added stress are all factors that may impact the developing child. Children of low-income families usually behave in a different manner because they are faced with detrimental struggles that wealthier children are never faced with. Their brains have adjusted to various conditions that contradict positive school performance. Risk factors such as emotional and social challenges, acute and chronic stressors, cognitive lags, and health and safety issues are all factors that influence a child raised in poverty (Jensen, 2017).

Emotional and social instability are introduced to children from impoverished backgrounds at an early age. Children are in need healthy learning for sufficient brain development. However, impoverished children do not have opportunities for such learning. Children require a reliable caregiver with support, a safe and stable environment, and enrichment in complex activities (Jensen, 2017). Children of poverty are not offered such opportunities and therefore struggle later in life as a result (Gunnare, Frenn, Wewerka, & Van Ryzin, 2009). A study conducted in Ireland in the early 1900s reported that of around 10,000 infants of homes with absent or limited maternal nurturing care over a 25-year period, only 45 survived (Joseph, 1999). Children of poverty are usually left at home to prepare their own food and watch their younger siblings while their guardians work. Whereas their peers are playing outside, watching television, and participating in after-school activities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Television will not enhance the proper emotions necessary for children. They instead need person-to-person interactions (Szeweczyk-Sokolowski et al., 2005). Due to financial difficulties, children from poverty are not given the reliable environments that build a child's stable attachments. Research shows that children from poverty develop psychological issues at a greater rate than their more wealthy peers (Jensen, 2009). Consequently, these children often have social conduct problems in both the home and school environment (Pettit, Bates, & Dodge,1997).

Poverty and Special Education

A child's first three years of life are absolutely crucial. In these first three years, these children must be talked to, interacted with, appropriately touched and held. Their needs of hunger, thirst, or comfort need to be responded to from their caregivers. They need to experience a steady and safe separation from their caregivers, in order to prevent experiencing attachment disorder later. Children who are appropriately played with, read to, and have quality experiences, have brains that develop significantly to their capability. Unfortunately, without these necessary components that children require, a child may display mental and social challenges once they grow up (Izrad, 2016). The parent or caregiver passes on humanity to the next generation through mirror neurons. The child will watch, learn, and imitate what he or she sees from their caregivers. However, when an impoverished child is neglected or abused, he or she does not gather the normal experiences to imitate and instead imitates inappropriate behaviors seen through those mirror neurons (Izrad, 2016).

The lack of attunement influences brain configurations, which can also change as the stress hormones continuously putting the child on alert in either fight, flight, or pause mode. In comparison to a healthy neuron, a stressed neuron generates a weaker signal, maintains less

blood flow, processes less oxygen, and extends fewer connective branches to nearby cells (Jensen, 2016). Later in life, these changes may impact cognition with delays that may eventually lead the child into undesirable behaviors. Many of these students may be given drugs for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and are usually medicated at a higher rate than their wealthier peers. Nevertheless, these drugs have critical side effects, such as sleepiness or decreased appetite (Ford, 2008).

Poverty has been linked to many academic insufficiencies that can handicap impoverished students. Ford (2008) found that generational poverty contributed to language challenges, leading to prevention of further learning. Students of low socioeconomic status often experience a greater amount of stress than their wealthier peers. Their mothers usually lacked the necessary healthcare during pregnancy, resulting in an increased risk of low birth weight. Many of these children also have a substantial risk of fetal alcohol syndrome and poor nutritional supply (Hanover Research, 2014). In addition, stress and trauma can change the processes of the brain. An ACE Study (Izrad, 2016) noted that chronic stress, often resulted from poverty and trauma, can create something known as the allostatic load. Constant stress without relief can change the brain, lower the immune system, and in turn, increase health and emotional issues. If the stress is bad enough and lasts long enough, various parts of the brain can be damaged beyond repair (Izrad, 2016).

Impoverished children often face a great deal of challenges from neighborhoods that are not safe to not having enough or the right kinds of food. The University of North Carolina Department of Education did a report that showed a strong relationship between poverty and special education placement. The study showed that children living in poverty are more likely to have difficulties with academics. Many of these students do not have access to the high-quality

schools or the programs needed to provide a substantial amount of academic assistance (Thompson, 2017).

According to a study completed in 2006 published in *Educational Researcher*, environmental factors may make educational achievement harder for children of poverty. Poverty is often linked to drug abuse, alcohol problems, and mental health difficulties. Parents of impoverished students are less likely to be involved in their child's education, also leading to more problems that are academic. Poverty creates stress that can prevent a child from learning. Many of these children might go to school hungry or have nutritional deficits. According to a 2006 study in *Teachers College Record*, children with these struggles of poverty may not meet educational milestones, which will make them more likely to be placed in special education classrooms (Thompson, 2017).

In the 2005 study, the *Journal of Special Education*, revealed that racial minorities are more likely to be in special education programs and that poverty might be the main cause. Due to a stressful environment, impoverished children tend to have more learning problems and developmental delays. The 2008 *Clinical Obstetrics and Gynecology* study showed that mothers in poverty usually receive inadequate prenatal care, which can lead to developmental delays. Learning disabilities can also be linked to frequent moves, family stress, inadequate nutrition, and exposure to dangerous chemicals such as lead (Thompson, 2017).

Children with behavior problems are more apt to be placed in a special education program. Since impoverished children's parents are usually less involved in their education, teachers struggle with collaboration at home in developing behavior plans. Because of this, special education may be recommended as an option to improve the student's opportunity for academic success (Thompson, 2017). Since teachers are often concerned about students living in

these conditions, their behaviors are more likely to be observed, and this increased observation can lead to special education placement. The University of North Carolina School of Education examined that teachers are more concerned with ensuring that these students in poverty to ensure obtain a recommendation to special education programs. Nevertheless, special education programs at some of these schools do not always provide these students with the resources they need. The United States Department of Education issued a report that pointed out that the low-quality schools are unreasonably found in impoverished areas, making the special education programs inadequate. Giving these students less access to quality special education worsens the conditions of poverty and symptoms of learning disabilities (Thompson, 2017).

The Effects on the Schools and Community

Van der Kolk (2014) stated that the only hope that impoverished and neglected children have is found through a solid education where they are able to develop a sense of identity. Unfortunately, many schools located in poverty-stricken areas are understaffed. Many of these schools are teaching children who are pretending everything is fine, going to school striving to be unheard and unknown. In such schools, students are usually three years behind and continue to be behind and held back. In addition, many of these students will drop out around freshman year or soon after. Lower performance scores, turnover in educational leaders, and lower graduation rates will often define many of these schools. There is a great turnover rate among educators at schools in impoverished neighborhood, due to the exhaustion that comes from working with these students (Izrad, 2016).

Educators did not realize that when they received their degree in education, their responsibilities would go far beyond the classroom. Teachers often struggle with their roles in the classroom since they are not trained in social work or therapy. However, educators must

understand that poverty affects learning. Over 51% of students in public schools today are from impoverished families. Many of these students do not graduate, rarely contribute financially to society, and are usually a cost to society due to government assistance, healthcare, and the justice system. Furthermore, these students often fail achievement tests that can ultimately impact teacher's pay (Izard, 2016).

Educators in positions where they are teaching numerous students from low socioeconomic backgrounds must be fully prepared to teach such students. These teachers often risk the idea of carrying the burdens and stress of their students upon themselves. Consequently, their own stress levels elevate leading to health issues, burnout, and the possibility of leaving education altogether. Exercise, rest, and a mentor can help prevent educators from becoming too stressed. These teachers must also develop their own ability to cope and persevere in their teaching. Capacity is described as knowing your own limitations and vulnerability, while having a willingness to fail yet still getting back up to finish. Once equipped with both resilience and capacity, teachers need to know and greet their students by name, building initial relationships with them. In addition, educators must model appropriate social behaviors for the students to use (Izrad, 2016).

The steep learning curve is hard not only on students but also on the teachers themselves: 15% leave the profession and another 14% change schools after their first year, often due to feeling overwhelmed, ineffective, and unsupported (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Questionnaires and case studies suggest captivating perceptions in the areas where new teachers often struggle. Schools can help new teachers improve their skills, keep them in the position longer, and raise student achievement by first effectively addressing these areas. The stress from poverty and trauma often interferes with the greatest teachers' performance in the classroom. (Izrad, 2016).

Not only do these students of poverty affect the schools, but they also have a great impact on the community. Financially, the community will not improve its future when students are not graduating, and if they are, they are still often lacking the adequate academic, life, and working skills. Without a solid plan in place from the educators, this cycle will continue and these students will still lack the skills to work or to obtain a post-secondary education (Izrad, 2016).

Students of poverty with disabilities are among the largest of any identity group (Stapleton, O'Day, Livermore, & Imparato, 2006). Research proves that poverty and disability are linked in numerous ways. Much of this is due to the fact that they are lacking in access to healthcare, more likely to work in dangerous jobs, and face various other obstacles that increase the risk of disability (Gorski, 2014). Further more, even if these students with disabilities are able to maintain a full-time job, there is still an income inequality that they are faced with (DeNavas-Walt, 2011).

How Schools Close the Gap

Since students experience life through their seeing, hearing, or touching, they then become either visual, auditory, or kinesthetic learners. Kinesthetic is often the default mode for when a student is stressed. In addition to how the student learns, these three modalities are also where the student stores pain. Therefore, if a teacher's preferred method of teaching is the same as the student's modality for the storage of painful memories, that student may find it difficult to learn form that teacher's teaching style. For instance, the teacher might be telling the students to "*look* at the board and I will *show* you to solve this problem." Key words in this sentence trigger the visual modality in which the student sees a totally different picture in their mind. This also might happen from a student who has been yelled at, and a teacher is telling him or her, "let me *tell* you how to read this paragraph and *hear* the author's voice." From the student's auditory

memory, the student has complete difficulty in actually listening to the educator because of the pain stored. On the other hand, some students require a hands-on approach and are more kinesthetic learners. Such students might require going to the board and actually using the marker. Nevertheless, touching such learners, even a gentle touch on the shoulder, may trigger a painful memory from the past where he or she has been hit. Overall, as educators, one must figure out which modality is best for these students and which trigger painful memories (Izrad, 2016).

Izrad describes a list of approaches an educator can use in addressing the challenges of teaching students in poverty. The first he hones in on is to build positive and enriching relationships. Educators should celebrate with their students, praise their positive qualities, notice their determinations, and talk about their hopes for the future. Next, educators should create a safe environment for learning. Students from poverty backgrounds do not usually feel safe at home. Therefore, at school, they should be guaranteed a feeling of safety. This can be done through face-to-face greetings on a daily basis. Maintaining a safe place for these students emphasizes the student's emotional safety and makes the students more comfortable in the learning environment. Students of poverty come from a loss of control in their lives with limited resources. Much of the time, these students act out or withdrawal in the classroom as a way to gain control. Therefore, teachers should give students a sense of control in the classroom. This can be done by giving students choices on assignments or a space to calm down in the room. Educators should also use a calm voice in the classroom that can often soothe painful sounds and words of their past. Educators must teach emotional skills. For instance, such students are not taught gratitude; therefore, they may not express gratitude when given something in the class. The teacher must teach this sense of gratitude and other emotions they may experience yet not

understand (Izrad, 2016).

While it is apparent that these students might act out to deal the stressors of poverty, educators should learn to deal with these inappropriate behaviors. One strategy to use with students who might misbehave would be to have a calming table and chair somewhere in the classroom that offers safety for the student. Educators must understand that there is a reason for all behavior. A stressed student may misbehave as a distraction for not understanding the lesson. Understanding the why of the behavior leads one to knowing how to address the behavior, in place of taking the student away from the learning environment. On the other hand, when educators are dealing with the withdrawn student, they will need to move forward at a slow pace and in a calm manner. This will help the student move out of hiding and introduce safety in the classroom (Izrad, 2016). Izrad (2016) also mentioned that the most important cognitive skill that an educator may use is short-term working memory. Working with students who have less attention skills need to practice their short-term working memory skills. Teachers can help improve their attention skills by practicing number sequences, words making sentences, and telling a story. For example, in working with number sequences, give the students a set of numbers. Have someone start by naming one of those numbers, then the second person repeats the number called out by the first person, adding their own number, not the consecutive number, continuing around the room (Izrad).

Izrad (2016) introduced writing strategies for students with impoverished backgrounds. Researchers requested that a group write about their history for 15 minutes for about four consecutive days. In the following months, the group who wrote about their history of trauma reported fewer health problems. Penebaker did a similar study allowing people to express their emotions from trauma through writing and saw an increase in health. In education, teachers

should find ways to add expressive writing throughout the curriculum. In reference to reading, Izrad (2016) declared that reading is a taught skill that should be shared by an early age by caregivers. Nevertheless, the caregivers of some of these students cannot read themselves or have limited resources. Providing reading classes and incorporating reading in all curriculum is a necessity in education. Reading across the curriculum will improve the socioemotional development of the student. In addition to reading, Izrad focuses on the importance of building a student's vocabulary stating that enhancing vocabulary builds brain structure quickly. Educators should incorporate vocabulary building throughout the lesson rather than an afterthought. For students who have been traumatized, increasing their word knowledge not only enhances their speaking ability with a more varied range of words, but it also builds new structure in the brain for learning. Teachers can incorporate this into their busy day by using a journal and a list where the students are able to track new words they have learned. Doing these things will add words to these students' vocabulary that give them a voice to the feelings and stressors that have been causing their behavior (Izrad, 2016).

Self-regulation is also a good strategy that needs to be taught to students from poverty. Many of these students usually lack the social skills that are developed at an early age, knowing little emotion. Teaching these students how to self-regulate these emotions is critical and can be done through a calm voice so that stressors do not get agitated. Students should be taught breathing techniques that can calm them in stressful situations. Some students may not want to do this and can instead blow soap bubbles, which also accomplishes the same goal of relaxation. Such students may need to be taught manners, anger management, taking turns, and other emotions that can benefit them in all aspects of their life. Although teachers often want to fuss and raise their voice, Izrad advises one to use these moments to teach the students these

important emotions. Many of these students lack empathy, which they can also be taught in the classroom. Their mirror neurons are still grasping clues about life from their teachers, as they watch him or her model appropriate behavior. Educators should look at these students in the eye when talking to them and provide them opportunities to move around the classroom while learning. The brain is moving knowledge that is being learned to the long-term memory while the student learns and moves simultaneously (Izrad, 2016).

Research has proven that teacher quality, meaning advanced degrees and years of experience, often reveals no great positive incline on student achievement. The reasoning for this is because the students' experiences are not parallel with the educational principles that most schools uphold (Akerlof & Kranton, 2002). One way to help close that gap is to maintain clear, understandable, and visible high expectations throughout the school. Research proved that not only should there be high expectations, but they should also have measurable goals. The goals of the school were not unattainable but instead had a purpose and focused on academic progress (National Education Association, 2011; Reeves, 2003; Stone, Barron & Finch, 2012; Stressman, 2006). In some high schools, teachers may see as many as 120 students a day and rarely have the time to make an impact on the student's personal life. If teachers were given smaller classes, they might be able to take the time to make more of a difference because of the personal bonds that are able to be formed in the smaller classes (Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain, 2005). Neverthless, Caroline Hoxby (2000) declares that there is no significant relationship between teacher and student ratio in her study on the effect of natural variation in class size.

In addition to class size, it has also been proven that an increase in educational funding will make an impact on the students' test scores. Research showed that increasing the spending often made a positive and considerable impact on the test scores of fourth graders but had no

significant impact on the test scores of eighth graders. Of those fourth graders, it was often the lower scoring students who made the most improvement (Guryan, 2001).

Holistic preschools have been studied and are proven to close the achievement gap of students of a low socioeconomic status. Chicago Child-Parent Centers (CPCs) offered a diverse option of services for the economically disadvantaged students. One of the ways they do this is through home visits, classroom volunteer occasions, professional developments and workshops, and parent-teacher meetings. Making the parents active in the educational program is vital in CPCs, improving the schools learning environment altogether. In this specific program, parental participation is a requirement, which highlights a child-focused vision for the school. Studies revealed that due to these requirements, CPC programs often had positive results. Children who participated in these programs had a better chance of success in kindergarten without the chance of referral to special education. Furthermore, their reading test scores in the 8th grade were higher than their peers, graduation rates were higher, and retention rates were lower. Parental involvement throughout the preschool years lead to parental involvement throughout elementary school, which plays a vital role in student achievement (Hanover Research, 2014).

Hanover Research (2014) declares that effective progress to close achievement gaps must address both academic and environmental factors. Various initiatives are encouraged through this research to close these gaps. Making the faculty competent on the culture of these students is vital. Educators must work with medical, social services, and community agencies to become a comprehensive support for the students. Reaching out to the students' families is a critical part of this process. Data-driven instruction is crucial in the improvement plan. High expectations and a focus on academics is another significant component, along with district-level support to encourage this. Furthermore, Hanover (2014) declares that funding, adequate resources, and

extended learning opportunities are needed to expand learning in the classroom. Finally, educational leaders must have access to qualified staff and the ability to compensate teachers who take on extra responsibilities (Hanover, 2014).

Hanover (2014) continues to declare the importance of extended learning opportunities by focusing on the importance of after-school, before school, intersession and summer programs, stating that such programs provide a way to reach students that school-time programs may not be able to do. Specifically, extended learning opportunities (ELOs) have shown a positive impact on economically disadvantaged students because such programs provide these students with learning opportunities that middle and upper-class students already have access to and experiences that broaden their skills and create positive relationships (Hanover Research, 2014). The Council of Chief State School Officers proved that ELOs are linked to gains in student performance and improvements to study habits. Research revealed that elementary students who participated in effective afterschool programs had higher mathematics scores than peers who experienced less adult supervision. These students also have greater study habits, are able to stay persistent with tasks, pay attention better in class, complete assignments in a timely matter, and follow instructions (Jensen, 2016).

Edutopia (2012) revealed five tips were given on ways to help students affected by poverty. The first tip is to love the students, something that seems so easy but can be harder than expected. The children who are coming into the schools from poverty come with their own set of issues and bad experiences, educators should be creating a positive experience, even with a consistent grasp on discipline. The next tip is to expose the students to experiences, because many impoverished students are limited to their experiences. Although field trips are often exhausting, they are also essential and allow these students to see things they never thought they

would see. Plenty of praise is another sound piece of advice given in this article. Students want

to be recognized with their success, because they are often used to hearing the negative

comments. These positive comments and praise will boost their confidence that they need to

learn. Educators need to be specific with their praise and let the students know he or she is

paying attention to their efforts. Asking for money from one's class is unnecessary and can often

embarrass these students. Although one's class may have needs, it might be a good idea to set up

an anonymous donation method. Finally, keep expectations high and remember that they are

poor, not ignorant. Educators should believe in the student's abilities and allow them to reach the

expectations that even society has for them (Spiegel, 2012).

   Poverty barriers can be broken using research-based theories that are known as best

practices for educating impoverished students. One theory, known as the Strengths Perspective

Approach, emphasizes the students' strengths and the focus that these strengths can have on

these students. Educators of students in poverty should look for the strengths and tell the students

what they see is good in them, while also telling them he or she is happy to see them. This will

help them feel wanted and valued. Next, the Resiliency Theory is where people develop

resilience when they are around others who tell them what is good about them. Educators should

show these students what is unique about them and treat them in a way that makes them feel

special. The Asset Theory states that the more assets a student has, the more likely they have to

succeed. Educators should connect these families to resources, while building partnerships

within the community. Educators may be these families only avenue to certain resources in the

community. The Social Capital Theory emphasizes the fact that people increase their chances for

success when they know the right people. Impoverished families benefit from having sound

relationships with people who have benefited from education. Educators should enlighten these

families with opportunities that will put them in a place to build relationships. This should be done through face-to-face instead of just a list. Finally, the last theory described is the Faulty Attribution Theory, which states we attribute motives to someone else's behavior without discovering the "why" behind their actions. In other words, educators should be slow to judge and realize these families are doing the best they can with what they have. Educators should attempt to find the "why" behind the behavior (Beegle, n.d.).

The single most crucial action educators can take is mentoring a young person. Research on people who grew up poor and made it to college revealed that they all had mentors. Effective mentors must trust in the student's capability to get out of poverty. Let the mentee know you believe in them, and they can become successful. Effective mentors also believe that the student has strengths and talents. Educators do this by building on what the student already knows and by suggesting classes or activities from which they could benefit. Effective mentors know the benefits of connecting mentees to others who are educated. From this, mentors introduce these students to a network of people who have succeeded because of educators or have been promoted in their job. Effective mentors understand that assets are vital to success and can build on them. Educators give supports and information for how one moves out and stays out of poverty. Finally, effective mentors know how to navigate middle-class systems, procedures, and paperwork. Educators should be willing to help these students with paperwork and applications, teaching them how to advocate for themselves (Beegle, n.d.).

Summary

Carr (2013) declares that every state and county in the country is affected by poverty in some way. Individuals exposed to significant impacts of poverty are influenced by adverse conditions with little positive benefits. Specifically, education faces critical challenges when

educating impoverished students. (Carr, 2013). In hopes of decreasing the poverty rate, the

government has put into place various programs and supports to address this obstacle (Cicirelli,

1969). Nevertheless, Ferguson, Bovaird, and Muller (2007) argue that even with these supports,

poverty ultimately decreases a child's readiness for school. Academic readiness is shown

through a child's ability to succeed socially and academically in an educational setting

(Ferguson, Bovaird, & Mueller, 2007). While there continues to be an increasing number of

students from disadvantaged backgrounds, schools are still struggling as to how to successfully

teach such challenging students (Izrad, 2016).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of teachers' perceptions of student's who come from an impoverished background, while also providing insight on successful effective strategies that should be used in the classroom with such students. In this specific study, a qualitative research approach was used to obtain teachers' perceptions of the effects of a student's socioeconomic status on their educational performance. This chapter presents the entire research approach, methods of data, how data were analyzed, and the population used for the data.

Research Questions

In this study, data were gathered that allowed the researcher to analyze and answer the following research questions:

1. What are educators' perceptions of the impact of low socioeconomic status on student learning?

2. What are educators' perceptions of instructional best practices regarding impoverished students?

Description of the specific research approach

A qualitative research design was utilized to gather in-depth perceptions of the participants. This was accomplished through focus group semi-structured interviews. While the focus group interviews served as the primary source of data, triangulation was achieved by also examining questionnaires and artifacts. Artifacts included student academic data and additional artifacts that were found to inform the analysis. Qualitative research methods were developed in the social sciences to enable researchers to study social and cultural phenomena. Qualitative research methods are designed to help researchers understand people and the social and cultural contexts within which they live (Myers & Avison, 2002). Qualitative research was chosen to better identify best strategies for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Since teacher's perceptions were the vital part of this study, it was necessary for this study to be a qualitative study for data to be collected through narratives and interviews. The entire basis of the study came from the voices of the participants. In the qualitative study, the participants were to lead the study to develop a more accurate idea of best strategies for impoverished students.

A focus group was used to give the researcher a greater understanding of educators' perceptions about the topic being studied. Questionnaires were an asset to the study and provided support data and were utilized in the triangulation of data. The interviews provided from the focus groups provided a plethora of information. Focus groups are group interviews that allow the researcher the ability to grasp new knowledge and a deeper understanding of the topic (Nagle & Williams, n.d.). Focus groups emphasize communication between the participants in the research to obtain data. Group interaction is a vital part of this method of research. Instead of the researcher asking each person to respond to one question, the participants will be encouraged to talk to one another and ask questions based on each other's personal experiences. The idea

behind the focus group method is that it will be able to decipher the participant's views. This is not as easily completed in a one to one interview (Kitzinger, 1995). In this study, from a focus group of four teachers from four different schools, interviews were conducted to gain perceptions of the effects that low socioeconomic status has on students' performance in the classroom. The researcher introduced a series of open-ended questions and the participants were encouraged to explore their own issues from their own experiences. This method of research allowed the researcher to grasp other forms of communication and gain access that was useful for the study (Kitzinger, 1995).

Description of the study participants and setting

The researcher involved four urban schools located in West Tennessee. The first school was a K-6th grade school composed of approximately 600 students with the following demographics: 316 African American, 221 White, 23 Asian, 41 Hispanic, 14 Multiracial, and 1 Pacific Islander. Of these students, 50% of were considered economically disadvantaged and 25% were students with disabilities. The second school was a 9th-12th grade school composed of around 1,000 students with the following demographics: 819 African American, 155 White, 6 Asian, 38 Hispanic, and 11 Multiracial. Of these students, 85% were considered economically disadvantaged and 20% were students with disabilities. The third school was a K-3rd grade school composed of around 550 students with the following demographics: 522 African American, 24 White, 6 Hispanic, 1 American Indian, and 6 Multiracial. Of these students, 95 % were considered economically disadvantaged and 15% were students with disabilities. The fourth school was a K-8th grade school composed of around 600 students with the following demographics: 182 African American, 347 White, 4 Asian, 35 Hispanic, and 22 Multiracial. Of these students, 70 % were considered economically disadvantaged and 16% were students with

disabilities. Teachers, administrators, and instructional coaches were utilized during the

questionnaire process and analysis of data. With no connection to the questionnaire responses, a

total of four teachers from the four different schools were randomly chosen for the focus group.

One teacher from each school was chosen. This allowed the focus group to have participants

from various grade levels, ensuring an expansive variety of opinions and conversation. The

responses from the questionnaires were used to compose and inform the focus group interviews.

Data collection procedures

The researcher first obtained permission from the Carson-Newman University

Institutional Review Board to begin the study and process of data collection. Prior to beginning

research, the researcher obtained necessary approval forms from the district's Leader of

Assessment and Accountability and the four different principals from the schools being used in

the research. Next, the researcher obtained the district's application to complete the research that

described the research objectives, and related information. The researcher obtained teacher

approval forms that were used for all of the teachers selected to use in the study.

 Four schools from a public school system in West Tennessee were chosen to be a part of

the research samples. Students' test scores were obtained from the district testing coordinator.

The researcher analyzed the scores and compared the scores of students who were economically

disadvantaged to those who were not. Testing data was given on one grade level per school in

the area of English Language Arts and students were divided into economically disadvantaged

and not economically disadvantaged.

The Likert scale is a popular rating scale that is used to questionnaire participants

regarding their experiences. In the Likert scale, the answers range from one extreme to another,

such as "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." This type of questionnaire gives the researcher a

clear understanding as to how the participants are feeling. (Fieldboom, n.d). A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire with closed-ended questions was given to the four different schools with questions regarding the research concepts of the study. Teachers, administrators, and instructional coaches participated and responded to the questionnaire to gain a broad perspective of the topic on a variety of different measures. The researcher conducted three meetings with a focus group of four teachers to discuss the study. The answers from the questionnaire were used as the basis for the for the questions in the interviews, but did not influence the participants who were chosen for the focus group. The researcher had a predetermined set of questions, but was allowed to transition to different areas if the participants and conversation is led elsewhere. The researcher audio-recorded each interview and then transcribed each. The length of the interviews varied from 45 minutes to one hour and 30 minutes. A journal was used for the researcher to record thoughts and observations during the interview to grasp the participants' attitudes throughout.

Ethical Considerations

The study began with authorization from the Carson-Newman University Institutional Review Board. Once this authorization was granted, permission from the school system and then individual principals was obtained. After both the school system and principals had agreed to the study, the chosen participants were contacted to ensure that they were willing to participate in the voluntary study.

Cates (2016) recommends that the names of the school and personal names are not revealed to anyone throughout the study to remain confidential. Pseudonyms were used to identify the participants throughout the study. All of the participants signed an informed consent document at the beginning of each interview. The participants were reminded that this was a

voluntary study and their answers would remain confidential. Permission was required to audio-record the interview and use direct quotes when necessary. Everything was transcribed in the report of the study and both consistency and honesty were used when transcribing the data (Cates, 2016).

Data analysis procedures

After each of the three meetings with the focus group, data analysis took place. Field notes were taken throughout the interviews. After the interviews, the field notes were analyzed and transcribed into a journal. The audio recordings were also transcribed into a journal and analyzed after the interviews. Once the transcriptions were completed, the participants were able to review the notes to ensure that their responses and the conversations within the focus group were interpreted correctly. Member checking confirmed that all responses were accurately recorded. Patterns and themes were observed and reviewed from the transcriptions that gave feedback correlated to the research questions.

Data coding is the process of creating codes from examined data. In a qualitative research approach, this data comes from observations, interviews, or questionnaires. Data coding is used grasp an understanding of the meaning of the data that participants have provided (Reading Craze, 2017). In order to protect the participants' identities, pre-set coding was used to identify the participants being included in the study. All participants were referenced regarding their title along with an assigned number. Examples include Testing Coordinator 1, Teacher 1, and Administrator 1. These were created to distinguish such data as interviews, observations, journals, test scores, and notes. This research involved open coding, allowing the division of the data in similar categories of information. In open coding, one primarily focuses on the text to define concepts and categories. Highlights from the data will distinguish concepts and categories

(Reviews of Educational Research Methods, 2009). In this study, open coding was used and categories in the data were investigated as a basis for the analysis. Patterns from the interview responses were observed and used as concepts and additional related findings became categories. After using open coding, axial coding was utilized, which is used to identify relationships among the open codes and identifying the connections from these codes (Reviews of Educational Research Methods, 2009). Axial coding was used to create a better understanding of the study by combining the categories into larger groups that revealed themes. Peer debriefing was used after coding and transcriptions were complete. An impartial peer reviewer examined and evaluated the methods and the data reported, clarifying the research as valid and credible.

Summary

A qualitative research study was used to determine the answer to two vital research questions in this study. This research method allowed the researcher the ability to utilize a natural setting and the participants to lead the research. Student achievement data were analyzed from current test scores to examine the effect that a low socioeconomic status has on student performance. Questionnaires were given to four schools located in West Tennessee to gain a basis for the interview questions in the focus group. A focus group of four teachers was held with questions led by the researcher. From the results of the scores, questionnaires, and interviews, the data were coded and analyzed for patterns and consistencies in relation to the research questions (Cates, 2016). The results learned from this research will be beneficial for application in educators who teach impoverished students.

To better understand the entirety of the research method utilized, the following steps were used for the process:

Student achievement data was examined to evaluate the comparison of test scores of economically disadvantaged students vs. those who are not considered economically disadvantaged; Questionnaires were given to four schools with closed-ended questions; A focus group of five teachers met three times with open-ended questions, led by the researcher; The interviews were audio recorded and scribed answers were transcribed on the hard copy of the interview questions; The researcher kept a journal to record any ideas that were noticed immediately in the interview; Transcription was completed after each interview from the journal recordings and audio recordings; The data were coded and any themes or patterns were noticed.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to analyze the effects that an impoverished background has on children through the eyes of educators and their perception on effective strategies when working with these students. The information found and theories developed throughout this study revealed educator's perceptions of how impoverished students are affected in the classroom and what strategies are beneficial for these students (Myers & Avison, 2002). This study involved collecting data through students' test scores, a questionnaire, and three open-ended semi-structured interviews with a focus group of four teachers. Four urban schools located in West Tennessee were chosen for the population. Students' test scores of those labeled economically disadvantaged were obtained from the district and analyzed and compared to those not labeled economically disadvantaged. Testing data came from the area of English and Language Arts in one grade level per school. A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire with general questions regarding educators' perceptions of educating students of a low socio-economic status was given to the focus group. Four schools were randomly chosen and teachers were interviewed on three different accounts with more in-depth questions regarding the topic. These recorded interviews varied from 45 minutes to one hour and 30 minutes, and a journal was used to record thoughts. Filed notes were taken and transcribed in the journal. The audio-recordings were also transcribed in the journal. This method allowed for narratives and interviews for the basis of the study to be the teachers' perceptions and allowed the participants to lead the study and give their perceptions of the topic.

The aforementioned research methods were used to answer the research questions that directed the study:

1. What are educators' perceptions of the impact of low socioeconomic status on student learning?

2. What are educators' perceptions of instructional best practices regarding impoverished students?

Presentation of Descriptive Characteristics of Participants

The school district is composed of 26 schools and 13,000 students. To ensure poverty was analyzed on all aspects, four schools of various grade levels were chosen to research. The four urban schools located in West Tennessee were of the following grade ranges: K-6th, 9th-12th, K-3rd, and K-8th. Teachers, administrators, and instructional coaches were the respondents to the questionnaire. Four teachers, one from each school, were randomly chosen by the school principal for the focus group and interviews. The questionnaire was sent via email to the four schools for the questionnaire responses from teachers, administrators, and instructional coaches. After receiving the questionnaire responses, the focus group met over three periods and the four teachers were interviewed using open-ended interview questions. The four participants were pre-selected by the principals of the four schools given the questionnaires.

Student Achievement Data

The students' test scores of those labeled economically disadvantaged was obtained from the district testing coordinator and analyzed to those not labeled economically disadvantaged in the area of English and Language Arts in one grade level per school.

Table 4.1

Student Achievement Data for School 1

Subject	Grade	Subgroup	% Below	% approaching	%on track	% mastered
ELA	3	All	48.7	40.7	9.8	10.6
ELA	3	Econ. Dis.	52.4	39.8	7.8	7.8
ELA	3	Non-Econ. Dis	30	45	20	25

Table 4.1 reveals that of the third-grade students in School One, in the area of English Language Arts (ELA), there were 52.4% of students labeled economically disadvantaged who scored in the "below" range and only 30% who scored in the "below" range who were labeled non-economically disadvantaged. There were 7.8% of students labeled economically disadvantaged at School One who were on track and mastered the test and 25% of students labeled non-economically disadvantaged who were considered on track and mastered the test.

Table 4.2

Student Achievement Data for School 2

Subject	Grade	Subgroup	% Below	% approaching	%on track	% mastered
ELA	10	All	42	44.4	11.3	13.5
ELA	10	Econ. Dis.	50	44.3	5.3	5.3
ELA	10	Non-Econ. Dis	34.2	44.4	27	21.5

Table 4.2 illustrates School Two of 10th graders which revealed somewhat similar results in these two categories. Fifty percent of students labeled economically disadvantaged performed in the "below" category and 34.2% of students labeled non-economically disadvantaged performed in the "below" category. The percent of students who were on track and mastering was also similar to that of School One. Of the students labeled economically disadvantaged, 5.3% scored in the "on track and mastery" category, and 21.5% scored in the "on track and mastery" category.

Table 4.3

Student Achievement Data for School 3

Subject	Grade	Subgroup	% Below	% approaching	%on track	% mastered
ELA	7	All	37.3	37.3	23.9	25.4
ELA	7	Econ. Dis.	61.6	61.6	19.2	19.2
ELA	7	Non-Econ. Dis	22	22	26.8	29.3

Table 4.3 illustrates School Three of 7th graders which revealed that 61.6% of students labeled economically disadvantaged scored in the "below" category of ELA, and only 22% of students labeled non-economically disadvantaged scored in the "below" category. Students labeled economically disadvantaged who were considered "on track and mastered" in ELA were 19.2%, while students who were labeled non-economically disadvantaged were among 26.8%.

Table 4.3

Student Achievement Data for School 4

Subject	Grade	Subgroup	% Below	% approaching	%on track	% mastered
ELA	4	All	15.3	51	27.9	33.7
ELA	4	Econ. Dis.	25.7	53.8	17.9	20.5
ELA	4	Non-Econ. Dis	9.3	49.2	33.8	41.5

Finally, Table 4.4 revealed that in School Four of fourth graders, 25.7% of students labeled economically disadvantaged scored in the "below" range and only 9.3% labeled non-economically disadvantaged scored in the below range. Also in School Four, economically disadvantaged students who scored "on track and mastered" category were among 20.5%, while 41.5% of non-economically disadvantaged scored in the "on track and mastered" range.

The findings from *Ta*bles 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 *1* were all parallel from school to school in the data analyzed. One grade level per school was observed, and each percentage revealed similar results. There were a greater percentage of students labeled economically disadvantaged

who scored in the "below" category in the area of ELA test scores. At each school, there were a less percentage of students labeled economically disadvantaged who were in the "on track and mastered" category.

Questionnaire Data

Figure 4.1

Questionnaire Statements

Strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, and strongly agree (Responses)

1. Students labeled economically disadvantaged progress at slower rate academically than those from wealthier backgrounds.
2. Class size plays a role in teaching students labeled economically disadvantaged.
3. Students labeled economically disadvantaged are more prone to behavior problems than those from wealthier backgrounds.
4. Using behavior modifications such as the token economy are essential with those labeled economically disadvantaged. (A token economy rewards good behavior with tokens that can be exchanged for something desired. A token can be a chip, coin, star, sticker, or can be something than can be exchanged for what the student wants to buy).
5. Ignoring inappropriate behaviors when possible of those labeled economically disadvantaged is an efficient way in handling behavior problems with these students.
6. Students labeled economically disadvantaged prefer kinesthetic learning.
7. Students labeled economically disadvantaged struggle with social skills.
8. Students labeled economically disadvantaged respond to clear and high expectations in the classroom.
9. Students labeled economically disadvantaged rely on effective mentors in their learning experience.
10. Teachers build a relationship with students labeled economically disadvantaged to enhance their learning experience.

Figure 4.1 represents the 5-point Likert scale questionnaire sent to the four different schools for teachers, administrators, and instructional coaches as the respondents. The questionnaire noted in Figure 4.1 was emailed to the principals of the four schools and passed along to the mentioned educators to respond. The questionnaire represented in Figure 4.1 was sent to principals on January 8, 2018. Feedback was received from 80 educators in the four schools out of approximately 240 questionnaires sent for a 33% return rate.

Table 4. 5

Questionnaire Responses

Question Number	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	3.75%	26.25%	17.50%	48.75%	3.75%
2	0.0%	8.86%	8.86%	41.77%	40.51%
3	2.56%	29.49%	19.23%	41.03%	7.60%
4	7.50%	26.25%	33.75%	28.75%	3.75%
5	30.0%	41.25%	10.00%	17.50%	1.25%
6	0.0%	10.26%	51.28%	34.62%	3.85%
7	3.85%	30.77%	19.23%	41.03%	5.13%
8	1.27%	15.19%	22.78%	52.16%	7.59%
9	0.0%	5.06%	11.39%	67.09%	16.46%
10	*0.0%*	*5.13%*	*5.13%*	*51.28%*	*38.46%*

Table 4.5 represents the percentage of respondents to each question in the questionnaire who: strongly disagree, disagree, are undecided, agree, or strongly agree. As shown in *Table 4.5*, in question one of Figure 4.1 *Questionnaire Statements*, the majority of respondents agree with number one in saying that students who are labeled economically disadvantaged progress at a slower rate academically than those of their wealthier peers. The majority of respondents in question two also agreed with saying that class size plays a role in teaching these students. Again, as shown in question three, the majority agreed that students labeled economically disadvantaged are more prone to having behavior problems. Question four reveals that the majority are undecided about if behavior modifications are essential when teaching these students. The majority of respondents disagree with question five in saying that ignoring inappropriate behaviors of these students is effective. The majority of respondents to question six are undecided in saying that students labeled economically disadvantaged are kinesthetic learners. In question eight, the majority agree with saying that students labeled economically

disadvantaged respond to clear and high expectations in their learning experience. The majority of respondents agree with question nine in saying that students labeled economically disadvantaged rely on effective mentors in their learning experience. Finally, the majority of respondents in question 10 agree that teachers build a relationship with students labeled economically disadvantaged to enhance their learning experience.

Focus Group and Interview Data

The interview process consisted of three interview sessions with a total of 20 interview questions. The questions were open-ended and based upon the two aforementioned research questions. A journal and audio recording were used to ensure the interview responses were interpreted accurately. The three interviews varied from 45 minutes to one hour and 30 minutes. To ensure the fidelity of the data collection process, peer debriefing was used after coding and transcriptions were complete. An impartial peer reviewer examined and evaluated the methods and the data reported, clarifying the research as valid and credible. Member checking, where the participants were able to review the notes to ensure that their responses and conversations were interpreted correctly, confirmed that all responses were accurately recorded. While the focus group interviews served as the primary source of data, triangulation was achieved by also examining questionnaires and student academic data.

Appendix A represents the interview questions guide that was used to ask the focus group of four teachers. Each part distinguishes the three different days the sessions took place. Interview session one took place on January 16, 2018. Interview session two took place on January 23, 2018. Lastly, interview session three took place on January 29, 2018. Four teachers were interviewed. One interviewee was a Caucasian female who had been in education 14 years and currently teaches an Emotionally Disturbed K-5 classroom at a K-3rd school. Another

Caucasian female participant had been in education 17 years and currently teaches English at the high school level. One interviewee was a Caucasian female who had been in education 6 years and currently teaches in a third-grade classroom. The fourth interviewee was an African American female who had been in education for 16 years and currently teaches English Language Arts on the 6th grade level.

Study Findings

Coding requires data from the study to be collected and categorized into various subcategories. Codes, which are disguised as labels, become topics that occur from the data gathered. This thorough process requires several analyzations of the transcripts and filed notes (Brown, 2017). Pre-set coding was used to identify the participants and protect their identity. As noted throughout the focus group participants were referred to as Participant 1, 2, 3, and 4. Upon completion of the initial coding, options were observed to logically integrate individual codes into greater categories that put the information together.
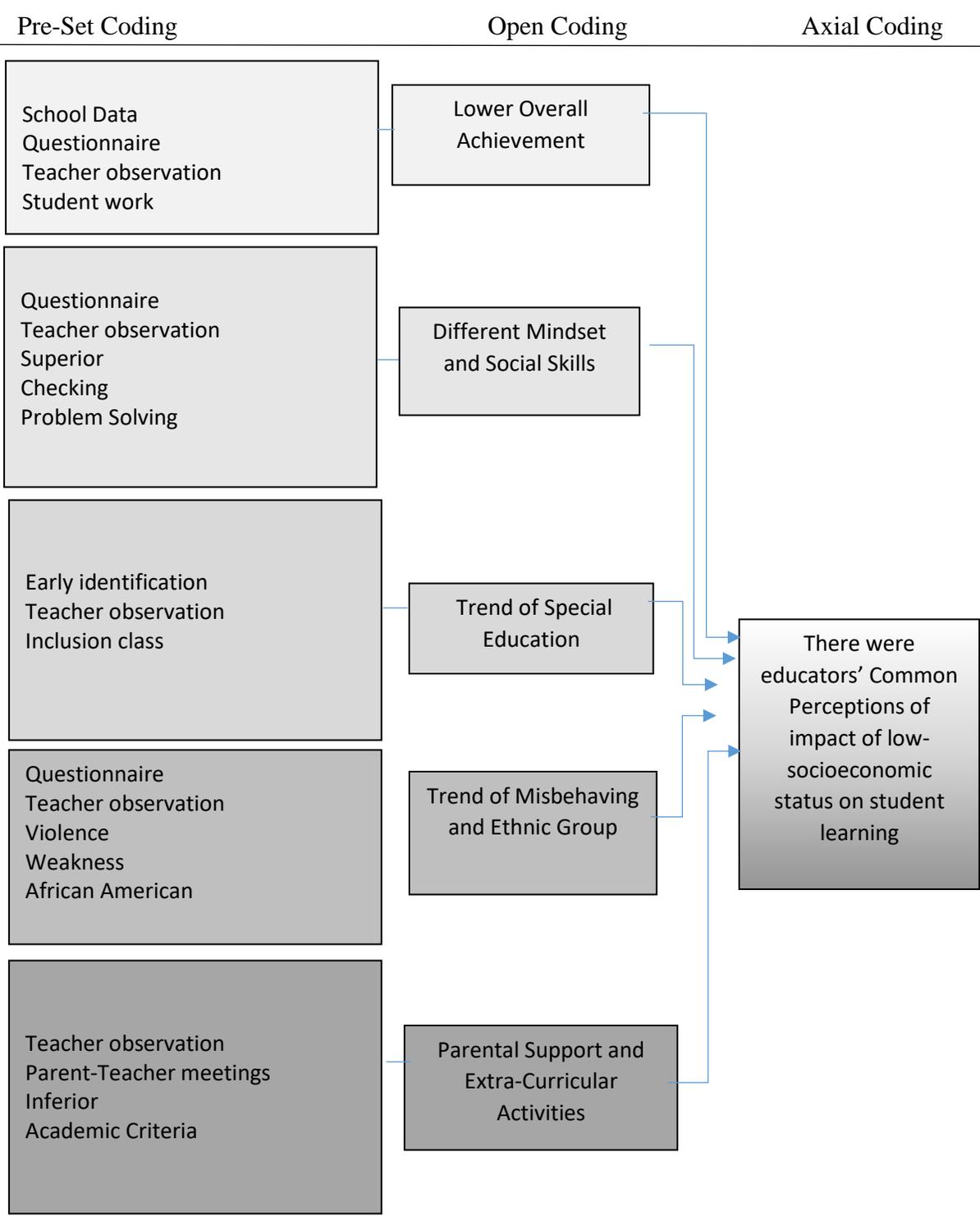
Sorting and investigating the data into categories as a basis for analysis was done through open coding. Patterns from the interview responses were observed and additional related findings became categories. A greater theme was correlated from the codes observed. The researcher must investigate the information closely and determine if there were any differing data that may contradict the main data and offer another perspective about the data, giving an opposite view to the researcher's first impression (Brown, 2017). Open Coding revealed the themes listed above based on the two research questions. Analyzing and interpreting this data is a tedious task because there is no statistical test to lead the interpretation of the data. It instead requires the researcher to identify the vital parts of the data and how it will be observed.
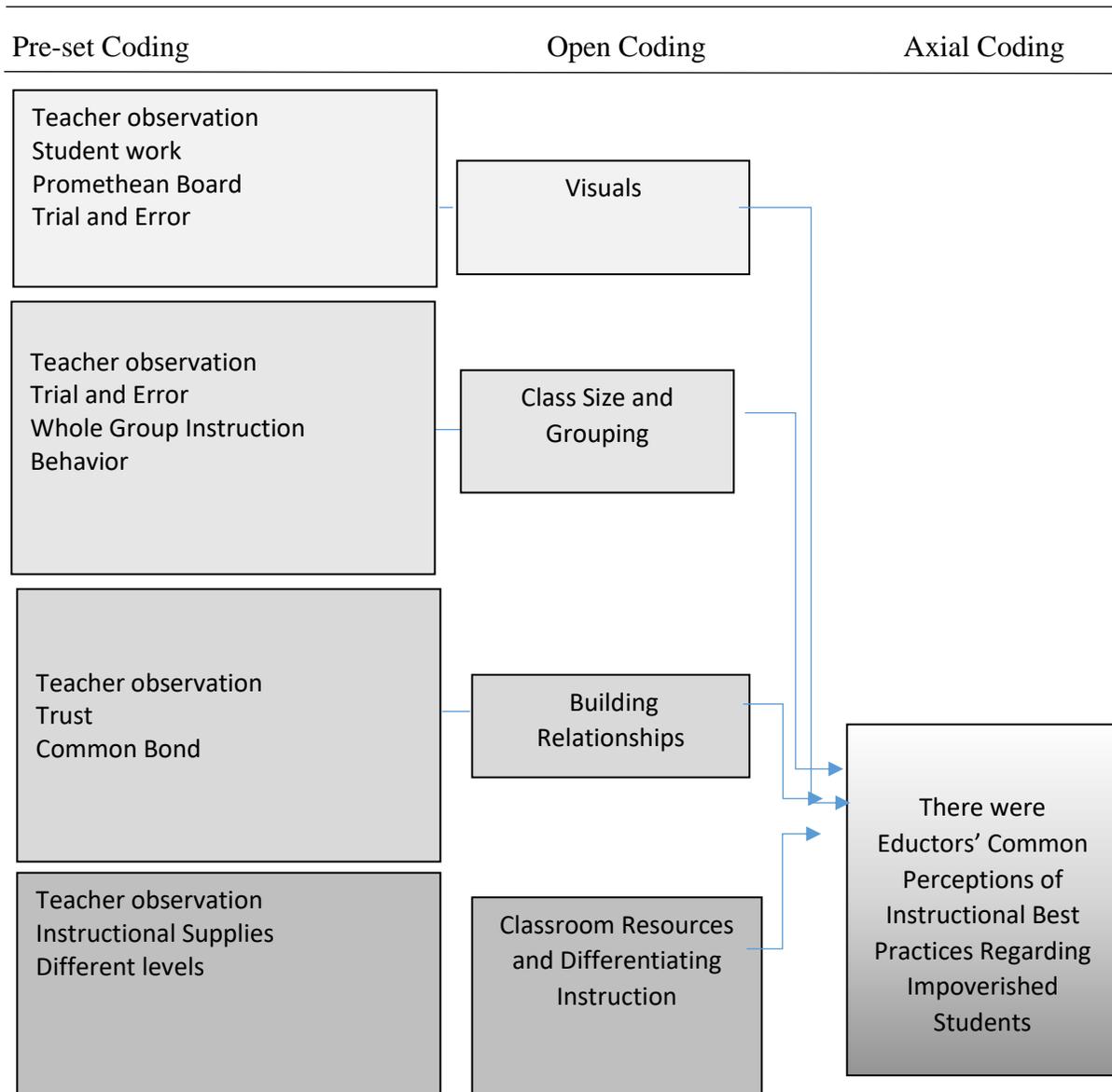
Finally, axial coding was used to create a greater understanding of the entire study in

which the categories were combined into larger groups that revealed themes (Reviews of

Educational Research Methods, 2009). As it pertains to this study, the data in the themes from

open coding found from the student scores, questionnaires, and interviews were reviewed to

create a better understanding of the entire study within larger themes. Answering the first

research question pertaining to educator's perceptions of the impact of low socioeconomic status

on student learning, it was discovered that all educators, as revealed from the student data,

questionnaires, and interview sessions, portrayed the common theme that students of low

socioeconomic status perform lower academically and thus have poorer behavior in the

classroom. Answering the second research question pertaining to educators' perceptions of

instructional best practices regarding impoverished students, it was revealed that addressing

behavior is a necessity before addressing instructional practices in the classroom. Figure 4.2

separates the findings into two categories and breaks down the various levels of coding into the

themes analyzed.

Figure 4.2

Data Sorted in Levels of Coding

Pre-Set Coding	Open Coding	Axial Coding

School Data
Questionnaire
Teacher observation
Student work

Lower Overall Achievement

Questionnaire
Teacher observation
Superior
Checking
Problem Solving

Different Mindset and Social Skills

Early identification
Teacher observation
Inclusion class

Trend of Special Education

Questionnaire
Teacher observation
Violence
Weakness
African American

Trend of Misbehaving and Ethnic Group

There were educators' Common Perceptions of impact of low-socioeconomic status on student learning

Teacher observation
Parent-Teacher meetings
Inferior
Academic Criteria

Parental Support and Extra-Curricular Activities

Pre-set Coding	Open Coding	Axial Coding

Teacher observation
Student work
Promethean Board
Trial and Error

Visuals

Teacher observation
Trial and Error
Whole Group Instruction
Behavior

Class Size and Grouping

Teacher observation
Trust
Common Bond

Building Relationships

Teacher observation
Instructional Supplies
Different levels

Classroom Resources and Differentiating Instruction

There were Eductors' Common Perceptions of Instructional Best Practices Regarding Impoverished Students

Category One

Based on the testing data, questionnaire responses, and interview responses, the following

five sections represent the first themes found from the coding process and answer the first

research question: What are educators' perceptions of the impact of low socioeconomic status on

student learning? In establishing the first category, the following five themes developed through

the data analysis, questionnaire responses, and interview process:

1. Lower Overall Achievement

2. Different Mindset and Social Skills

3. Trend of Special Education

4. Trend of Misbehaving and Ethnic Group

5. Parental Support and Extra-Curricular Activities

Lower Overall Achievement

The data from the schools revealed that the students labeled economically disadvantaged

perform at a lower achievement level, and the participants from both the questionnaire and the

focus group verified this evidence. Participants one and two specifically noticed a lower

achievement level in reading and writing. Each participant taught on a different grade level and

different content area. Participants one and four did not see much of a difference when

comparing their current students. However, Participant four is at more of a rural setting,

previously coming from an extremely urban setting. When asked to compare the students from

the two schools academically, she was able to recognize a great difference in the achievement

level. The students from the urban school setting who are labeled economically disadvantaged

perform at a lower level. Participant one was able to compare her teaching experiences and noticed the same trend amongst the different groups.

Different Mindset and Social Skills

Much of the focus group noticed the different mindset and social skills that a student labeled economically disadvantaged had versus their wealthier peers. Participant two explained that one of her students labeled economically disadvantaged stated, "I'm going to be in the hood the rest of my life, I'm going to be a thug." The participants elaborated that they have the mindset that this is their life and is always going to be their life. They often deal with their problems through violence and anger when socializing with their peers. Participant four noted that they tend to get angry easier, are not able to handle their emotions, and cannot de-escalate from problems as easily as others. They often do not know how to interact appropriately with their peers in social settings and interact through 'checking.' Checking is explained as a way to become superior to their peers and 'call out' their peers amongst others. Participants agreed that it is how they know to solve problems and prove that others are weaker.

Participant two states explains the difference, "They want their peers to feel inferior and 'checking' them is a way to make them look stronger. This is all they have seen and the only way they know how to react."

Trend of Special Education

Participant two currently teaches at the high school level in both a resource setting and inclusion setting. When speaking on her inclusion class, she recognized that many of the students labeled economically disadvantaged are labeled Special Education and have an Individualized Education Plan. Participant one, the Special Education Department Chair of a Pre-K-3rd grade school, reiterated that she receives more special education referrals than most schools. In this

district, participant one is at a school where the majority of the students are labeled economically disadvantaged.

Participant one, with exhaustion in her voice, states, "there are daily referrals for Special Education in both Pre-K and K. They are actually being tested and qualifying."

Trend of Misbehaving and Ethnic Group

Participants one and two reiterated that the major trend throughout their school of economically disadvantaged is misbehavior, as well as the majority of these students being African American. Participants one, two, and four each spoke on the fact that students labeled economically disadvantaged often had more behavior problems and got in trouble more than their wealthier peers. While much of the focus group teaches a majority economically disadvantaged students at this point, they were asked to compare their current situation to past settings and were able to recognize the behavior and ethnic difference. Participant two, at the high school level, stated they are noted weak if they do not walk away from the fights. Participant one reiterated that they physical violence is still prominent at the lower level.

Participant two reiterates, "They have an 'I don't care' attitude and the trend of misbehaving and not caring is prominent. They are more worried about looking weak to their peers and it is a totally different mindset."

Parental Support and Extra-Curricular Activities

Participant four recognized that the parents of students of a low socio-economic status are often belligerent, may curse at their children, and are less involved in the education process. Participant four stated that these parents tend to feel inferior in meetings and think the teacher assumes he or she is 'better' than them. Parents often make excuses for the inappropriate behavior. Participant four also spoke that the students are able to find means to attend dances

because they like getting dressed up and showing off to others. Many often want to participate in sports, but are kept from it due to behaviors or academic problems.

Participant four explains the struggle of parental support and extra-curricular activities, "When the parents come to meetings, they either make excuses for why the child is doing what they are doing or they act the way the child does towards the child. They will come to the dances, because they want to show off their pretty things and look like they have money. They try to play sports but end up being kicked off because of their behavior or their grades."

Participant two, at the high school level, noticed that parents are even less involved at that point and trying to persuade them to attend meetings is nearly impossible. Participant two also spoke on some of the extracurricular activities at the high school level. Many of the students in clubs such as Future Farmers of America and Beta Club, that require an academic criterion, are not labeled economically disadvantaged.

Participant two shares her views being a school sponsor, "I am the Beta Club representative and there are few that are labeled economically disadvantaged because there is a GPA requirement and academic criterion that many won't reach."

Participant one notices that parents are less involved in their IEP meetings, "They very rarely come and it is hard to get a hold of them because their number has changed or been disconnected."

Category Two

Based on the testing data, questionnaire responses, and interview responses, the next four sections represent the themes found from the coding process and answer the second research question: What are educators' perceptions of instructional best practices regarding impoverished

students? The following themes were established through the questionnaire responses and interview process:

1. Visuals

2. Class size and grouping

3. Building Relationships

4. Classroom Resources and Differentiating Instruction

Visuals are Imperative

Participants in the focus group noted that learners labeled economically disadvantaged are labeled visual learners. Therefore, when teaching, visuals are imperative. Visuals seem to keep their interest longer, and they stay focused for greater periods of time. Participants recognized that although some may be kinesthetic learners, they are not able to do many hands-on activities because the students' behavior prevents these types of activities. Therefore, teachers heavily rely on visuals throughout the instruction when teaching students labeled economically disadvantaged.

Participant two states, "I use the Promethean board during instruction to keep their attention and various graphic organizers to assess them and help them follow along."

Class Size and Grouping is Imperative

The questionnaire and the focus group both revealed that class size is relative when teaching students labeled economically disadvantaged. The focus group elaborated on this in saying that a smaller class is easier with these students because of distractions and behaviors. Students must be carefully paired and grouped based on behavior. Students labeled emotionally disturbed cannot be grouped for long periods or with certain peers because inappropriate

behaviors quickly arise. Participants one and two both stated that it is more beneficial to allow them to work individually.

Participant one describes the struggle of group work, "When we do try large group work, they usually get out of hand and the behaviors prevent them from doing so. If it does work, it has to be extremely structured and well-planned to be effective. "

Building Relationships is Imperative

Revealed in both the questionnaire and from the focus group, it is essential that teachers build relationships with their students labeled economically disadvantaged. Participant three strives to establish this relationship at the beginning of the year and continues to build on this throughout the year. Participant three explains to her students that they are a family who sticks together to help with building this bond. Each participant works to get to know their students to help in building that relationship. Participants notice that building this relationship results in trust from the students, which then leads to less behavior problems and more academic achievement.

Participant four shares the importance of relationships, "I usually get to know my students by just talking to them about things they like to do so they know I care. It helps them start to trust me and builds that relationship."

Classroom Resources and Differentiating Instruction are Imperative

The focus group explains that supplying the students labeled economically disadvantaged with the necessary instructional supplies is a necessity for instruction. Participants state that the students labeled economically disadvantaged often come to class unprepared. To successfully begin instruction and move these students academically, teachers should provide materials that are necessary for instruction. Participant four describes the benefits of differentiating instruction

to students labeled economically disadvantaged. During independent work and assessment, participant four provides different levels of work for the students to do at their seat.

Participant four assures that "Students are not able to tell a difference in the work, and it allows each student to work on their own level."

Summary

The pre-set coding helped with identifying the various participants and artifacts used in the data collection process. Various categories emerged and led to the open coding themes that were revealed in the axial coding process and answered the first research question: What are educators' perceptions of the impact of low socioeconomic status on student learning? Themes that led to this were revealed in open coding: Lower overall achievement, different mindset and social skills, trend of special education, trend of misbehaving and ethnic group, and parental support and extra-curricular activities.

The same process was used in answering the second research question: What are educators' perceptions of instructional best practices regarding impoverished students? Preset coding helped identify the participants and questionnaire responses, which led to the four themes found in open coding: visuals, class size and grouping, building relationships, and classroom resources and differentiating instruction. Each of these four themes were revealed in axial coding, answering the second research question.

It was found that there is not one common "fix" to best practices regarding impoverished students, but instead a mixture of ideas and components working together to provide sound instruction for such students. As the themes were found in the first category, teaching students of low-socioeconomic status is not always an easy task, as there are obstacles on the way. Category two reveals components on overcoming such obstacles that many educators believe is a good

start to educating impoverished students. This chapter presented the findings of the achievement

data collected, questionnaire responses, and the focus group responses from the four participants.

Chapter 5 provides conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 5

Findings, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Summary of Study

Students labeled economically disadvantaged enter school with the odds stacked against them (D'Aoust, 2008). Poverty affects these children in regard to their cognitive functioning, their socio-economical functioning, and their overall academic achievement. The first five years of a child's life are crucial, and low socioeconomic status has a significant negative impact on a child's educational achievement (McLoyd, 1998; Smith, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1997). Poverty is something that has been a struggle for numerous nations for a long period. (History, n.d). Younger children are rarely given the opportunity to become successful in America, with nearly 13 million living below the poverty line. However, public schools can give them hope and a means of escaping this continuous cycle (Children's Defense Fund, 2015).

The purpose of this study was to acquire feedback from teachers regarding their perceptions regarding what effects an impoverished background has on children and what strategies are effective when working with these students. The qualitative study involved collecting data through English Language Arts test scores, a questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews with a focus group of four teachers. This chapter presents a summary of the statement of the problem, discussion, conclusions, implications, and recommendations.

Statement of the Problem

Children from impoverished backgrounds enter school with less quality non-maternal care than those of their wealthier peers. Research from the National Institutes of Health shows that those children with higher quality, non-maternal childcare tend to have better development skills early on in life (2006). This study also proves that when such children enter at a higher

level, they have a greater opportunity at being successful in other areas of life. Various areas are using pre-school programs to try to fix this reoccurring problem. However, evidence still revels that the gains attributed to preschool still fade throughout elementary school, leading researchers to believe that low-quality schooling or teaching could be the key component to the overall decline in teaching impoverished students (Currie and Thomas, 2000). This study sought to determine which key factors may help improve the academic success of students from an impoverished background.

Research Questions

Teachers' perspectives were examined related to the following research questions:

1. What are educators' perceptions of the impact of low socioeconomic status on student learning?

2. What are educators' perceptions of instructional best practices regarding impoverished students?

Discussion

The research questions were answered through school achievement data, questionnaire responses, and semi-structured interviews of four teacher participants. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. All of the responses were coded using pre-set coding, open coding, and ending with axial coding that revealed the two categories. The following is a brief discussion of the categories developed in axial coding and the themes shown in open coding.

Category One

The first research question was revealed through axial coding, after open coding proved the following themes: lower overall achievement, different mindset and social skills, trend of special education, trend of misbehaving and ethnic group, and parental support and extra-

curricular activities. Category one, revealed in axial coding, determined the educators' common perceptions of the impact of low socio-economic status on student learning. The following information briefly relates the findings related to the themes. Lower Overall Achievement: The achievement data and questionnaire responses were used as a basis for illustrating the lower overall achievement among students of low socio-economic status. From the focus group, it was even more apparent that the participants saw lower academic achievement in their students labeled economically disadvantaged versus students they had previously taught without this label. Different Mindset and Social Skills: The open-ended interview questions prompted the teachers to further discuss how these students socialize. Each participant reiterated that there is a very different mindset from such students that causes their social skills to be completely different than those of a wealthier background. Teachers believe that these students often look to violence as their first option and are not able to cope with obstacles in the educational environment. Trend of Special Education: Two of the four participants noticed this specific trend in two different age groups. It was revealed that at the high school level, more of the students with Individualized Education Plans are labeled economically disadvantaged. Nevertheless, at the pre-school level, there are more referrals from students labeled economically disadvantaged who qualify for special education services. Trend of Misbehaving and Ethnic Group: The questionnaire responses revealed that there are more behavior problems with students from impoverished backgrounds. The focus group elaborated that there is more overall violence from these students because of their mode of response to all situations. They strive to not be weak and therefore react in a way to feel superior. The focus group also noted that they are predominantly African American. Parental Support and Extra-Curricular Activities: The focus group revealed that there is a difference in parental support of those labeled economically disadvantaged. The

parents often respond in a different manner or do not respond at all. Extra-curricular activity participation is different from those with an impoverished background due to an academic criteria or behavior problems that prevent them from participating.

Category Two

The second research question was revealed through axial coding, after open coding proved the following themes: visuals, class size and grouping, building relationships, and classroom resources and differentiating instruction. Category two, revealed in axial coding, determined the educators' common perceptions of instructional best practices regarding impoverished students. The following information is a brief discussion of the findings related to the developed themes. Visuals: Each participant spoke on how one would think that these learners would learn best through kinesthetic experiences. However, they instead all found that they learn best through visuals. Doing hands-on materials with these students is often difficult because of the behavior problems and the fact that they cannot appropriately manage the freedom of action necessary to complete this type of activity. These students need visuals to keep them focused and on track. Class Size and Grouping: The questionnaire revealed that a class size is imperative with learners labeled economically disadvantaged. The focus group reiterated that a smaller class works better and that grouping the students correctly is vital and when done, must be done with caution. Usually, whole group instruction is better with these students, because inappropriate behaviors escalate when grouped together. Building relationships: The questionnaire responses showed that this is an important factor when teaching these students. The participants stated that it was absolutely critical in building that trust and initially bonding with these students. They often respond better in the classroom if there is a positive relationship built early with from the teacher. Classroom Resources and Differentiated Instruction:

Participants supply their classes with materials necessary for instruction. This is something that avoids unnecessary altercations during instruction time and enhances instruction by not having to delay skill attainment. Differentiated Instruction allows the students to pace themselves and the teachers noted that this is the most efficient way to instruct these students.

Conclusions

This study explored teachers' perceptions of the impact of a low socio-economic status on student learning and teachers' perceptions of instructional best practices when teaching impoverished students. School demographic data, a questionnaire, and teacher interviews were used as a basis for this study. Teachers' perceptions of students from an impoverished background include various constructs. Beliefs include that they have lower overall achievement, more negative mindset and less skillful social skills, a trend of being involved in special education. Additionally, they perceive these students to misbehave more often, have minimal parental support, do not participate as often in extracurricular activities, and tend to be African Americans. In reference to the identified themes, perceptions include: students from an impoverished background will perform lower academically than their wealthier peers; They are likely to perform in the below mastery group in state testing and have lower grades in the classroom; Students of low socio-economic status have a different mindset and way of handling obstacles in the educational setting. They want to handle their problems through violence and have the mindset that they will be in that socioeconomic status for their entire life. There are more students of low socio-economic status who will be identified as special education, misbehave in the educational setting, and are of the African American ethnic group. Students from an impoverished background have a lack of appropriate parental support and not able to participate in extracurricular activities as often as their wealthier peers.

In order to better educate students of a low socio-economic status, it is essential that teachers use visuals and are careful with the size of the class and the grouping of the students. Building relationships with the students is a necessity and can help teachers gain the trust of these students. It is pertinent that teachers provide classroom resources and differentiate the instruction throughout the classroom. It can be determined that with these instructional practices implemented and followed with fidelity, teachers believe that students from an impoverished background can have a better learning experience.

Implications

This study indicated that students from an impoverished background are more likely to succeed with certain instructional practices in place. Teachers believe that students perform at a lower academic level and exhibit behavior problems. Teachers need to be aware of the instructional practices to put into place for these students who are beginning their educational experience behind their wealthier peers. Students of low socioeconomic status will learn better through the use of visuals in the classroom. The use of available technology, videos, promethean boards, or diagrams will help enhance learning in the classroom. If grouped within the class, teachers must be mindful of how the grouping is done throughout the class. Groupings students must be done in small time frames and no more than three students to a group. Behavior problems should be expected when grouping these students for long periods of time in a large group. Building relationships with students of impoverished background will help build a relationship of trust that these students often lack. This could be done by finding an interest in things that interest the students and discussing it with the students. To ensure an easier learning process, it is necessary that things such as paper and pencils are provided for students from an impoverished background to ensure learning can begin with ease. Differentiating the instruction

and create activities and lessons on various levels for these students who are all working at a different pace is necessary for effective learning. If these best instructional practices are put into place early on in the learning process, students from an impoverished background will have a better overall learning experience.

Limitations

The data were limited to the geographic area in which the study was performed. The sample comes from one geographic setting in west Tennessee which could limit the sample population. A sample from a more urban setting may have different results. Teachers perceptions in a different setting would be different from the sample size used in this specific sample.

Recommendations for Further Study

To gain a better understanding of the benefits of the implementation of instructional best practices when teaching students from an impoverished background, some additional research needs to occur. Although research has been conducted regarding whether socioeconomic status affects students educationally, there is a lack of research concerning students' perceptions of what instructional best practices are the most beneficial. A future study suggestion would be to conduct a focus group consisting of students, as well as teachers, and compare their perceptions of instructional best practices to those of teachers. It would be beneficial to understand students' views of how they learn best and what affects their learning.

Additional research could also be conducted to determine the effectiveness of the instructional best practices mentioned in the current study. Through a quantitative study, student scores could be examined before and after such instructional practices are implemented in the classroom. Another recommendation would be to use a greater number of teachers in the focus

group and add various school personnel into the focus group. It would be beneficial to interview administrators and counselors in the buildings to gain their perceptions of these students.

Summary

Research proves that students from a low socio-economic status begin their educational experience further behind than their wealthier peers. It is evident that there are obstacles that make education more difficult for impoverished students. This current study proved that teachers observe the impact that low socioeconomic status has on student learning. The data from the student achievement scores and the questionnaire responses revealed similar findings to the focus group interviews. The findings illustrated the perceived trends of students of a low socioeconomic status. Such students often perform lower academically and have poorer behavior. Their social skills are often different than those of their wealthier peers. Many of the students from impoverished backgrounds are in special education and are African American. The parental support is different than those of their wealthier peers, and they are not always able to participate in extra-curricular activities due to various factors. Teachers are able to better educate students from a low socioeconomic status by using visuals, grouping their students for an appropriate time period, building relationships with them, providing classroom resources, and differentiating the instructions. This study identified effective instructional practices to use with students of a low socioeconomic status.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

Part 1

1. How long have you been in education?
2. What subject/grade level do you teach?
3. How do students labeled economically disadvantaged perform academically in your classroom?
4. Do you see a trend of those labeled economically disadvantaged in your classroom? If so, please describe. (gender, race, culture, special education, foster care, etc.)
5. What differences academically do you see in students labeled economically disadvantaged in the classroom?
6. What differences behaviorally do you see in students labeled economically disadvantaged in the classroom?
7. How do you perceive economically disadvantaged students as interacting and socializing with their peers?
8. How do students labeled economically disadvantaged behave in your classroom?

Part 2

1. Do you see economically disadvantaged students as a certain type of learner? If so, what?
2. What specific behavior modifications do you use in your classroom with students labeled economically disadvantaged?
3. What specific teaching strategies do you use in your classroom with students labeled economically disadvantaged?
4. How do you differentiate instruction in your classroom for students labeled economically disadvantaged?
5. How do you set expectations for those labeled economically disadvantaged?
6. How do you effectively build relationships with students labeled economically disadvantaged?

Part 3

1. What differences do you see in students labeled economically disadvantaged who attend a preschool program?
2. What differences do you see in students labeled economically disadvantaged in regard to extracurricular activities?
3. What differences do you see in students labeled economically disadvantaged in regard to parental support?
4. What supports do you put into place in your classroom for students labeled economically disadvantaged?
5. How do students labeled economically disadvantaged socialize in comparison to their non-at-risk peers?
6. Give your overall opinion of how being economically disadvantaged during their school years affects them as adults