THE ROLE OF ANTICIPATORY IMAGES IN THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF LOW-INCOME, INNER CITY STUDENTS

by

JAMES M. DAVY

A Dissertation submitted to the

Graduate School-Newark

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Urban Systems

written under the direction of

_____
Dr. Sabrina Chase, Chair

and

Dissertation Committee

_____

_____

_____

Newark, New Jersey

October, 2018

Copyright page:

Abstract

The Role of Anticipatory Images in the Academic Success of Low-Income, Inner City Students

By James M. Davy

Dissertation Director:

Dr. Sabrina Chase

Lower levels of academic achievement and educational progress of low-income, inner city students is an affront to human dignity, a waste of human capital, and a threat to our democracy. Despite structural teaching and learning reforms, which have improved the academic success of low-income, inner city students in recent years, large numbers of urban students fail to graduate from high school (NCES, 2018f). Because poverty contributes to low academic achievement, some advocates argue that the academic achievement and progress of poor, inner city students will never improve unless and until structural reforms are enacted to address the effects of poverty and the social and economic inequalities they and their families face (Anyon, 2005; Berliner, 2006; Duncan & Murnane, 2014; Putnam, 2015). While the fight for structural change continues as it should, we must also include in the "family of ideas" (C. Anderson, Turner, Heath, & Payne, 2016) innovative approaches to improving the academic achievement and progress of low-income, inner city students. This study examined the role anticipatory images play in the academic achievement of such students. The anticipatory principle (Cooperrider, 1990) and theory of prospection (M. E. P. Seligman, Railton, Baumeister,

& Sripada, 2013) suggest that humans project images ahead of themselves and then use them to guide their actions and behavior. Predicated on the notion that lessons that can be learned from high academically achieving urban students, ten students who graduated from the Newark Public Schools at or near the top of their class and continued to excel in college, as well as the one person in each of their lives who most influenced their educational progress were interviewed to determine whether anticipatory images were integral to their academic success. This study found that high academically achieving students do engage in a psychological process of framing positive anticipatory images of the future with the help of key people in their lives and use them to progress in the direction of their dreams. From an early age, students should be taught anticipatory competence skills and techniques to improve their academic performance and achieve their educational goals.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude to the team of advisors who supported me throughout the dissertation process from conceptualization to completion. Specifically, I thank the members of my committee: Dr. Sabrina Chase, my dissertation chair, Dr. Alan Sadovnik, Dr. Arthur Powell, and Dr. Luis Rivera for their encouragement and support. This study would not be possible without the students and those who have been most influential in their lives agreeing to participate in the research. I thank them for graciously giving their time to be interviewed and providing valuable feedback throughout the process.

I thank the Dean and Associate Dean of the Honors Living and Learning Community at Rutgers University – Newark for allowing me access in search of student research participants. In particular, I wish to express my gratitude to Ingrid Renderos, Director of Academic Partnerships in the Office of the Chancellor for her unwavering support and assistance during the dissertation process, especially in helping identify student participants.

Finally, this work would not be possible without the loving support and encouragement of my family, sons Jim and Drew and daughter-in-law Kaitlyn. Most significantly, I extend profound thanks, appreciation, and gratitude to my wife Lucille, who provided invaluable advice, guidance, and unwavering support, particularly with respect to editing. I am fortunate and blessed to have such a loving partner.

Throughout the process, I felt the steady, invisible hand of my parents, Dr. Thomas and Mary Davy, who instilled in my sisters and me the importance and value of

education in living a fulfilling and rewarding life. My hope and dream is that my

grandchildren, Joshua and Ryan will be so influenced.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter One

Introduction

National statistics indicate that large numbers of Black and Hispanic students fail to graduate from high school (NCES, 2018f). Despite this fact, the same data source points to a small percentage of students who complete high school, which indicates that these students do something differently than their less academically successful peers. The purpose of my research is to examine the role that anticipatory images play in the academic achievement of low-income, inner city students. The anticipatory principle suggests that humans project images ahead of themselves and then use them to guide their actions and behavior in the direction of these anticipatory images (Cooperrider, 1990; M. E. P. Seligman et al., 2013). While poverty contributes to low academic achievement and educational attainment, another possible reason why low-income, inner city students dropout of school is that they do not project an image of education as a viable pathway to a positive future (Halx & Ortiz, 2011), while academically successful students might. If high academically achieving low-income, inner city students do use anticipatory images to drive their academic progress, the practice of framing and acting on them and can be taught to students, educators, and families to improve the academic performance and high school completion rate of all low-income, inner city students.

Studies that address the topic

There are approximately five models, which explicate the conditions and factors that promote the academic performance of high achieving low-income, inner city students. Student resiliency posits that despite adverse risk factors facing inner city students such

as poverty, high unemployment and underemployment, family disorganization, high rates of incarceration, drugs, violence, teenage pregnancy and inadequate, sub-standard housing, some students beat the odds and succeed with protective risk factors provided by supportive parents/caregivers, teachers, adult role models, peers and the community (Johnson, 1997; Williams & Portman, 2014; Winfield, 1994). A family achievement model suggests that parents provide a home environment that regulates the student's activities with a disciplined focus around educational achievement and hard work (Ceballo, 2004; Clark, 1983; Fan, 2001; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Hara & Burke, 1998; Hitlin, 2006). Focusing on teaching and learning strategies, school environment, teacher professional development, school leadership and integration of parental engagement and community support, the school effects model addresses conditions within schools that promote academic success (Achinstein, Curry, & Ogawa, 2015; Borman & Rachuba, 2001; Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010). The student self-motivation model (Bohon, Johnson, & Gorman, 2006; Duran & Weffer, 1992; Fuligni, 1997; Halx & Ortiz, 2011; Hill & Torres, 2010; McHatton, Zalaquett, & Cranson-Gingras, 2006; Tyson, 2011; Zetlin, 1998) suggests that high achieving students make a personal decision to pursue academic achievement and avoid distractions that often lead others astray. Some students adopt a good attitude model featuring a work ethic grounded in academic engagement and persistence, an expectation that their teachers believe in their ability to meet high standards and follow-through on that belief, and a commitment to affiliate with like-minded peers, who share their values (Geary, 1988). Within the context of these five model frameworks there is some mention of an inadequately explored possible connection between students who hold positive aspirations for the

future and their academic success. It is this linkage, which will be investigated in this research study.

Studies Suggesting a Linkage Between High Achieving Students and Positive Images of the Future

The literature hints there may be a linkage between high achieving students and their framing of positive images of the future that involve college attendance and career aspirations, which guide their actions and behavior in the direction of their vision (Athanases, Achinstein, Curry, & Ogawa, 2016; Ceballo, 2004; Clark, 1983; Geary, 1988; Harper, Harris, & Institute for Higher Education, 2012; Hill & Torres, 2010; Ibañez, Kuperminc, Jurkovic, & Perilla, 2004; Land, Mixon, Butcher, & Harris, 2014; Martinez & Deil-Amen, 2015; Morales, 2010; Reis & HÉBert, 2007; Schreiner, 2010; Tough, 2008, 2012; Tyson, 2011; Vasquez & Buehler, 2007; Wang, Haertel, Walberg, Mid-Atlantic Lab. for Student Success, & National Research Center on Education in the Inner Cities, 1997; Winfield, 1994). However, there are no definitive, conclusive quantitative or qualitative studies of anticipatory images and their relationship to academic success. Given the prevalence of academic underachievement and failure in America's public inner city schools, the potential implications for helping students frame positive anticipatory images as a tool guiding students toward academic achievement is significant. If academically successful students do indeed frame positive anticipatory images, then learning how they are framed could influence the way parents parent, teachers teach, and guidance counselors counsel. This overlooked strategy has the potential for raising academic achievement for greater numbers of low-income, inner city youth.

Studies that Investigate the Structural Effects of Poverty and Low Educational Achievement

This dissertation research is not intended to discount or minimize the significant societal structural forces low-income, inner city children and students face at home, in their neighborhoods, and in school, which block their opportunity for upward social and economic mobility. The effects of poverty and attendant low educational attainment among low income, inner city students has been researched and documented (Anyon, 1997, 2005; Apple, 1995; Berliner, 2006; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Desmond, 2016; Duncan & Murnane, 2014; Edin & Kefalas, 2011; Edin & Nelson, 2013; Ladd, 2012; Noguera & Wells, 2011; Putnam, 2015; Wilson, 1996). Some of these scholars believe that true educational reform designed to elevate learning for low-income, inner city students cannot be successful unless interventions are implemented to eliminate or mitigate structural social and economic barriers (Anyon, 1997, 2005; Berliner, 2006; S. Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Putnam, 2015). Poverty does matter and a plethora of policy interventions have been proposed to address it and its effects relative to educational achievement (Anyon, 1997, 2005; Apple, 1995; Berliner, 2006; Desmond, 2016; Duncan & Murnane, 2014; Edin & Kefalas, 2011; Edin & Nelson, 2013; Ladd, 2012; Noguera & Wells, 2011; Putnam, 2015; Wilson, 1996). Additionally, a number of models of structural educational evidenced-based reforms for improving the quality of education for low-income, inner city students have been tested and proposed (Bryk et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Duncan & Murnane, 2014; Fullan, 2014; Noguera & Wells, 2011; Ravich, 2010; Arthur J. Reynolds, Ou, & Topitzes, 2004; A. J. Reynolds, Richardson, Hayakawa, Englund, & Ou, 2016; A. J. Reynolds et al., 2007; Schweinhart et al., 2004)

Every effort and policy intervention for the elimination of poverty and its deleterious effects on children and families should be pursued with maximum energy. Additionally, evidence-based educational reforms should be applied with vigor to improve the educational attainment of low-income, inner city students. However, this research proposal seeks to investigate those few resilient students who "beat-the-odds" and succeed and progress academically despite the overwhelming structural barriers they face. Let's be clear – they should not have to face such barriers in the first place. What is it about resilient students that enable them to progress educationally despite being exposed to the same structural conditions and factors as others who do not achieve at the same levels? The answer to this question might be found in educational research that delves into the resiliency framework theory, and a possible connection with theories from the world of organizational development and social psychology that explore the anticipatory principle, theory of prospection, and pragmatic prospection. If there is a connection between the academic success of resilient students and how they view the future, then perhaps we might take what we learn from this investigation to improve the academic standing and achievement of other less successful low-income, inner city students.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the anticipatory images framed and used by academically successful low-income, inner city students who graduated from the Newark public schools and now attend college. For the purpose of this research, anticipatory images are defined as those images of the future that influence behaviors and other actions and the pathways taken toward the image.

Research Questions

There are four research questions, which guided this research study:

1. Do academically successful low-income, inner city students who have graduated from an urban public high school and attend a four-year university frame and use anticipatory images to guide their academic achievement?

2. What are the anticipatory images these students frame and how do they frame them?

3. How do students use their anticipatory images to realize their imagined future?

4. How do others support students in the fulfillment of their anticipatory images?

Chapter Two

Literature Review

In 1976, economists Sam Bowles and Herb Gintis argued that social problems and class inequalities are caused by the structure of the United States capitalist society (S. Bowles & Gintis, 1976; S. Bowles & Gintis, 2011; Sadovnik, Cookson, & Semel, 2012). Sadovnik et al. (2012) cautioned that because social problems, including class inequality, are caused by societal economic and power structural arrangements we should not "blame the victims" - those who are marginalized due to low socioeconomic status; instead, policy interventions are required to address the structural problems that relegate them to low skill, low wage jobs and block their pathways to opportunity.

This perspective has influenced the work of educational reform advocates and scholars who point out that many education reforms designed to improve student learning among poor, disadvantaged children of color fail because they do not address the multitude of ways poverty influences student performance (Anyon, 1997, 2005; Berliner, 2006; Sadovnik et al., 2012). Anyon (2005) points out that the history of educational reform initiatives from the development of vocational education in the early 20th century to various efforts to provide greater access and curriculum resources to low income students to the present day standards-based reforms and high stakes testing have failed because, "Individual and neighborhood poverty builds walls around schools and classrooms that education policy does not penetrate or scale" (Anyon, 2005, p. 70). Fullan (2014) concludes that the problems of urban education are multiple and extend

beyond the schools with disadvantages operating in many complex and compounded forms.

In writing about poverty and its deleterious effects on the education of poor children, Berliner states, "We have had the information for over a half century. No Child Left Behind is merely delaying the day when our country acknowledges that a common characteristic is associated with the great majority of schools that are most in need of improvement; it is this common characteristic of our failing schools that I write about, for ignoring it, we severely limit our thinking about school reform" (Berliner, 2006, p. 487). Quoting sociologist Elizabeth Cohen, Berliner concluded that "Poverty constitutes the unexamined 600-pound gorilla that most affects American education today" (Berliner, 2006, p. 488) Likewise, Ladd argued, "Study after study has demonstrated that children from disadvantaged households perform less well in school on average than those from more advantaged households" (Ladd, 2012, p. 2). Reinforcing this perspective, Noguera and Wells (2011) state, "There is substantial evidence that one of the major reasons why greater progress in improving American schools has not been achieved is because federal education policy has not adequately addressed the ways in which poverty and inequality influence student learning and school performance" (Noguera & Wells, 2011, p. 11).

In *Our Kids,* Robert Putnam addresses the widening opportunity gap between poor, minority children living in impoverished neighborhoods and affluent white children who have greater access to economic and social mobility (Putnam, 2015). Like Bowles and Gintis, Anyon, Noguera and Wells and Ladd, Putnam examined the structural societal forces that impede and restrict opportunity for children of low socioeconomic status, who live in the poorest neighborhoods, have parents who are disproportionately

less educated than parents of higher socioeconomic status, experience less upward

mobility and greater downward mobility and face formidable economic and social

barriers throughout their lives (Putnam, 2015). To make matters worse, Putnam

continues, these conditions will be reproduced in the lives of their children and their

children's children (Putnam, 2015).

Putnam and others have documented the root causes of the structural forces that

restrict upward social and economic mobility for low-income African American and

Hispanic families residing in America's inner cities (Putnam, 2015; Wilson, 1996). With

the collapse of manufacturing in the 1970's and the movement of jobs away from

America's urban centers, real wages declined for poor people residing in the inner city

(Putnam, 2015; Wilson, 1996). As higher income people moved from America's cities to

suburban locations, poor families, mostly African Americans remained "trapped" in

deteriorating inner city neighborhoods (Putnam, 2015; Wilson, 1996). During this period,

America's cities declined with abandoned manufacturing infrastructure and concomitant

environmental contamination, the erosion of property tax base and revenues, as well as

the scaling back of municipal services and public education. At a time when education

was crucial to economic and social mobility, low socioeconomic families were left

residing in poor neighborhoods subjecting children to low resourced and failing schools

and streets beset with drug use and trafficking, gang violence and crime (Putnam, 2015;

Wilson, 1996). With this pervasive economic and social collapse resulting from poverty,

family life was affected and stressed as evidenced by an increase in juvenile delinquency,

divorce rates, single parent households, and the high incidence of incarcerated males.

According to Putnam, the last 40 years has been a period of "unprecedented growth in income inequality" resulting in "de facto segregation along class lines" (Putnam, 2015).

Why is this important? Because as Putnam emphasizes class based residential segregation translates to class based school segregation with children of high socioeconomic status attending schools with better teachers and more educational resources (Putnam, 2015). They are also more likely to form social networks and capital that facilitate their admission to and graduation from college. Low income, inner city children simply do not have this kind of opportunity.

To address these structural societal deficits, the following policy interventions represent some but not all the recommended courses of action:

Guarantee Livable Income Stability for Low-Income Families

1. Increase the minimum wage in order to create "sustained economic revival" among low-income, inner city families (Anyon, 1997, 2005; Berliner, 2006; Putnam, 2015, p. 246).

2. Require that the wages for women be set equal to those of men doing comparable work (Berliner, 2006).

3. Improve parental leave policies to ensure income stability and greater family support (Putnam, 2015)

4. Eliminate regressive income taxes and reform corporate tax policies (Anyon, 1997, 2005).

5. Provide income supplements to poor working parents, such as expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit and the child tax credit, (Anyon, 1997, 2005; Berliner, 2006; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

6. Protect existing income supplements programs, such as food stamps, housing vouchers and child care support (Putnam, 2015)

Provide Jobs for Low-Income Families

7. Provide job training to Blacks and Latinos (Anyon, 1997, 2005).

8. Outlaw racial discrimination in hiring (Anyon, 1997, 2005).

9. Reform union rules that block the hiring of minorities (Anyon, 1997, 2005)

10. Eliminate policies that incentivize corporations from sending jobs oversees (Anyon, 1997, 2005).

Institute Criminal Justice Administration Reforms

11. Reduce the practice of incarcerating young African American males and fathers for non-violent crimes and provide greater discretion in parole administration in an effort to strengthen family relationships and bonds (Putnam, 2015).

12. Provide drug and medical treatment and rehabilitative services and education for ex-offenders (Putnam, 2015)

Ensure Affordable and Stable Housing for Low-Income Children and Families

13. Provide affordable housing in the suburbs where entry-level jobs are located (Anyon, 1997, 2005).

14. Enforce anti-racial discrimination statutes that confine Blacks and Latinos to substandard housing in the urban centers (Anyon, 1997, 2005; Berliner, 2006).

15. Develop initiatives that provide low-income families with decent affordable housing (Desmond, 2016; Putnam, 2015).

16. Expand legal aid services to low-income families to protect against arbitrary and discriminatory evictions by greedy urban landlords (Desmond, 2016).

17. Institute a universal housing voucher program for low-income families (Desmond, 2016).

Provide Health Insurance Coverage for Low-Income Children and Families

18. Require companies like Wal-Mart to provide their employees with medical insurance and retirement plans (Berliner, 2006).

19. Institute universal medical coverage for all children since improved health predicts better educational outcomes (Berliner, 2006).

Clean-up Environmentally Contaminated Low-Income Neighborhoods

20. Remediate environmentally contaminated low-income neighborhoods to reduce and eliminate birth defects from lead and mercury, which diminishes the cognitive development and capacity of children (Berliner, 2006).

Expand All-Day Kindergarten and Early Pre-school Education

21. Provide high quality, center based child-care support for families to enable parents to make a livable wage (Putnam, 2015).

22. Expand high-quality early childhood education so that all low-income children attain its benefits over their life times, such as greater educational attainment and improved health outcomes (Berliner, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Deming, 2009; Dodge, Bai, Ladd, & Muschkin, 2016; Kirkpatrick Johnson, Staff, Schulenberg, & Patrick, 2016; Noguera & Wells, 2011; Putnam, 2015; Arthur J. Reynolds et al., 2004; A. J. Reynolds et al., 2016; A. J. Reynolds et al., 2007; Schweinhart et al., 2004)

Provide Evidence-Based Parenting and Family Development Supports

23. Expand in-home visitation programs by trained professionals, such as the Nurse-Family Partnership that support low-income parents in childrearing practices, health advice and counseling, stress management and other family services (Putnam, 2015).

Pursue Evidence-Based Educational Structural Reforms

Anyon and Berliner advise that educational reform efforts will fall short if the structural forces associated with poverty are not also addressed; however, Ladd points out that this might be an unrealistic expectation given today's political environment, which is rife with contention and stalemate (Ladd, 2012). It is essential, therefore, that evidence-based educational reforms be pursued (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Ravich, 2010). Various research and evidenced-based models to improve the quality of urban education for low-income children have been proposed and should be pursued (Bryk et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Duncan & Murnane, 2014; Fullan, 2014; Kirp, 2004; Noguera & Wells, 2011).

The common elements of structural educational reform proffered by these advocates are: Strong and effective school based leadership, which promotes a collaborative and team-based decision-making environment among teachers, administrators, and parents; professionally trained and educated teachers who value and participate in continuous professional development in effective teaching and learning strategies; development of a school learning culture that promotes clear and unambiguous instructional guidance with a high quality, rigorous curriculum and standards, as well as an assessment and accountability system that provides diagnostic data for more effective

teaching strategies; inclusion of parents as partners with teachers in the education of their children; the engagement of community advocates and organizations in supporting the education of children; and an unwavering belief among teachers, administrators, parents, and community members that "all children can learn" (Bryk et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Duncan & Murnane, 2014; Fullan, 2014; Kirp, 2004; Noguera & Wells, 2011).

My research focus does not discount in any way the significant societal structural forces that low-income, inner city children and students face at home, in their neighborhoods, and in school. Every effort and policy intervention for the elimination of poverty and its deleterious effects on children and families should be pursued with maximum energy. Additionally, evidence-based educational reforms that work should be applied with vigor to improve the educational attainment of low-income, inner city students. However, this research proposal seeks to investigate those few resilient students who "beat-the-odds" and succeed and progress academically despite the overwhelming structural barriers they face. What is it about them that enable them to progress educationally despite being exposed to the same structural conditions and factors as others who do not achieve at the same levels? The answer to this question might be found in educational research that delves into the resiliency framework theory, and a possible connection with theories from the world of organizational development and social psychology that explore the anticipatory principle, theory of prospection, and pragmatic prospection. If there is a connection between the academic success of resilient students and how they view the future, then perhaps take what we learn from this investigation to

improve the academic standing and achievement to other less successful low-income, inner city students.

Resilient Students

In *Integration Interrupted: Tracking Black Students and Acting White After Brown,* Karolyn Tyson introduced us to an academically high achieving low-income, inner city public school student named Curtis, who with determination and persistence disregarded the taunts of fellow students for "always studying," saying that "since I was really young, and I've done the research on what it takes to get there, I've had some kind of, like direction" (Tyson, 2011). In another study a 22-year old Latino from Los Angeles named Jose, one of ten low-income Hispanic first generation undergraduate students attending Yale University, shared a story about how his father "ingrained" in him and his siblings the value of education as a means toward a better future (Ceballo, 2004, p. 177). On February 20, 2017, ABC's Good Morning America featured 82-year old Raye Montague, who was the first person to design a U.S. Navy ship using a computer and later served as the first female program manager of ships for the Navy. As a young child, Mrs. Montague's mother told her, "Raye, you have three strikes against you. First you are female, second you're Black, and third you will have a Southern, segregated school education but you can be and do anything you want, provided you have an education" (Miller, 2017). In the interview Mrs. Montague described how she dreamed of becoming a ship design engineer after her grandfather took her inside a Navy ship, where the commander told her that she needed to be an engineer to build a ship like this (Miller, 2017).

Curtis, Jose, and Mrs. Montague attained academic success despite living in an urban environment in which educational underachievement is the norm. Their respective stories may explain how students like them, who are referred to as resilient, overcome barriers and overwhelming odds to achieve academic success. What Curtis, Jose, and Mrs. Montague shared in common was that they each formed a vision or image of a desired future, which they developed with the assistance and support of a parent or caregiver, and then applied personal initiative in planning and taking steps to achieve their goal.

Resiliency Framework Theory

Stressful, cumulative risk factors. Resiliency framework theory posits that certain low-income, inner city students "beat-the-odds" by succeeding academically despite exposure to stressful risk factors characteristic of their neighborhood, familial, and school environments (Ceballo, 2004; Geary, 1988; Howard, 2003; Johnson, 1997; Tough, 2008, 2012, 2016; Williams & Portman, 2014; Winfield, 1994). Low-income, inner city students tend to reside in segregated and impoverished neighborhoods beset with stress producing risk factors such as joblessness, high unemployment and underemployment, crime, violence, drug use and trafficking, family disorganization, high rates of incarceration, particularly among African American males, teenage parenthood, substandard housing, and low school achievement and attainment, which often results in their dropping out of school (E. Anderson, 1999; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Edin & Kefalas, 2011; Edin & Nelson, 2013; Freudenberg & Ruglis, 2007; Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder, & Sameroff, 1999; Howard, 2003; Johnson, 1997; Lemann, 1991; MacLeod, 2008; Williams & Portman, 2014; Wilson, 1996; Winfield, 1994).

National statistics indicate that large numbers of Black and Hispanic students fail to graduate from high school. Despite a national graduation rate of 84 percent in school year 2015-2016, 24 percent of Black students and 21 percent of Hispanic students in the United States do not graduate from high school after four years (NCES, 2018f). In 2010, the problem was described as a "graduation rate crisis in America," as approximately 1.3 million students were dropping out of high school (Ruglis & Freudenberg, 2010). It was reported that of the 4.25 million ninth-graders who enrolled in high school in 2012, 935,000 or 22 percent would drop-out before graduation in 2016 (NYU Steinhardt, 2015). Despite this reduction, school drop out rates are still high among low-income and Black and Hispanic students (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2018; Freudenberg & Ruglis, 2007; Vaughn, Salas-Wright, & Maynard, 2014). The highest rates are found in approximately 2,400 urban school districts serving predominately low-income Black and Hispanic families that fail to graduate one third or more of their students (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2018). Ruglis and Freudenberg (2010) referred to these schools as "drop-out factories."

This problem is more acute for public school students in Newark, New Jersey where the adjusted cohort 4-year high school graduation rate for students who attend the nine comprehensive high schools in Newark improved from 61 percent in 2011 to 74 percent in 2017 (Backstrand, Donalson, & Ratani, 2018). However, this means that 26 percent of entering 9th graders did not graduate from their Newark public high school in 2017. Fortunately, the prospect for high school graduation for students who attend any of Newark's six magnet schools is much brighter as approximately 95 percent of entering 9th grade students received their diplomas in 2016 (Backstrand et al., 2018).

The problem of low educational attainment as measured by dropout status and graduation rates must be evaluated in conjunction with low academic underachievement among low-income, Black and Hispanic students especially as compared to white students. The 2017 the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) mathematical test results for eighth grade students showed that Black and Hispanic students were 87 and 80 percent, respectively, below proficiency compared to 56 percent for white students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018a). In reading, Black and Hispanic students were 82 and 77 percent, respectively, below proficiency compared to 55 percent for white students (NCES, 2018c). A closer examination of the mathematical NAEP data for eighth grade students reveals that Black and Hispanic students are 53 and 43 percent, respectively, below basic proficiency compared to 18 percent of white students, while reading scores reveal a similar gap for Black and Hispanic students of 40 and 33 percent, respectively, compared to 16 percent of white students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018a, 2018c). These data suggest that while more Black and Hispanic students are remaining in school, they are still achieving at significantly lower levels. Unfortunately, we cannot determine NAEP scores for Newark's public school students since only statewide data is available.

The effects of poverty and low socioeconomic status are associated with poor academic performance, including drop out status among low-income, inner city students (Borman & Rachuba, 2001; Ceballo, 2004; Duran & Weffer, 1992; Farrell, 1994; Fuligni, 1997; Geary, 1988; Goldenberg, Gallimore, Reese, & Garnier, 2001; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Halx & Ortiz, 2011; Hitlin, 2006; Johnson, 1997; Land et al., 2014; Sánchez & Machado-Casas, 2009; Seabrook & Avison, 2012; Valadez, 2008; Williams & Portman,

2014; Winfield, 1994). The deleterious impact of poverty on early childhood cognitive development is correlated to lower levels of cognitive function, social development, and psychological well being and self-esteem (Anyon, 2005; Ceballo, 2004; Halx & Ortiz, 2011).

From a public health perspective, children who do not graduate from high school experience over their lifetimes a higher incidence of diabetes, heart disease, mental health problems, including major depression, and self-rated poorer health status (Lee et al., 2016) and it is reported that non-graduates die precipitately from cardiovascular disease, cancer and infection, lung disease and diabetes (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006; Seabrook & Avison, 2012). Research suggests that poverty and low-income, resource poor neighborhoods predict low high school completion rates (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). In poor neighborhoods, the lack of resources correlates with poor physical health outcomes such as chronic asthma, low birth weight, lead poisoning, stunting, developmental delays/learning disabilities and emotional and behavioral problems among children, all of which predict low high school completion rates (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Black and Hispanic children living in low-income, low-resourced urban neighborhoods experience poorer health and developmental delays and a higher incidence of high school dropout status (Sandel et al., 2016).

For those students who do not complete high school the future is not bright. They will experience higher rates of joblessness, underemployment and incarceration and poor health outcomes over their lifetimes and it is likely their children will experience the same (Seabrook & Avison, 2012). Furthermore, students who drop out of the educational system typically disconnect from the functions of society, closing off opportunities for

economic prosperity and becoming effective citizens in a democratic society (Johnson, 1997).

        Resilient students and protective factors. Resilient students, on the other hand, are able to overcome adverse, stressful circumstances with the help of their parents or loved ones (Ceballo, 2004; Clark, 1983; Fan, 2001; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Hara & Burke, 1998; Hitlin, 2006; McHatton et al., 2006; Tough, 2012, 2016), a caring and supportive teacher or teachers (Achinstein et al., 2015; Athanases et al., 2016; Borman & Rachuba, 2001; Ceballo, 2004; Fan, 2001; Geary, 1988; Hara & Burke, 1998; Hill & Torres, 2010; Hitlin, 2006; Howard, 2003; Land et al., 2014; Martinez & Deil-Amen, 2015; McHatton et al., 2006; Tough, 2012, 2016; Tyson, 2011; Williams & Portman, 2014; Winfield, 1994; Zetlin, 1998), constructive school systems and processes (Achinstein et al., 2015; Athanases et al., 2016; Bryk et al., 2010; Ceballo, 2004; Duran & Weffer, 1992; Geary, 1988; Hill & Torres, 2010; Howard, 2003; Land et al., 2014; Martinez & Deil-Amen, 2015; Tough, 2012; Williams & Portman, 2014; Winfield, 1994; Zetlin, 1998), complementary peer affiliations (American Public Health Assocciation, 2010; Land et al., 2014; Williams & Portman, 2014; Winfield, 1994), enriching community support systems and relationships (Achinstein et al., 2015; Farrell, 1994; Furstenberg et al., 1999; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Harper et al., 2012; Johnson, 1997; Kaplan, (n.d.); McHatton et al., 2006; Williams & Portman, 2014; Winfield, 1994), and their own self-motivation (Ceja, 2004; Duran & Weffer, 1992; Dweck, 2006; Farrell, 1994; Furstenberg et al., 1999; Geary, 1988; Harper et al., 2012; Howard, 2003; Johnson, 1997; Lessard, Butler-Kisber, Fortin, & Marcotte, 2014; Marsh & Martin, (n.d.); McHatton et al., 2006; Reis & HÉBert, 2007; Schreiner, 2010;

Sherman, Norman, Franklin, Arigbon, & Kulak, 2002; Tough, 2012, 2016; Wang et al., 1997; Williams & Portman, 2014).

Parental support and encouragement. Research indicates that students ascribe their school success and achievements as well as the formation of their academic identity to the powerful influence of their parents' support and encouragement (Catsambis, 2001; Ceballo, 2004; Ceja, 2004; Clark, 1983; Fan, 2001; Farrell, 1994; Furstenberg et al., 1999; Goldenberg et al., 2001; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Hara & Burke, 1998; Harper et al., 2012; Howard, 2003; MacLeod, 2008; McHatton et al., 2006; Morales, 2010; Tough, 2012; Wang et al., 1997; Williams & Portman, 2014; Winfield, 1994). The parents of high achieving academically successful students tend to foster an educational home environment in which students are continuously socialized about the long-term value of education (Bohon et al., 2006; Catsambis, 2001; Ceballo, 2004; Clark, 1983; Duran & Weffer, 1992; Farrell, 1994; Fuligni, 1997; Goldenberg et al., 2001; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Hara & Burke, 1998; Hitlin, 2006; Horn & Chen, 1998; Jarrett, 1999; Mayo & Siraj, 2015; McHatton et al., 2006; Morales, 2010; Sánchez & Machado-Casas, 2009; Sherman et al., 2002; Williams & Portman, 2014; Winfield, 1994; Zetlin, 1998) and where learning opportunities or moments, which reinforce the teaching occurring within the classroom are provided (Clark, 1983).

Parents of such students tend to be more positively involved and engaged with their children's teachers and schools, viewing their role as a key partner in the education of their children (Bryk et al., 2010; Catsambis, 2001; Ceballo, 2004; Clark, 1983; Furstenberg et al., 1999; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Hara & Burke, 1998; Howard, 2003; Ibañez et al., 2004; Kaplan, (n.d.); Land et al., 2014; Mayo & Siraj, 2015; Williams &

Portman, 2014; Winfield, 1994; Zetlin, 1998). Conversely, teachers report that parents of low academically performing students tend to be disconnected from their child's teachers and school and are therefore perceived as uninterested in their child's education (Ceballo, 2004; Hill & Torres, 2010; Valadez, 2008). Outside of school, parents of high achieving academically successful students are adept and diligent in linking their children to very scarce community-based educational enrichment programs and activities (Castelfranchi, 2005; Clark, 1983; Farrell, 1994; Furstenberg et al., 1999; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Harper et al., 2012; Jarrett, 1999).

Finally, high academically achieving students are encouraged and "pushed" by a parent or parents to develop educational goals (Clark, 1983; Farrell, 1994; Howard, 2003; Jarrett, 1999) and strive to accomplish them through persistence and grit (Ceja, 2004; Clark, 1983; Hill & Torres, 2010; Tough, 2012, 2016).

Caring, supportive, and competent teachers. High academically achieving students report that caring, supportive, and competent teachers are an essential factor in their educational success (Bryk et al., 2010; Clark, 1983; Geary, 1988; Howard, 2003; Williams & Portman, 2014; Winfield, 1994) and that they routinely affirm their students' academic abilities (Martinez & Deil-Amen, 2015). Caring and supportive teachers believe that all students are intelligent and can succeed through hard work as demonstrated by deliberative study habits, which they continuously reinforce and emphasize (Hill & Torres, 2010; Howard, 2003; Martinez & Deil-Amen, 2015). Within the classroom and school environment these teachers tend to have positive, nurturing relationships with students (Howard, 2003; Kaplan, (n.d.); Land et al., 2014; Reis &

HÉBert, 2007; Sherman et al., 2002) and steadfastly maintain an "ethic of care" toward them (Land et al., 2014; McHatton et al., 2006).

Students also attribute their high academic performance to the competency of the teacher in providing stimulating, motivating, and "fun" pedagogical instruction (Clark, 1983; Geary, 1988; Kaplan, (n.d.); Williams & Portman, 2014), while at the same time expecting and demanding that students rise to meet high curricular standards and rigor (Achinstein et al., 2015; Hill & Torres, 2010; Williams & Portman, 2014). According to students, caring, supportive and competent teachers tend to be sensitive and respectful of their racial and cultural identities and use that awareness to enhance their instructional practice (Athanases et al., 2016; Harper et al., 2012; Howard, 2003; Land et al., 2014; McHatton et al., 2006). Finally, caring, supportive, and competent teachers are recognized as an important and essential informational resource in helping students plan their educational goals (Harper et al., 2012; McHatton et al., 2006).

Constructive school systems and processes. To meet the needs of low-income, inner city students, it is incumbent on the school administration to ensure an educational environment in which caring, supportive, and competent teachers are hired and receive on-going professional development in leadership, classroom management, teaching and learning practices, curricular design, and cultural competency (Bryk et al., 2010; Geary, 1988; Hill & Torres, 2010; Land et al., 2014; McHatton et al., 2006; O'Connor, 1997; Williams & Portman, 2014). Students tend to thrive in a secure school environment, in which is socially acceptable for them to learn, pursue their educational goals, and develop their own academic self-concept and identity (Achinstein et al., 2015; Geary, 1988; Kaplan, (n.d.); Marsh & Martin, (n.d.); Morales, 2010; Tough, 2012, 2016; Winfield,

1994). These schools also create a welcoming environment for parents to be involved as collaborative partners in the educational progress of their children (Bryk et al., 2010; Williams & Portman, 2014).

High academically achieving students are also supported by school-based support structures such as counseling and health-based services (Center for School Health and Education, 2012; Freudenberg & Ruglis, 2007; Kaplan, (n.d.); Lessard et al., 2014; Reis & HÉBert, 2007; Ruglis & Freudenberg, 2010; Vaughn et al., 2014; Williams & Portman, 2014; Winfield, 1994). In addition, schools support the academic success of low-income, inner city students by providing them academic mentoring and tutoring support (Johnson, 1997; Winfield, 1994).

Complementary peer affiliations. Another protective factor employed by resilient students is the active development of positive relationships with supportive peers, who also value education as an investment in the future (Farrell, 1994; Harper et al., 2012; Kaplan, (n.d.); Lessard et al., 2014; Reis & HÉBert, 2007; Schreiner, 2010; Tough, 2012). High academically achieving students form networks of peer support (Harper et al., 2012; Schreiner, 2010) or a "community of achievers" (Reis & HÉBert, 2007) that support and affirm their educational interests and goals. Peer support takes the form of study groups and participation in school-based programs, as well as community-based academic enrichment activities (Kaplan, (n.d.); Williams & Portman, 2014). Peer support and acceptance serves as a powerful influence in the academic success of both parties to the relationship (Land et al., 2014). High achieving academically successful students tend to "stay-away" from peers who do not support their educational interests and goals (Kaplan, (n.d.)). Because these complementary affiliations are such a powerful

influence, schools that create and foster a "school-oriented peer culture" further enhance an environment that allows students to progress academically (Williams & Portman, 2014).

Community support systems and relationships. Non-family adults and community-based organizations support the educational interests and goals of the high achieving students (Farrell, 1994; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Kaplan, (n.d.); McHatton et al., 2006; Williams & Portman, 2014; Winfield, 1994) and typically identified by parents in an effort to support the interests and goals of their children (Farrell, 1994; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Kaplan, (n.d.); McHatton et al., 2006; Williams & Portman, 2014; Winfield, 1994). Community-based organizations support students through after school educational enrichment or other extracurricular activities, scholarship assistance, and other needed social services (Farrell, 1994; McHatton et al., 2006; Wang et al., 1997; Williams & Portman, 2014) and serve as an "extended family support system" (Kaplan, (n.d.)) or "social support network" (Williams & Portman, 2014) in fostering the educational progress of high academically achieving student. Developing positive adult human relationships is integral to expanding the social capital networks that support the progress of low-income, inner city students (Johnson, 1997).

Student self-motivation. Students become serious about learning when they see the utility and value of education (Clark, 1983; Harper et al., 2012; Howard, 2003; Land et al., 2014; Tough, 2012; Wang et al., 1997). When there is shared family agreement or "concordance" about the value and meaning of education as a pathway to a better future, students make a decision to buckle-down to do the hard work necessary to succeed academically (Clark, 1983; Farrell, 1994; Howard, 2003; Land et al., 2014; Sánchez &

Machado-Casas, 2009). This inner drive and the success it produces enhance the

students' sense of self-esteem, self-efficacy and academic self-concept (Howard, 2003;

Marsh & Martin, (n.d.); Mayo & Siraj, 2015; Reis & HÉBert, 2007; Winfield, 1994) and

prompts them to set priorities and goals, engage themselves pedagogically, become

involved in extracurricular activities, seek out peer and adult community-based

relationships that support their aspirations, and adopt help-seeking behaviors to access the

resources needed to progress individually and academically (Kaplan, (n.d.); McHatton et

al., 2006; O'Connor, 1997; Schreiner, 2010; Winfield, 1994).

In some cases, students are motivated to succeed academically to avoid the

struggles their parents experienced living in poverty (Ceja, 2004; McHatton et al., 2006).

Whatever their motivation, once students find it, they adopt a spirit of grit and persistence

as exhibited by their hard work in pursuit of academic achievement (Dweck, 2006;

Schreiner, 2010; Tough, 2012, 2016; Tyson, 2011).

Positive Image, Positive Action Dynamic

Curtis, Jose, and Mrs. Montague's stories of academic achievement, in which their

positive images of a desired future seemed to play an important role might further

explicate and expand upon resiliency framework theory. My research examines the role

anticipatory images play in the academic success of high achieving low-income students.

For the purpose of this research, anticipatory images are defined as those images of the

future that influence behaviors and other actions and the pathways taken toward the

image. Research suggests a possible linkage between the academic achievements of

resilient students and their formation of anticipatory images. My research explores how

academically successful students form such anticipatory images and how integral they are

in guiding their behavior, actions and decision-making processes in the direction of their vision of the future. The concept of anticipatory images will be discussed within the theoretical framework of the positive image-positive action dynamic (Cooperrider, 1990), theories of prospection (Baumeister, Vohs, & Oettingen, 2016; M. E. P. Seligman et al., 2013; M.E.P. Seligman, Railton, Baumeister, & Sripada, 2016), and anticipation (Poli, 2014), mental simulation processes (Taylor, Pham, Rivkin, & Armor, 1998), and mental contrasting (Baumeister et al., 2016; Kappes & Oettingen, 2014).

Positive image. In his conception of Appreciative Inquiry, Dr. David Cooperrider of Case Western Reserve University framed the anticipatory principle as one of its foundational theories (Cooperrider, 1990). This principle extends the theory of anticipatory reality framed by psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Harry Stack Sullivan in 1947, asserting that, "Every social action somehow involves anticipation of the future" (Cooperrider, 1990, p. 332). Further clarifying Sullivan's statement, Cooperrider asserts that "positive images are a key factor in every action" (Cooperrider, 1990). Castelfranchi (2005) suggests, "the mind is for anticipation and building and working on anticipatory representations" of the future.

Cooperrider (1990) posits a positive image, positive action dynamic, in which positive images of the future produce behavior, actions, intentions, and beliefs leading to the envisioned outcome. If positive images produce positive actions and outcomes, then negative images of the future may produce a negative anticipated reality further supporting Cooperrider's contention that "human systems are forever projecting ahead of themselves a horizon of expectation that brings the future powerfully into the present as a causal agent" (Cooperrider, 1990, p. 372). Anticipation is described as an "indispensible

tool for navigating the complexities of everyday life" (Christian, Miles, Fung, Best, & Macrae, 2013). One study found that young adults might experience 60 "future oriented thoughts" per day or one every 16 minutes suggesting that such thoughts are ubiquitous (Barsics, Van der Linden, & D'Argembeau, 2016).

  The anticipatory principle and theory of prospection suggest that people do not construct images of a desired future on their own. Such images are socially constructed with the help of others, who play an important role in projecting images and expectations onto people through a self-fulfilling prophecy (Cooperrider, 1990; Hulme, 2001; M. E. P. Seligman et al., 2013; M.E.P. Seligman et al., 2016; Tavory & Eliasoph, 2013). Hulme asserts, "The beliefs or mental pictures that others hold for an individual's future have the potential to influence that individual's future consciousness" (Hulme, 2001, p. 48). Cooperrider (1990) uses the well-known Pygmalion research to demonstrate the mutually reinforcing correlation between teacher expectations of students as either high or low achieving, the inculcation of these expectations into the belief system of students, and their ultimate influence on their high or low academic achievement. Tavory and Eliasoph (2013) argue that human interactions and relationships shape the future through a shared and coordinated vision. Such interactions and relationships are necessary for the process of "calibrating and adjusting" the steps needed to achieve the desired future

  According to Cooperrider, the positive or negative projections of images onto another human have the potential to "transform a lifetime" (Cooperrider, 1990). Seligman reinforces this notion that "even wrongheaded assumptions about the future can exert a causal influence on human behavior, thereby in some cases helping them come true" (M. E. P. Seligman et al., 2013, p. 123). Hulme cautions that educators "need to be mindful of

the importance of their words in shaping a student's future orientation- even passing comments can have significant ramifications" (Hulme, 2001, pp. 50-51). The social construction of self, which projects the beliefs and expectations of family (parents), peers and teachers, requires students to develop and apply anticipatory competence enabling them to reframe negative past experiences and expectations into positive images of the future or to affirm, embrace, and act on others' positive expectations for them. If they do not possess the capacity to reframe or reinterpret the negative projections of others, students have a tendency to adopt self-defeating behaviors and actions including disengagement from educational pursuits and academic achievement (Farrell, 1994; Howard, 2003; Hulme, 2001; Land et al., 2014).

The anticipatory principle is further explicated by Dr. Martin Seligman's theory of prospection, which is simply the ability to mentally imagine what might happen in the future (M. E. P. Seligman et al., 2013; M.E.P. Seligman et al., 2016; Szpunar, Spreng, & Schacter, 2014). M. E. P. Seligman et al. (2013) challenge the historical framework of psychology as grounded in the belief that people are driven by their past history, circumstances, and inner states suggesting instead that people use past experiences to develop an "evaluative landscape" of possible acts, behaviors and outcomes. The theory of prospection offers a counterpoint to the deterministic notion that our futures are pre-ordained by our past or by the circumstances of our lives. Instead, humans can engage in active agency in applying past experience as a resource to frame alternative possibilities of a desired future (Gilbert, 2006; M. E. P. Seligman et al., 2013; M.E.P. Seligman et al., 2016). In other words, people do not have to adhere to a negative future based on a deficit-based past but can actively construct an image of a positive future and then plan

and coordinate their actions to achieve their vision. According to Dr. Roberto Poli, "If the future indeed becomes a core organizing principle of the mind, the past will have to recede from being a force driving needs and goals to being a resource from which agents selectively extract information about the prospects they face…these prospects can include not only possibilities that have occurred before but also possibilities that have never occurred" (Poli, 2014, p. 25).

Positive action. The positive image, positive action dynamic is supported by research that delves into the mechanics of how it actually works. Lombardo argues that, "future consciousness enables people to be conscious of what is possible, probable and desirable in the future." (Lombardo, 2016, p. 2). Others have referred to "cognitive evaluation" (Castelfranchi, 2005, p. 265) or the "integrative function of consciousness" (Baumeister, Masicampo, & Vohs, 2011, p. 351) to describe a process humans use to translate anticipatory images into reality. Seligman presents the idea of an evaluative mapping process humans use to assess and process information about the past in framing a range of possible future-oriented actions (M. E. P. Seligman et al., 2013; M.E.P. Seligman et al., 2016) and Lombardo also suggests an evaluative element in framing future consciousness by stating, "The past is tied to awareness of the future" (Lombardo, 2016, p. 3). He further argues, "Past knowledge and understanding enables our capacity to anticipate and predict the future" (Lombardo, 2016, p. 3).

Seligman's evaluative map notion is elaborated by research on "pragmatic prospection," which postulates that people think about the future in order to bring it to reality through planning and coordination (Baumeister et al., 2016; M. E. P. Seligman et al., 2013; M.E.P. Seligman et al., 2016). Taylor et al. (1998) argue that one of the most

intriguing skills possessed by humans is the ability to envision the future and then regulate behavior and emotions so as to bring it to fruition. Taylor et al. (1998) further assert that people use imagination to conjure images, stories, and projections of things not currently present and then use those projections for planning the future through a process of mental simulation (Taylor et al., 1998). There are two types of mental simulation. The first is process-oriented simulation, in which the individual envisions the future and the steps necessary for achieving it. The second is outcome simulation, in which the ideal is projected without attention to process, goals and steps for its attainment (Taylor et al., 1998). Process-oriented mental simulation enables individuals to strive for superior performance and increases the likelihood for goal attainment, while merely envisioning the outcome does not (Taylor et al., 1998).

The ability of individuals to project an ideal image of the future, establish goals and determine the steps for its achievement enhances feelings of self-efficacy and self-esteem (Taylor et al., 1998) and enhances performance in the process of goal attainment (Christian et al., 2013; Dowick, (n.d.)). Mental process simulation initiates an "integrating" process of "planning, coordination, and calibration" (Baumeister et al., 2011, p. 354; Dowick, (n.d.)) or "goal directed behavior" (Castelfranchi, 2005; Christian et al., 2013; Lombardo, 2016), which prompts intentional acts and behavior designed to achieve the desired future ideal.

Cooperrider (1990) asserts that some anticipatory images are so strong that they actually produce physiological or psychological effects. For example, the anticipation of an unpleasant future experience may raise one's blood pressure or result in an anxiety attack causing an individual to adjust his/her behavior to avoid the event Cooperrider

(1990). Barsics et al. (2016) argue that "emotional responses" or feelings are an integral element of goal-directed behavior guiding humans toward a desired ideal and away from undesirable outcomes that will cause unpleasant feelings and emotional distress.

Researchers have also developed the process of "mental contrasting" in which individuals create a mental representation of a desired future attendant with "implementation intentions" to achieve it (Castelfranchi, 2005; Christian et al., 2013; Kappes & Oettingen, 2014; Pezzulo & Rigoli, 2011; Szpunar et al., 2014). Mental contrasting calls for individuals to anticipate (visualize) obstacles and develop implementation intentions and plans to overcome them (Castelfranchi, 2005; Christian et al., 2013; Kappes & Oettingen, 2014; Pezzulo & Rigoli, 2011; Szpunar et al., 2014). Kappes and Oettingen (2014) argue that individuals must see the desired endpoint first so that the planning and coordination is contextualized. In other words, individuals mentally contrast current and anticipated reality, including obstacles and mentally simulate various options or alternatives to overcome the barrier. The most optimal choice is then made and executed to achieve the desired future outcome. This process requires mental simulation of the desired outcome, as well as the consequences of each possible course of action. It is entirely an anticipatory process.

In addition to mental contrasting, Seligman discusses the idea of the "evaluative landscape" incorporating the simulation technique of "if/then" analysis, in which individuals review situations with an eye toward their relevancy to the attainment of the desired outcome. For example, I want to pass tomorrow's test with an A grade. "If" I hang out with my friends tonight instead of studying, "then" I will not be ready for the test and will not get an A; therefore, I must stay home and study to be successful in

accomplishing my goal (M. E. P. Seligman et al., 2013; M.E.P. Seligman et al., 2016). This if/then evaluative analysis also works in a reverse, negative construct when people construct mental images of what it is they wish to avoid. For example, I do not want to drop out of school and be relegated to a possible life of joblessness and poverty (avoiding the negative outcome). Therefore, if I work hard and concentrate on my homework, then there is a high probability that I will complete school and go on to a productive and happy life (M. E. P. Seligman et al., 2013; M.E.P. Seligman et al., 2016). Interestingly, research indicates that college students who mentally simulated successful test taking, adjusted and focused their studying behavior with the intention of doing well on the exam and, indeed, received a better score (Taylor et al., 1998). Vadeboncoeur and Vellos (2016) suggest that the act of studying, writing a paper, working on project assignment, as well as determining the steps to high school or college graduation all involve anticipation or prospection.

Another pragmatic prospection technique is mental rehearsal, whereby individuals visualize a desired and ideal outcome and mentally rehearse or practice how it will be achieved (Prabhakar, Coughlin, & Ghetti, 2016; Spreng & Levine, (n.d.); Szpunar et al., 2014; Taylor et al., 1998). It is suggested even when thinking about a perceived past failure, humans mentally rehearse how it might have been done differently so as not to repeat the problem in the future (Baumeister et al., 2011; Baumeister et al., 2016). We see this practice when watching athletes prepare for a competition. For example, just prior to an event, gymnasts close their eyes and mentally rehearse their routine. We actually watch their body movements as they go through this process. The great Jack Nicholas

introduced us to the idea of actually mentally rehearsing where he wanted the ball to end up so he could plan the type and arc of his golf swing to achieve his objective. He said, "I never hit a shot, not even in practice, without having a very sharp, in focus picture of it in my head. It's like a color movie" (Nicklaus, Bowden, & McQueen, 2005).

Anticipatory competence. The concepts of "anticipatory consciousness" (Hulme, 2001) and "future consciousness" (Lombardo, 2016) further explicate Cooperrider's anticipatory principle and Seligman's theory of prospection by asserting that humans have the capacity to think beyond the realm of what already exists. In other words, some people are good at projecting images of the future and moderating their actions and behavior in moving toward that preferred future, while others are not. This capacity can be learned and developed (Cooperrider, 1990; Lombardo, 2016; M. E. P. Seligman et al., 2013; M.E.P. Seligman et al., 2016) as "anticipatory competence" (Cooperrider, 1990). Conceptually, people exhibit anticipatory competence when they visualize in their mind an image of a desired future, frame goals, and plot the actions and steps needed to accomplish them. M. E. P. Seligman et al. (2013) suggests that such individuals are adept at simulating a range of alternatives and projecting consequences, as well as "disconfirming unrealistic prospections" and reframing negative images of the future into positive possibilities. Additionally, anticipatory competent people have the ability to mentally visualize obstacles and plan ways to overcome them.

Limitations in the Research

There is no quantitative or qualitative research that directly links the anticipatory principle and theory of prospection to the educational success of low-income, inner city students. On the other hand, there is research which discusses the stereotypical

perspective that it is more realistic for children living in poverty to expect lower status

jobs and diminished financial status (Kaplan, (n.d.); Weinger, 1998) and that students

who internalize socially constructed negative perceptions of the future tend not to

progress educationally (Land et al., 2014). Additionally, some parents of low-income,

inner city students lower the educational and career aspirations of their children because

they feel that life is stacked against them or they do not want them to be disappointed

when their dreams do not materialize (Howard, 2003; MacLeod, 2008). However, there

are research studies, mostly qualitative, suggesting that low-income, inner city parents of

resilient students hope for a better life for their children and believe that education is the

key to achieving success (Ceballo, 2004; Ceja, 2004; Clark, 1983; Dyce, Albold, & Long,

2013; Hill & Torres, 2010; Howard, 2003; Ibañez et al., 2004; Jarrett, 1999; Valadez,

2008). Less clear is how parents translate their hopes and wishes into positive action and

inculcate them in their children.

Research suggests that resilient students tend to have aspirations, which include

attending college (Geary, 1988; Howard, 2003; Winfield, 1994), and exhibit goal directed

behavior (Ceja, 2004; Duran & Weffer, 1992; Johnson, 1997; Land et al., 2014; Lessard

et al., 2014; Schreiner, 2010). O'Connor (1997) presented the experiences of two low-

income, inner city students of color, one resilient and the other non-resilient and found

that the resilient student was optimistic about the future, while the other was pessimistic.

The optimistic student worked hard and progressed, while the pessimistic student rejected

the achievement ideology and failed in school. It is not clear what anticipatory images

they held and how they may have influenced their optimistic and pessimistic behaviors

and actions. In a study of expelled students, one of the students stated, "I was not

thinking about the future" (O'Connor, 1997). The study, however, does not discuss how students should think about and operationalize their future and who in their lives might help in this endeavor.

Finally, research suggests that schools can play an important role in helping students develop aspirations and goals by fostering a college going school culture (Achinstein et al., 2015; Athanases et al., 2016; Christian et al., 2013; Kaplan, (n.d.); Martinez & Deil-Amen, 2015). The Achinstein et al. (2015) study discusses how a charter school, which accepts students who have been "labeled" as trouble and uneducable, expose them to a pervasive school culture in which they are "re-labeled" as college bound material. For those students who remain in the school, a very high percentage attend college, though many of them do not progress to completion (Achinstein et al., 2015). Martinez and Deil-Amen (2015) discuss the importance of schools adopting a "college for all" culture as a key element of educational progression.

The research does not specifically address how teachers, peers and adults from the community assist students form anticipatory images or how they support them in the attainment of these visions.

Theoretical Framework

Positive image, positive action dynamic. In his conception of Appreciative Inquiry, Dr. David Cooperrider of Case Western Reserve University framed the anticipatory principle as one of its foundational theories (Cooperrider, 1990). This principle extends the theory of anticipatory reality framed by psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Harry Stack Sullivan in 1947, asserting that, "Every social action somehow involves anticipation of the future" (Cooperrider, 1990, p. 332). The anticipatory principle posits a positive image, positive

action dynamic, in which positive images of the future produce behaviors and actions leading to the envisioned positive outcome (Cooperrider, 1990). If positive images produce positive actions and outcomes, then negative images of the future may produce a negative anticipated reality further supporting Cooperrider's contention that "human systems are forever projecting ahead of themselves a horizon of expectation that brings the future powerfully into the present as a causal agent" (Cooperrider, 1990, p. 372).

The anticipatory principle is further explicated by Dr. Martin Seligman's theory of prospection, in which he challenges the historical framework of psychology as grounded in the belief that people are driven by their past history, circumstances, and inner states. Instead, Seligman and his colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania suggest that people use past experiences to develop an "evaluative landscape" of possible acts, behaviors and outcomes (M. E. P. Seligman et al., 2013). The theory of prospection offers a counterpoint to the deterministic notion that our futures are pre-ordained by our past or by the circumstances of our lives. Instead, humans can use past experience as a resource to frame alternative possibilities of a desired future (M. E. P. Seligman et al., 2013; M.E.P. Seligman et al., 2016). According to Dr. Roberto Poli, "If the future indeed becomes a core organizing principle of the mind, the past will have to recede from being a force driving needs and goals to being a resource from which agents selectively extract information about the prospects they face…these prospects can include not only possibilities that have occurred before but also possibilities that have never occurred" (Poli, 2014, p. 25).

Coupled with the positive image, positive action dynamic is research that delves into the mechanics of how it actually works. Seligman's "evaluative landscape" notion is

elaborated by research on "pragmatic prospection," which postulates that people think about the future in order to bring it to reality through planning and coordination (Baumeister et al., 2016). The processes of outcome and process simulation suggest that just visualizing the desired outcome (outcome simulation) will not bring the vision to reality. What is needed, it is argued, is process simulation, which marries the desired outcome with the action steps needed to accomplish it (process simulation) (Baumeister et al., 2011). Additionally, researchers have developed a process of "mental contrasting" requiring the individual to visualize a mental representation of a desired future and then develop "implementation intentions" to achieve it. In the process of mental contrasting, the individual is also expected to anticipate (visualize) obstacles and develop implementation intentions and plans to overcome them (Kappes & Oettingen, 2014). Finally, an element of Seligman's "evaluative landscape" is the technique of "if/then" analysis, in which individuals review situations with an eye toward their relevancy to attainment of the desired outcome. For example, "if" I do X, "then" I will not be able to achieve "Y" which leads me to my desired outcome; therefore, I must do Z to be successful in reaching my goal (M. E. P. Seligman et al., 2013; M.E.P. Seligman et al., 2016).

Resiliency framework theory. This study investigates the possibility that the positive image, positive action dynamic might explicate the academic success of resilient low-income, inner city students. In field of education, resiliency framework theory posits that certain low-income, inner city students "beat-the-odds" by succeeding academically despite exposure to the stressful risk factors characteristic of their community, familial, and school environments (Ceballo, 2004; Geary, 1988; Howard, 2003; Johnson, 1997;

Tough, 2008, 2012, 2016; Williams & Portman, 2014; Winfield, 1994).   Resilient

students are able to overcome adverse, stressful circumstances with the help of their

parents or loved ones (Ceballo, 2004; Clark, 1983; Fan, 2001; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000;

Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Hara & Burke, 1998; Hitlin, 2006; McHatton et al., 2006;

Tough, 2012, 2016), a caring and supportive teacher or teachers (Achinstein et al., 2015;

Athanases et al., 2016; Borman & Rachuba, 2001; Ceballo, 2004; Fan, 2001; Geary,

1988; Hara & Burke, 1998; Hill & Torres, 2010; Hitlin, 2006; Howard, 2003; Land et al.,

2014; Martinez & Deil-Amen, 2015; McHatton et al., 2006; Tough, 2012, 2016; Tyson,

2011; Williams & Portman, 2014; Winfield, 1994; Zetlin, 1998), constructive school

systems and processes (Achinstein et al., 2015; Athanases et al., 2016; Bryk et al., 2010;

Ceballo, 2004; Duran & Weffer, 1992; Geary, 1988; Hill & Torres, 2010; Howard, 2003;

Land et al., 2014; Martinez & Deil-Amen, 2015; Tough, 2012; Williams & Portman,

2014; Winfield, 1994; Zetlin, 1998), complementary peer affiliations (American Public

Health Assocciation, 2010; Land et al., 2014; Williams & Portman, 2014; Winfield,

1994), enriching community support systems and relationships (Achinstein et al., 2015;

Farrell, 1994; Furstenberg et al., 1999; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Harper et al., 2012;

Johnson, 1997; Kaplan, (n.d.); McHatton et al., 2006; Williams & Portman, 2014;

Winfield, 1994), and their own self-motivation (Ceja, 2004; Duran & Weffer, 1992;

Dweck, 2006; Farrell, 1994; Furstenberg et al., 1999; Geary, 1988; Harper et al., 2012;

Howard, 2003; Johnson, 1997; Lessard et al., 2014; Marsh & Martin, (n.d.); McHatton et

al., 2006; Reis & HÉBert, 2007; Schreiner, 2010; Sherman et al., 2002; Tough, 2012,

2016; Wang et al., 1997; Williams & Portman, 2014).

A possible linkage between resiliency framework theory and the positive image, positive action dynamic. Many of these studies and others suggest but do not specifically address a possible linkage between the resiliency framework and the positive image, positive action dynamic (Achinstein et al., 2015; Athanases et al., 2016; Ceballo, 2004; Clark, 1983; Geary, 1988; Harper et al., 2012; Hill & Torres, 2010; Ibañez et al., 2004; Land et al., 2014; MacLeod, 2008; Martinez & Deil-Amen, 2015; Morales, 2010; O'Connor, 1997; Reis & HÉBert, 2007; Schreiner, 2010; Tough, 2008, 2012, 2016; Tyson, 2011; Valadez, 2008; Wang et al., 1997; Winfield, 1994). These same studies suggest but do not fully explore the possibility that academically successful students may develop a positive future image of economic and social mobility with a desired career interest in mind and coupled with the recognition that a college education is the pathway to bringing their vision to reality. Furthermore, within the resiliency framework, parental influence, supportive teachers and school structures, peer affiliations, and community relationships may contribute to and reinforce the career and college going images formed by resilient low-income, inner city students (Achinstein et al., 2015; Athanases et al., 2016; Ceballo, 2004; Ceja, 2004; Clark, 1983; Duran & Weffer, 1992; Farrell, 1994; Geary, 1988; Harper et al., 2012; Hill & Torres, 2010; Horn & Chen, 1998; Howard, 2003; Johnson, 1997; Kaplan, (n.d.); Land et al., 2014; Lessard et al., 2014; McHatton et al., 2006; O'Connor, 1997; Reis & HÉBert, 2007; Schreiner, 2010; Tyson, 2011).

This study seeks to establish a theoretical framework, which posits that students frame positive anticipatory images of the future with the assistance and support of parents, teachers, peers, and adults within their community. It is further anticipated these positive images of the future involve high school graduation, college attendance and

graduation, and a career that enables them to achieve a better life grounded in upward

economic and social mobility. Once the student frames a positive image of the future they

moderate their behavior and actions in the direction of the vision through pragmatic

prospection, which involves planning and the coordination of action steps to achieve their

desired outcome and evaluative mental analysis, whereby daily decisions and choices are

made about situations based on which one will lead them to their desired goal.

Chapter Three

Methods

Research Design

This study used a qualitative research method of inquiry. I designed a strategy of inquiry to identify, describe, and explain student experiences with framing and application of anticipatory images. This study relied on the students and the influential people in their lives to describe these experiences (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 1994). In this study, research subjects will be referred to as student participants and most influential other participants.

The intent of this study is to obtain a rich, detailed description of the topic of interest through face-to-face semi-structured interviews of the high academically achieving low-income, inner city students and the person they identify as the person who most influenced their educational aspirations and progress. An interview protocol was used and each interview was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by me. Transcriptions were analyzed for significant statements or quotations from which themes and categories were derived. The themes and categories were used to create detailed textural and structural and composite descriptions of their experience with anticipatory images.

Researcher's Role

As the primary data collection instrument for the study, I approached this study with an experiential background in the principles and practice of Appreciative Inquiry (Ai). President of a consulting firm that specializes in the practice of Ai, I am also the director of the Center for Applied Appreciative Inquiry, which is situated in the School of Public

Affairs and Administration at Rutgers University Newark. One of the foundational

principles of Ai is the anticipatory principle, which asserts that humans are guided by the

images they project ahead of themselves (Cooperrider, 1990). For this research

investigation, it was incumbent on me as the researcher to approach it with an open mind

setting-aside my pre-conceptions, pre-suppositions, judgment, and biases related to Ai

and the anticipatory principle (Moustakas, 1994). I maintained an open-mind in listening

to the stories as told by the study participants.

Setting

This study was conducted on the campuses of Rutgers University Newark and New

Brunswick. Interviews were conducted in a variety of locations. To accommodate student

participants from the Rutgers New Brunswick campus, interviews were conducted in

meeting rooms situated in the Alexander Library. Student participants from the Newark

campus were interviewed in the researcher's office in the School of Public Affairs and

Administration building located at 111 Washington Street, Newark, New Jersey.

Interviews of most influential participants were conducted in locations convenient to

them. For example, the researcher met with most influential participants at the Alexander

Library in New Brunswick, other offices at Rutgers Newark, in the student center at a

private college in northern New Jersey, the guidance office of a comprehensive high

school in Newark, and the executive office of a charter school in Paterson, New Jersey.

Study Participants

The original plan called for the researcher to interview fifteen students who graduated

from the Newark Public Schools at or near the top of their class (top 15%), were eligible

for free and reduced lunch while in high school, were enrolled at Rutgers University-

Newark in the Honors Living-Learning Community Program and who completed the first

semester of course work with at least a 2.84 GPA. However, due to recruitment

challenges an IRB amendment was obtained to open eligibility to students who graduated

from the Newark Public Schools at or near the top of their class (top 15%), were eligible

for free and reduced lunch, while in high school, were enrolled at Rutgers New

Brunswick or Newark and who completed the first semester of course work with at least

a 2.84 GPA. With agreement from the dissertation committee, the number of student

interviews was reduced from fifteen to ten.

      The student research participants in this study graduated from a comprehensive

Newark public school or a magnet school[1]at or near the top of their class. For those

student participants, who graduated from a comprehensive Newark public school this is

an extraordinary accomplishment in its own right. It is even more remarkable given

recent data indicating that 26 percent of students fail to graduate from such schools in

Newark (Backstrand et al., 2018). It is also notable that the magnet school students who

graduated at or near the top of their class did so from highly competitive schools boasting

a 95 percent completion rate (Backstrand et al., 2018).

      The fact that the student participants attend Rutgers University Newark or New

Brunswick falls in line with the findings of a recent study, which found that an increasing

number of Newark public school students are enrolled in a college or university

(Backstrand et al., 2018) This study found that over half of Newark public school

students who graduated between 2011 and 2016 are enrolled in a college or university

following graduation compared to just 39 percent in 2014 (Backstrand et al., 2018).

---

[1] The terms comprehensive public high school and magnet school will be defined in chapter four.

However, 40 percent of magnet school students in Newark and 60 percent of comprehensive school students are not enrolled in a college or university (Backstrand et al., 2018). These statistics are presented to highlight the significant academic achievements of the student participants in this study and to illustrate the researcher's intention to learn about the anticipatory images of these high achieving low-income, inner city students believing there might be lessons learned that we can apply more broadly to all students.

Because this study focused on learning about the anticipatory images of students who were academically successful in public high school and continued their achievement in college, the GPA indicator upon completion of the first semester was used as a predictor of college completion. Research suggests that a GPA of 2.84 or better upon completion of the first semester is a strong predictor of ultimate college completion for underrepresented students (Gershenfeld, Hood, & Zhan, 2016). This GPA marker for college completion was used because the students interviewed for this study are still attending college. The researcher viewed the GPA marker as an element of continuing academic achievement and probable college completion. The fact that students in this study continue to exhibit academic success at Rutgers University Newark and New Brunswick is impressive given recent findings indicating that only 32 percent of magnet school students and 9 percent of comprehensive high school students complete college over five years (Backstrand et al., 2018). The fact that these student participants are still in college and excelling is significant especially in light of data indicating that Newark's students are less likely to complete college as students in other cities across the nation, such as Chicago (Backstrand et al., 2018).

Recruitment of Study Participants

At my request, the Associate Director of the Honors Living Learning Community sent an IRB approved recruitment email to all students of the Rutgers Newark Honors Living Community describing the eligibility criteria for the study and requesting interested students to contact the researcher directly. The email included an IRB approved flyer describing the research project, its eligibility criteria, and that research participants would be provided a $20.00 gift card. The Dean of the Honors Living Learning Community also afforded the researcher an opportunity to address an assembly of HLLC students about participating in the research study. These approaches produced a limited number of student participants.

The researcher employed snowball technique to recruit student participants, relying on several of the student participants, as well as other non-participating Rutgers Newark students and the Director of Academic Partnerships from the Rutgers Newark Office of the Chancellor to suggest potential subjects from among their acquaintances. These individuals made initial contact with their acquaintances, who they believed might fit the eligibility requirements for the study to ascertain their interest in participating in my research study and if they were, they were asked to contact me.

Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Neighborhood of Residence

The interview guide asked student participants questions about their race/ethnicity, gender, the Newark neighborhood of residence, and the public high school attended. All student participants were low-income as evidenced by their self-reported participation in the free and reduced lunch program in high school.

Informed Consent Procedure

All students and most influential participants were provided with clear instructions about the nature and purpose of the study and an informed consent agreement, which was approved by the IRB detailing their rights and assuring confidentiality. Each student participant was asked to identify a most influential person in their life who helped him or her frame anticipatory images of the future or assisted with their educational progress. Student participants initially contacted their most influential person and if they expressed interest in participating in the study, the student introduced us by email. I then contacted them directly inviting them to participate in the study. They were also provided clear instructions about the nature and purpose of the study. An informed consent agreement approved by the IRB established their rights and assured confidentiality.

Processes

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with the twenty study participants (10 student participants and 10 most influential participants) using an interview protocol (Appendix A and B). I asked probing and clarifying questions to obtain a richer, more detailed description of each study participant's experience.

Ethical Considerations

As previously mentioned, study participants were provided clear instructions on the nature and purpose of the investigation and an informed consent agreement approved by the IRB. I took careful and deliberate steps to protect the anonymity of the research participants. For example, during recorded interviews they were never referred to by name. During the transcription process they were referred to by an assigned numerical designation that only I know. Finally, when I wrote the research participant profiles I

used pseudonyms. I interacted with all research participants with an open mind without preconception (Moustakas, 1994). I approached each interview in the spirit of learning about the individual and believing that I would be amazed by the story I was about to hear.

Data Collection Strategies

Data was collected from twenty face-to-face, audio-recorded interviews (Moustakas, 1994). The initial student interviews ranged from forty-eight minutes to an hour and ten minutes. Initial interview questions for student participants are provided in Appendix A. A second follow-up interview was requested for the purpose of gaining greater clarity of the experiential description and to obtain from the student any requested changes to the interview summary. Second student interviews were approximately thirty minutes in duration; however, in a limited number of cases, student participants chose to communicate their comments about the draft interview summary via email or telephone foregoing a face-to-face meeting.

Interview questions for the most influential participants are provided in Appendix B. An initial interview was scheduled with each study participant and ranged from forty minutes to one hour in duration. A second interview was requested for the purpose of gaining greater clarity of the experiential description and to obtain any requested changes to the interview summary. In most cases the most influential study participants provided comments via email or telephone, requesting not to meet for the second interview.

Data Analysis Procedures

For this study, I used the followinh methodology for data analysis

1. I transcribed and reviewed verbatim transcriptions of each interview for significant statements or quotations with the understanding that all statements are meaningful and relevant.

2. A themes analysis of the significant statements was conducted whereby they were clustered into thematic categories, which I framed during the literature review. This analysis was used to produce an annotated summary of all participant interviews.

3. Thematic categories were used to write textural and structural descriptions of each student participant's experience with anticipatory images. These descriptions, which are written as student profiles can be found in chapter four of this dissertation.

4. A textural and structural description of the experience with anticipatory images, which integrated the six emerging themes, was written to explain the meanings and essence of the experiences and can be found in chapters five and six.

5. A composite summary as provided in chapter seven was written that discusses the meanings and essence of the students' experiences in relation with the theoretical framework for the study.

Throughout this process the researcher continuously reviewed the themes and categories from different angles in order to derive the detailed descriptions (Moustakas, 1994).

Verification

Triangulation was achieved by conducting twenty interviews (10 student participants and 10 most influential persons). The most influential persons served as a confirming and validating mechanism with respect to the students' stories. The responses from the

students and their most influential others were consistent. In addition, each research participant was afforded the opportunity to review the written summary of the interview describing their experience (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher incorporated all changes as requested.

It could be argued that better triangulation might occur if the same number of Newark Public students who did not graduate or go to college were also included in this study. While this is true, it will most likely be the focus of a future study. Another possible means of triangulation would be to interview younger 9th grade students to determine if they frame anticipatory images, how they do it, and the influence that such images have on their academic performance. These students could be studied longitudinally through high school, college, and beyond. Again, this approach could be followed in a future research study.

Limitation of Research

A possible limitation of my research design is that it depends on the recollection and retrospective assessment of their academic achievement and their anticipatory images by student and most influential person participants. It is possible that such recollections and assessments might not be completely accurate. I believe that the collective stories of students and the most influential others, as shared through individual interviews, serve as a triangulating mechanism to ensure the verification of responses and thematic data.

Reporting Findings

Findings are reported in a descriptive, narrative form. The study findings are contextualized in relationship to the literature review and a synthesis of the descriptions

provides a clear picture of the essence and meaning of the students' experience framing and using anticipatory images to drive academic achievement.

Chapter Four

Participant Profiles and Interview Results

This chapter introduces the students who are the focus of this study, as well as the individual they each identified as the person who most influenced his or her educational and career aspirations and progress. I present student profiles for each of the research participants, which set the textual and structural context for what anticipatory images students frame and how they influence the their academic achievement experiences. Before beginning these profiles, however, it is important to keep the research questions during this study front and center:

1. Do academically successful low-income, inner city students who have graduated from an urban public high school and attend a four-year university frame and use anticipatory images to guide their academic achievement?

2. What are the anticipatory images these students frame and how do they frame them?

3. How do students use their anticipatory images to realize their imagined future?

4. How do others support students in the fulfillment of their anticipatory images?

As a reminder, this study seeks to learn whether high academically achieving students from low-income families and neighborhood environments hold anticipatory images of the future and, if they do, describe how they frame and use them to their advantage. By studying students who graduated in the top fifteen percent of their high school class, who now attend Rutgers University, and who have achieved at least a 2.87 GPA at the end of their first semester, I hope to identify important lessons that can be

applied more broadly to improve the academic standing of struggling low-income, inner city students.

Table 1 summarizes important information for each student: gender, age, neighborhood of residence, high school attended, their class rank, ethnicity, the Rutgers University campus they attend and year, and current GPA. The students in the study represent all five wards of the City of Newark: one from the West Ward, three from the East Ward's Ironbound section, one from the North Ward, one from the Central Ward, and four from the South Ward. Six students attended and graduated from a Newark public magnet high school and four students graduated from a comprehensive public high school.

It is important to note that students who attend magnet high schools receive special instruction and have access to programs designed to attract a more diverse student body from throughout the district. Most importantly, admission to these magnet high schools is based primarily on a standardized admission test, so the students in this sample attending them were among the top 5 percent of all Newark eighth graders who took the test. The magnet schools attended by students in this study offered specialized instruction and curricula in the arts, humanities, or science. In Newark the graduation rates of the magnet schools are significantly higher than comprehensive high schools (NJ Department of Education, 2018). In fact, the average graduation rate for the three magnet schools attended by students in this study is 94.46 percent compared to 65.43 percent for those students who attended and graduated from the four comprehensive high schools (NJ Department of Education, 2018).

Newark's comprehensive public high schools are typical for public schools in the United States. Examinations and grades are used to sort students into different populations and programs. Typically, comprehensive high schools provide a range of instruction and curricula for students preparing to attend college or those needing remedial or vocational instruction. Comprehensive public high schools tend to offer a range of specialized courses.

It is worth repeating again that Newark's comprehensive public high schools are behind the national average in graduation rates with an adjusted cohort 4-year high school graduation rate of just 74 percent (Backstrand et al., 2018). This means that 26 percent of entering 9th graders fail to graduate from Newark's comprehensive public high schools. For students who attend any of Newark's six magnet schools the prospect for graduation is brighter with a graduation rate of 95 percent (Backstrand et al., 2018).

As the following table illustrates, study participants include four African American students and six Hispanic students. Of the four African American students, one is male and three are female. Of the six Hispanic students, three are male and three are female. The Hispanic students include two individuals of Dominican descent, two of Puerto Rican descent, one of Honduran descent, and one of Brazilian descent. Of the six Hispanic students, four immigrated to the United States. One African American student emigrated from Ghana, Africa. The students ranged in age from eighteen to twenty-one.

Table 1: Overview of the Student Research Participants

Student/ Gender	Age	Newark Neighborhood	High School	High School Class Rank	Race/ Ethnicity	RU Campus/ Year	RU GPA
Sofia (F)	20	North Ward	Magnet	9	Hispanic/ Dominican	Newark/ 2nd year	3.0

Alexis (F)	20	West Ward/ Vailsburg	Magnet	4	African American	Newark/ 3rd year	3.3
Jasmine (F)	18	South Ward	Comp.	13	African American	Newark/ 1st year	3.0
Caleb (M)	21	South Ward	Comp.	7	African American	Newark/ 4th year	3.0
Alejandro (M)	20	South Ward	Magnet	11	Hispanic/ Puerto Rican	New Brunswick 2nd year	3.4
Alanza (F)	19	East Ward/ Ironbound	Magnet	6	Hispanic/ Brazilian	New Brunswick 2nd year	3.9
Valeria (F)	18	East Ward/ Ironbound	Comp.	1	Hispanic/ Dominican	Newark 1st year	3.5
Mateo (M)	18	Central Ward	Comp.	1	Hispanic/ Puerto Rican	Newark 1st year	3.6
Diego (M)	20	East Ward/ Ironbound	Magnet	14	Hispanic/ Honduran & Puerto Rican	New Brunswick 2nd year	3.1
Ama (F)	19	South Ward	Magnet	1	African American	New Brunswick 1st year	3.0

Note: All study participants have been assigned pseudonyms.

Table 1

Most Influential Persons

The students in this study each identified a person in their lives who most influenced their

educational aspirations and progress, and this person was also interviewed for this study.

Table 2 depicts the most influential persons and their relationship to the students. These

individuals included peers, a parent, a college readiness counselor from Rutgers Newark,

a former principal of a Newark comprehensive high school, an older sister, a high school

counselor from one of Newark's comprehensive high schools, a teacher/track coach from

a comprehensive high school, and a math teacher who teaches in a Newark magnet

school. Of the ten most influential individuals, five are male and five are females.

Interestingly, eight of the ten students selected a person of their same ethnicity/race.

However, there does not seem to be an association between the gender of the student and

the most influential person he or she identifies. The most influential persons in this study

have been assigned pseudonyms.

Table 2: Most Influential Person Subjects and Their Relationship to the Students

Student	Most Influential Person	Relationship to Student
Sofia	Alejandro	Sofia's best friend. Have known each other since pre-K
Alexis	Mrs. Carpenter	Alexis' mother
Jasmine	Ms. Spence	Jasmine's mentor. Counselor for RU TRIO
Caleb	Dr. Clinton	Caleb's former high school principal
Alejandro	Isabella	Alejandro's sister
Alanza	Diego	Alanza's boyfriend.
Valeria	Ms. Silva	Valeria's high school guidance counselor
Mateo	Coach Williams	Mateo's track coach and his health instructor
Diego	Alanza	Diego's girlfriend
Ama	Mr. Santiago	Ama's high school math teacher

Table 2

Student Profiles

The following student profiles introduce each of the students who participated in this

study and offer a snapshot of each participant's experience as a high academically

ANTICIPATORY IMAGES AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS

achieving student. The summaries also describe the students' most influential person. Every statement made by study participants was afforded equal value, and thus, I have chose to quote them extensively within the summaries.

Sofia

Sofia is a nineteen-year-old Latina of Dominican decent who self-identifies as Black and Native American. She graduated ninth in her class from a magnet high school in Newark, New Jersey, which boasts a 90.91 percent 2016 adjusted cohort graduation rate in a district in which more than one-quarter of its students do not graduate (NJ Department of Education, 2017). She is currently a second-year student at Rutgers University in Newark in its Honors Living and Learning Community (HLLC), which is an innovative "transformative college access and success program that fosters the academic, social, and personal development of talented students from all walks of life with a desire to make a difference in their communities and beyond (HLLC, 2017)." HLLC students are exposed to a curriculum of publicly engaged scholarship designed to address pressing issues of local and global citizenship. At the conclusion of her first year of university studies, the student attained a 3.0 GPA.

Sofia grew up and resides with her family in the North Ward of Newark. Despite her impoverished neighborhood and the problems attendant with the effects of poverty, particularly crime, she indicated she was "comfortable" living there, as it "felt safe, even though it wasn't safe."

She commuted daily from the North Ward of Newark to the Central Ward to attend the magnet high school, a school she appreciated for the diversity of the student

body and its innovative arts curriculum. Most importantly, she was supported by all of her teachers and said the school environment fostered quality teaching and learning.

While in high school, Sofia connected with NJ LEEP, a community nonprofit organization that helps students complete high school, attend competitive colleges, and begin careers. The program serves first generation and low-income students enrolled in grades 9-12 from more than twenty public, private, and charter schools situated in the greater Newark area. Helping students see themselves as college-going material, the organization also helps them navigate their way through the applications process to gain college admission. Sofia credits NJ LEEP and its staff with helping her get a sense of where she is going in life. She said the program "really guided me" toward college. A recent research study found that NJ LEEP is very adept and successful in working with low-income and first generational students in preparing them for college (Broome, 2018).

Sofia attributes most of her academic success to her mother and father, who she described as very supportive of her educational goals. Sofia's mother is a high school graduate and attended a year of college, studying accounting. She thinks her father graduated from high school but was not sure. Sofia recalled that it was her mother who monitored her academic progress primarily making sure she got her homework done. She said her parents were "just keen on education" and viewed it as the key to a better life. When her parents referred to a better life, Sofia said, "they meant financial security and a job not requiring physical labor."

In addition to monitoring her homework, Sofia said her mother expected her to bring home A's. She said her parents have the "immigrant mindset," which means they sacrificed a lot to get to America and work hard every day to provide for their family as

best they can. Because of that, they expect her and her older sister to also work hard to excel academically. From the perspective of her parents, it is only through education and hard work that the family will attain a better, more financially secure life.

Sofia describes herself as a very hard working student, always prepared to participate in class. Her most influential person, who is her life-long best friend Alejandro, said she is a "very determined student with a crazy, go-getter personality." Sofia and Alejandro attended high school together but he now attends Rutgers New Brunswick. They met in preschool and have remained close friends. He describes her as a "good" student, who, like him, participated in and led many extracurricular activities and clubs in high school.

At age seven or eight, Sofia recalled imagining herself as a Chief Executive Officer or Chief Finance Officer of a nonprofit organization. That image shifted in high school when she became interested in becoming an executive in the private sector, influencing her decision to major in business and accounting in her first year at Rutgers University Newark. However, she credits the HLLC program for helping to rekindle her interest and passion for the nonprofit and public sectors. In addition, Alejandro always pictured her "helping others" working in the public or nonprofit sectors and continuously nudged her in that direction. As she entered her second year at Rutgers Newark, she changed her major to public administration. Sofia freely admits her career/vocational image of the future strongly influences her drive and intensity of her academic work. She knows she needs to do quality work and attain good grades if she is to achieve her dreams.

Listening to her parents' never-ending admonition, Sofia holds a vision of education as the pathway to achieving her academic and career aspirations. She sees education as "a constant and basically the whole equation of my life and where I want to see myself." She embraces and accepts the importance of education and going to college as the pathway to a successful future and the achievement of her dream of working in the public and/or nonprofit sectors helping people.

In addition to Alejandro, Sofia has a circle of ten "like-minded" friends who share the same educational and college-going aspirations. They socialize together, although their time together mixes fun and homework. They support each other in doing well academically and pursuing their career and vocational aspirations. While they all like to have fun, they know when it comes to papers, exams, and projects, academics always takes precedence over fun. Of the circle of peers, Alejandro said, "We all push each other to succeed academically."

Alejandro. As mentioned, Sofia identified her best friend since preschool as her most influential person. They are both of Hispanic heritages, he is Puerto Rican and she is Dominican. Alejandro said they "pushed" each other to do well academically and to become involved in various extracurricular activities that positioned them to be accepted to college. As a participant in the Rutgers Future Scholars program, Alejandro shared with Sofia the information and resources he was given about college and the application process. He linked her to the HLLC program and its promise of supporting qualified students with a free college education at Rutgers Newark. Finally, it was Alejandro who always imagined Sofia working in a field where she could help people and nudged her to consider a career in nonprofit management or the public sector. He was influential in her

decision to shift her major from business accounting to nonprofit management and public

administration.

Alexis

Alexis is a twenty-year old African American female and third year student in Rutgers

University Newark's HLLC program, who attained a 3.3 GPA at the conclusion of her

second year. She graduated fourth in her class from a Newark magnet high school, which

boasts a 96.21 percent graduation rate (NJ Department of Education, 2017).

      Raised by her mother and father, Alexis grew up in the Vailsburg section of

Newark, which is geographically situated in the city's West Ward. Even though she

described her neighborhood as "crime-ridden with drugs, crime, police, and gun

violence," she said she likes her neighborhood as it provides a "sense of home."

      Residing in Newark's West Ward, she commuted by public transportation to her

magnet high school, taking two buses every day. She began commuting to the high

school in the seventh grade when she was admitted into a gifted and talented program,

which was conducted there. She described her high school teachers as "quality teachers,"

who prepared her well for college.

      Alexis felt supported by her mother, who she identified as her most influential

person. Her mother now works in a State government office in Newark; her father is a

truck driver for a food service company. Alexis' mother is a high school graduate and her

father attended one year of college. Although both parents always supported and

encouraged her educational progress, Alexis said her mother was the most supportive.

Despite being unable to help with the academic content of her work, her mother was

always there to help, encourage, and push her. Her mother stressed the importance of education for a better life and future "over and over again."

Alexis' mother said although she cannot help her daughter academically, she did provide all the support Alexis needed to excel. She was there to track her progress making sure she got her assignments done on time. "I think that helped her."

Alexis describes herself as a "hard working, motivated" student. When asked why she works so hard, she said she "just didn't want to be a product of my environment." She views education and attending college as the pathway to a better future. Her mother described Alexis as a "really determined person" and believes her daughter's focus, drive, and academic intensity are driven by her dreams and aspirations for the future.

Since her freshman year in high school, Alexis envisioned herself working in a job that supports the community in which she was raised. Initially, she imagined a career in law enforcement, but after taking some law classes in high school she pictured herself as a lawyer. This dream remained constant until her senior year in high school when she began thinking about a career in criminal justice. Her career/vocational image became more focused after taking a college criminal justice course from a female professor who was a former parole officer. Alexis then saw herself as a community parole officer, specifically helping former prisoners reintegrate into the community.

With her dream of becoming a community parole officer firmly rooted in her mind, she is motivated and driven to attain a high GPA at Rutgers. She reasons that graduating college with a high GPA is essential if she is to break into the field of community corrections. She has her sights set on attaining a 3.9 GPA believing a high

GPA will cause potential employers to take notice of her. She also pursues courses and internships that position her for a career as a parole officer.

Alexis has planned her courses and credit load so that she graduates with a 5-year Master's degree in criminal justice. Simultaneously, she studied for and took tests to obtain an armed guard license and is presently receiving firearms training because she will need that to apply to the Police Academy. If she is to become a parole officer, she knows she needs to carry a gun and be proficient with it.

Thinking ahead**,** Alexis recognizes she must steer clear of situations that could blemish her record. She imagines herself sitting in an interview for the position of parole officer and being asked about her background. She wants to be able to say her record is clean. Because she has thought about this scenario, she and her small circle of supportive, like-minded friends do not attend parties or do anything that could get them into trouble. "All I do is work. That's what I do." She has a circle of ten supportive friends/peers who all grew up in Newark and Irvington. "We already knew the environment and we were like, nah, we're not going to let that determine where we're going to go. We all have the same work ethic. None of us are slackers."

Mrs. Carpenter. As previously mentioned, Alexis' mother is her most influential person. With only a high school education, she feels she cannot help Alexis with the content of her academic work but she can be her chief encourager. She continuously reminds Alexis and her younger brother that education and college is essential for a better quality life in the future. She attends every teacher conference and even met with Alexis' teachers when she was in high school. She has always made it a point to know the due dates of Alexis' assignments and tracks and monitors her work to make sure she gets

everything done on time. Chuckling a little, she said still does this now that Alexis is in college. She knows about Alexis' dream of becoming a parole officer and admits she did not have a hand in influencing this decision but she supports her daughter in whatever career she chooses. "She will be great at whatever she chooses."

Jasmine

Eighteen year-old Jasmine is an African American female who is in her first year at Rutgers University in Newark. She attained a 4.0 GPA at the completion of her first semester of college. Jasmine is a high academic achiever, ranking 13th in her high school graduating class at a comprehensive high school in Newark, New Jersey, where only 64.84 percent of the students graduate (NJ Department of Education, 2017).

Jasmine described her high school as a "jail" because "you have to go through the scanners" just to get into the school. She said it is a place where teachers invest their time and energy teaching students who want to learn and disregard the others because "who wants to waste time teaching people who do not want to learn." Despite the school's reputation as one of the worst performing schools in the State of New Jersey, Jasmine feels that she was able to progress educationally because she was committed to learning. Sensing her potential, Jasmine feels that her high school teachers helped her prepare for college-level work at Rutgers Newark, as did her participation in college readiness programs.

Jasmine grew up in Irvington with her mother and three siblings. When her mother died at the beginning of her freshman year in high school, she and her siblings moved to the Central Ward of Newark to live in an apartment in the projects with her grandmother. She described her new community as "very urban" with "a lot of

violence." However, there was a "mix of love and hate and corruption, all in one, mashed together. Like a family." Her father was not prominent in her life. Because there were thirteen people living in the two bedroom apartment, she and her siblings, two sisters, one older and one younger, and her twin brother moved into a Section 8 house with more bedroom space across the street from her grandmother. Even though she had an older sister, Jasmine, at the age of thirteen, was the one raising her siblings. She was considered "the rock" of the family.

Jasmine describes herself as a good, hard-working student who is intent on getting her homework done as soon as it is assigned as she is driven to beat expectations. During her first year at Rutgers, she majored in criminal justice but she recently switched to social work as it is more aligned with her career/vocational image of the future.

Since middle school Jasmine dreamed of opening a residential home for troubled, previously incarcerated adolescent girls or those who might possibly become incarcerated. She wants "to be engaged in the system of foster care empowering young girls." She described this dream as her "purpose in life." Unwavering, the image has remained firmly planted in her mind until the present.

From the age of seven or eight, she has envisioned being a social worker. She recalled a DYFS case worker visiting her home once to investigate the fitness of her mother. She recalled how the social worker was "so kind and nice" to her and answered all her questions. Since that day, Jasmine has thought about her and her occupation saying, "The image of that social worker never left my mind."

Jasmine's dream influences her drive to be academically successful in high school and in college. She views college as a necessary step in the direction of achieving her

goal of one day opening the group home. She selected the criminal justice major thinking that helping girls stay out of incarceration or juvenile detention would require that kind of specialized knowledge. However, her decision to switch to social work is grounded in the idea that the girls will need a multitude of support services that only a social worker can provide. She also is taking courses in nonprofit management, as that will be needed to run her home. Jasmine participates in off campus extracurricular activities in an effort to increase the skills she needs to successfully open and operate the girls' home. For example, she volunteers in the youth department of her church believing that working with children will prepare her for understanding young people.

Two remarkable women in her life, her mother before she died, and her mentor, a student counselor at Rutgers University Newark influenced Jasmine. While she was alive, Jasmine talked to her mom about everything, including her dreams and aspirations. She said her mother supported her "all the way." Her mother did not graduate from high school, dropping out during her senior year when she became pregnant. However, her mother "constantly pushed" her to make school her main focus and goal. She said her mother "drummed into her" and her siblings the idea of education as essential for a better future.

Ms. Spence. Jasmine identified her mentor, Ms. Spence, as the single most important person who has influenced her educational aspirations and progress. Ms. Spence works as a student counselor in the TRIO program at Rutgers University Newark. She described how Ms. Spence appeared in her life during her sophomore year after her mother died. From the beginning, Ms. Spence ingrained in Jasmine the idea that she was college material and encouraged her to participate in RU NEXT, a college readiness

program for high school students. With her encouragement, Jasmine began to see college in her future and with her help, Jasmine planned the necessary steps to achieve that goal, including participating in the HLLC program at Rutgers.

Ms. Spence and Jasmine have remained connected now that she is a student at Rutgers Newark. Above all, says Ms. Spence, "I think the most important thing for me to do is to continue mentoring her, to keep pushing her toward her dream, to help her see how special she is in beating the odds."

Jasmine's friends/peers have also influenced her educational progress. "Everyone I surround myself with encourages my dream." She has various circles of friends who support one another. She now has a Rutgers HLLC group of nine friends who study and socialize together, as well as a group of supportive friends from church and a best friend from high school. They all are students who do well and are striving to achieve their dreams. "I only associate with go-getters; I can't surround myself with people who aren't on the same mindset as me."

Ms. Spence. As previously mentioned, Jasmine's most influential person is Ms. Spence, who was a counselor with the RU NEXT program. Since disbanded, it was a program that identified incoming high school students with the potential to attend college. Ms. Spence viewed Jasmine as a "diamond in the rough". With her encouragement, Jasmine participated in the many college readiness and leadership development activities. RU NEXT was replaced with a similarly purposed program called TRIO, and through the new program, Ms. Spence has continued to help Jasmine navigate her way into Rutgers Newark as an HLLC student.

Caleb

Caleb is a 21-year old senior business major at Rutgers University Newark. He graduated

seventh in a class at a comprehensive high school in Newark, where less than two-thirds

of the students complete high school. With a grade point average over 3.0, he has

continued his academic success as a college student.

While growing up, Caleb, his older sister, and his mother moved eleven times,

trying to find less expensive rents or better schools. Though their moves were

predominately within the South Ward's Weequahic and Shabazz sections, he also moved

to and from Montclair, Bloomfield, and Somerville. As a result of the frequent moves,

Caleb had to get acquainted with the customs, teachers, and students at each new school.

He noted with some amusement that Rutgers is the first school that he has attended

"longer than two years." Despite the transitory nature of his life, he said his home life

was "pretty peaceful" and despite his neighborhood being unsafe, he described it as "very

homey, very familiar."

Caleb described himself as a leader in school and thinks other students might also

think of him that way as well. From an early age, he said he has had a "real lust for

learning." From elementary school through high school he always showed interest and

did well on tests without having to do much studying and homework. He said he figured

out that approach did not work in college and had to learn how to study and prepare for

classes. Contrasting his academic work habits in high school and college, Caleb said he

"knows how to study now" by learning from his college friends. "I just copied how they

studied and I learned how to study with others rather than by myself." He also

acknowledged that he is more mature now, and isn't afraid to ask questions in class. After

receiving an "F" on an accounting exam, Caleb began using tutors to help him.   He takes advantage of tutorial assistance whenever he feels he needs to do better.

Given his background of moving so frequently, changing schools and his low-income status, Caleb envisions and desires a stable family life and economic security. He envisions himself providing an economically secure future for the family he hopes to have. He said, "Stability means everything to me."

He imagines securing economic stability by obtaining a business degree from Rutgers and being employed at Public Service Electric and Gas (PSE&G) in Newark, where he hopes to work in accounting. However, after becoming economically secure working in business, he envisions one day being a teacher and eventually principal of the public high school from which he graduated. He literally views a career in business as a key stepping stone for achieving his ultimate dream of working in education and improving the lives of Newark's children.

After graduating from high school, he stayed in communication with the principal. "He gives me gems of advice and guidance and even advises me about how to pursue the principal thing." To position himself for eventually becoming a high school principal, Caleb interns with the Future Project working with students at his alma mater.

Caleb stated that there is a "direct correlation" between his aspirations for the future and his academic drive and discipline. He wants the quality of his work to reflect where he wants to be. He emphasized that being academically focused and disciplined is important to his success and the attainment of his dreams and influences "how hard I work."

Caleb always knew that he was going to college. Both his mother and sister graduated from Rutgers Newark and there was no question that he, too, would attend college. His mother stressed the importance of education and doing well academically by pointing out how well his sister was doing in school. He also stated that for him, college was important because his mother told him that at age 18 he would be out of the house. "Because I didn't want to be homeless, I knew I had to focus on my education. That's probably the biggest motivation."

Caleb believes that his aspiration for stability and financial security emanates from his "life experience." He stated: "I knew what I wanted and what I didn't want. I didn't like moving so I figured I needed to find a way to a life of stability." As far as career aspirations, he talked about his participation in the Future Project during his senior year of high school. A counselor with the Newark branch of the Future Project "opened my eyes to alternatives." Caleb stated he learned a great deal from his mentor at the Future Project. "I look to him and people like him as a reference for what I want to achieve."

` Caleb noted how he "continuously thinks" about the mentor's words of encouragement, especially his admonition to anticipate obstacles and plan how to overcome them. He said that he thinks about potential obstacles "all the time" and how he will deal with them by thinking of everything "like a chess match…. so every day life is 'how am I going to do this, this is what I want, how am I going to get it, to get through, how am I going to go about it?' It is all about getting over it one way or another."

Caleb said his academic focus and intensity "heavily impacts" his social life, choosing to hang out with friends who have the same values and future-oriented goals:

"In everything I do, I want to reflect where I wish to be in my future. It even applies to how I hang out with friends and those I choose to hang out with." If it's not going to help him get to where he wants to be, he won't cut them off, but said he "reduces how much time I spend with them because I have other goals." He noted that while he and his friends like to have fun, most of their time together is centered on supporting each other academically.

He also believes that for some students who do not succeed academically, they "don't really see education as worth it or worthy. They don't really see what it can do for them." He noted these students typically "fall by the wayside." However, he said, "With a belief in education, people tend to be more successful. He concluded, "Because I see and accept the value of education, I use it so I can flourish in the real world."

Dr. Clinton. Caleb's identified his 35-year old high school principal as the person who most influenced his educational aspirations and progress. Presently, he is the CEO of a charter school in Paterson, New Jersey. He is also the involved with the Future Project. The Future Project is a national organization that works with inner city schools and students to "unlock the limitless possibility for every young person in this country." He stated, "The Future Project constantly reinforces for the student their positive image of the future and seeks to develop in the student the tools needed to execute their vision of the future."

Dr. Clinton described Caleb as "quiet, curious, outgoing and a smart individual." In high school, he marveled that Caleb was one of those students who was "really good academically" and who also performed very well in multiple sports. Dr. Clinton also noted that Caleb had the "drive and wherewithal to persevere through failure." Caleb was

always focused on how to be a better student. Even when he encountered a setback, he used his "solution-focused perspective" to learn how to be better the next time.

Dr. Clinton noted that Caleb had a "really strong support system" with adults in his life, who stressed the value and importance of education and college. In particular, he pointed out that Caleb's mother and aunt are a significant part of his support system as they both pushed him to do well in school and emphasized that doing well in school will lead to a "better future."

Dr. Clinton acknowledged his own role in supporting Caleb's educational progress recalling that he immediately saw that he had talent. "Once I saw his potential, I wanted to ensure he was challenged." He made sure Caleb's guidance counselor placed him in "more challenging and rigorous classes with high quality teachers" and also made sure Caleb received special tutoring services as needed. Most importantly and significantly, Dr. Clinton pushed Caleb to think about going to college upon graduation from high school, as he "knew right away" that Caleb was "destined for college."

Dr. Clinton affirmed that one of the reasons Caleb is so accomplished academically is because he is able to withstand peer pressure noting that peers are more influential than we imagine. He observed that Caleb chose peers who had the same "mindset" as he did, and stayed "away from the drama of everything else and remained focused on academics." From his experience working with inner city students, he noted that negative students pull students away from a positive direction. Teachers and other supportive adults provided Caleb with a "layer of protection" in "shielding" him from the "negativity that is present."

Alejandro

Alejandro is a Hispanic 20 year-old second year student at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, who achieved a 3.4 GPA at the end of his first year. He was previously interviewed as the person who most influenced Sofia's educational aspirations and progress. Like Sofia, he qualified for Free and Reduced Lunch and graduated from a magnet high school in Newark, New Jersey, ranking eleventh in his graduating class.

He stated that he lived in the projects in Newark's South Ward until the eighth grade when he, his mother and sister moved into a Newark Housing Authority townhouse a few blocks away. He stated that the South Ward neighborhood he grew up in was "dangerous with a lot of gang and non-gang violence." Despite the violence, Alejandro noted that he eventually became acclimated to the environment saying, "it was just what it was. So it was just kind of like something we all got used to."

Alejandro's biological mother was a prostitute who was addicted to drugs. He was born three months premature and addicted to heroin. As a result, the woman who adopted his older biological sister also adopted him. He grew up with his adoptive mother and his sister; he has had no contact with his biological mother. He noted that his adoptive mother who never graduated from elementary school is from Puerto Rico. His sister is two years older and attends a private college in northern New Jersey.

He said that his mother was very protective and restrictive of him and his sister given the dangerous and violent condition of the neighborhood. He recalled how his mother would not let him or his sister play outside. "So it was go to school, come home, go to school, come home, go to school, and come home. That's what it was."

Alejandro stated that he "loved" his high school because the "environment" and the "teachers" were "great." In high school he was involved in many extracurricular

activities, which, he believes, "molded" his experience and served as a "stepping stone"

to college admission. He described himself as a "dedicated, focused, and very

intrinsically motivated" student and believes that his friends and the teachers he has had

would say the same. He added that he is an "over-achiever and goal-driven." Alejandro

attributed much of his academic success to the "people in his life, who did not give up on

me." He recalled teachers he had from elementary school through high school, who

supported and affirmed him. As early as elementary school, there were teachers who

pulled him aside to praise his academic work. "Once you receive that kind of

acknowledgement and affirmation, you believe you can keep doing it."

As Alejandro was attaining good grades, he also joined school activities and

clubs. He noted that he was continually developing a supportive network of friends and

teachers. He continued this formula through high school and into college. As a student at

Rutgers University, he continues to expand his network. He has used his network in

getting into and involved with the honors program, becoming resident assistant in one of

the dormitories, and doing a "multitude of things."

The seed of attending college was planted when he was in the fourth grade. After

taking the NJASK test, he and his mother were invited to meet with his teacher, who said,

"If Alejandro keeps going on the track that he's going, he's going to end up somewhere

like Rutgers University in New Brunswick." From that day forward his mother

continually reminded him, "Remember what your teacher said – you are going to

college." He said, "With those words, my teacher's and my mother's, I realized I was on

a path to college."

From that day forward, Alejandro noted he thought about going to college and specifically what schools he wanted to attend. In the seventh grade, he was invited to participate in the Rutgers Future Scholars program. From the eighth grade through the eleventh grade, thinking about various potential colleges was his "obsession" as he envisioned multiple alternatives. He applied to various schools but eventually decided to attend Rutgers New Brunswick. He said that from the sixth grade until today he plans everything from the colleges he wanted to attend to the scholarship and funding supports he needed to attend college. He stated, "I plan for everything."

Alejandro has a clear vision about his future. He wants to work in urban education, and specifically a high school teacher in the Newark Public School System. "I always wanted to be a teacher. I remember as far as maybe 2nd or 3rd grade – that I wanted to be a teacher." As he got older and moved through the grades, he began to think more concretely about a career in teaching. During his freshman year in high school, he thought about being an English teacher. However, during the summer following the tenth grade, he took an advanced summer history course. He said that it was a "very intensive" course delivered in a shortened summer time period. That course helped him see that he wanted to be a social studies/history teacher with a concentration in social justice education.

He stated that he had several teachers in high school who reinforced his vision of becoming a teacher recalling how his favorite teacher said, 'oh, you need to be a teacher, I know you're going to be a teacher.' He also noted that a "bunch of his other high school teachers knew I wanted to be a teacher" and they also encouraged him, which he said he found "motivating."

As a college student, he believes his dream for the future influences his course selection decisions. He also evaluates everything he does academically in terms of what it "means for his future" or "what role the action or behavior plays in my plan." He recalled how he thought he might fail a particular course. "I knew if I get an "F", this means that I won't be able to do X, Y, and Z, which means I won't be able to do X, Y and Z, which means I won't be able to do such or such." As a result of this mental calculation, he took corrective action and attained an "A." He said, "I focused on the end point and thought about what an "F" means for me and my future. I used that renewed focus to study for the mid-term."

Alejandro remains connected with the Rutgers Future Scholars program working with the group to develop a mentorship program for students. He serves as a mentor for the EOF program and this past summer he worked with 100 incoming first year students on leadership development and training. He views his roles as a mentor and a resident assistant as part of his skill development in being an effective teacher some day. He reflected, "Everything I do is tailored to future needs and my anticipated future responsibilities. If I really want to be a teacher, if I really want to work in education, I need to do these things now."

Alejandro sees the value of education as the key to his future success. "Education has become my entire life. I believe in education." He said that his mother, who can barely read or write, stressed the importance of education constantly saying, "'Oh you have to go to school' because to do good in school means that you will get a good job and to get a good job means money. And money means no more poor." While his mother could not help him with his homework or academic content, she did assume the important

role of pushing the value and importance education and working hard. He pushes himself to do well academically to " "Repay her in some way for giving me this opportunity of life."

Alejandro stated that his close circles of friends definitely influence and reinforce the importance and value of education as a pathway to the future. "We talk about our futures, our education; we have conversations with each other. We challenge each other to strive for what we have laid out before us." He surrounds himself with "people who are like-minded people who are as academically focused as I am, who have these long-term goals; we all think that way."

Isabella. Alejandro identified his older sister as the person who has most influenced and supported his educational aspirations and progress. She is two years older and is presently in her fifth year at a northern New Jersey college. She also described their neighborhood as "very dangerous" and said their mother would not let them outside driving them to school, picking them up from school, and bringing them home, only to do the same routine every day. "When I look back, I think that was some serious sheltering."

She describes her brother as a "driven, engaged" student. She says that he stands out academically by the "way he speaks and interacts with people." She also stated that he "always seems to just go head-first into academics taking advantage of every opportunity that comes his way. He just rolls with it."

She and her brother talk all the time about the future. "I support and encourage him in whatever he want to do in the future but I always asked him questions so he thinks about the steps and things he needs to do to achieve his dreams." She is well aware of his current aspiration to teach social justice history in an urban high school and remarked,

"He will be an awesome teacher." Alejandro came to her for academic advice because "he really could not go to my mom for help as she did not have any education." She said, "If he needed help, I would help him. I wanted to always be that support for him and make sure that whatever career he wanted, he could do it. I always said, "nothing is impossible for you; you can do it."

Even though their mother could not help them academically, because she could "barely read and write" she did support, encourage, and "push" both of them to do well in school. My mother was "all about education, education, education." She said, even though her mother was not educated, "she knew how important education was for our future and she believed that it would bring us both prestige, money, and a better life. She knew it was the way out of poverty."

Alanza

Alanza is a nineteen year-old Latina who graduated 6th in her class at a magnet high school in Newark, New Jersey. At age five, she immigrated to the United States from Brazil with her parents. She is a second year student at Rutgers University in New Brunswick majoring in business accounting, and earned a 3.88 GPA at the end of her freshman year. Alanza attends Rutgers for free having secured an Honors College scholarship, as well as funding from the Rutgers Future Scholars program. She was granted U.S. citizenship in January 2018. Describing herself as a "fast learner" and a "pretty determined, passionate, dedicated student," she said her friends might call her "a nerd" for "liking the things that I do, like accounting."

Upon arrival in the United States, her family settled in the Ironbound neighborhood of Newark. They came to America to secure employment, make some

money, and then return to Brazil but after awhile they decided to stay in Newark. She said they adapted to Newark and "could not see ourselves going back to Brazil." Noting they were not "financially secure" as a family, her parents divorced when she was twelve. She continued to live with her father in the Ironbound, while her mother relocated to Connecticut. When she began high school, she and her father moved to less expensive housing in Elizabeth. However, because education was important to her and her father, she retained her Godmother's address in the Ironbound so she could continue attending her magnet high school.

Alanza described the Ironbound as a very safe neighborhood and "a very tight knit, Portuguese, Hispanic, Brazilian community within Newark." However, when she and her father moved to Elizabeth her freshman year of high school, she did not feel as safe in her new neighborhood. "We live there for the low cost of living."

Alanza attended kindergarten, elementary and middle school while she lived in the Ironbound. She attended Ann Street Elementary School, which she noted is a "nationally recognized Blue Ribbon school." Though she already knew the alphabet when she emigrated from Brazil, she had "to relearn everything here in America." She believes that she had a "good foundation" coming from Brazil but "at Ann Street they really cracked down and made sure I understood what I was doing." It was there that she learned to speak and write English in the school's ESL and after school programs.

With respect to her education at the magnet school, she described the teachers there as having zero tolerance for nonsense in the classroom. "The teachers believed you were there to learn; that is your purpose. The teachers did everything they could to make

sure you were learning." She also mused, "I feel like I had a harder time in high school than I do in college. I feel like I was pushed more at the magnet school."

Alanza stated that her parents put a lot of emphasis on education as the means to a better, more financially secure future. "They always told me that I had to do good in school," noting that she "really didn't have a choice." She surmised it was the immigrant mindset: "we worked so hard to get here; now you have to do something with yourself. You can't just slide by." Laughing, she recalled how her parents would stress the importance of education with the "threat" of sending her back to Brazil if she did not do well in school. "It was a big motivator even though I knew they would never do it but there was always that chance that they might."

Her father was very clear about going to school and attending college eventually. He "just knew that I would go to college." Although it was expected, she wondered how she could afford it if she was undocumented. Once she reached high school, however, "it was never really a question about whether or not I was going to go to college."

Alanza placed emphasis on education because she recognized the struggle her parents went through to immigrate to the United States. Given what they went through, she said, "I didn't have a choice but to be successful. I wanted to be successful." Alanza also highly values education after observing her cousins in Brazil and how they live. She said they are married with kids living paycheck to paycheck. "That's not what I want. That's just not the life I imagine for myself."

The two people in her life who most support her educational dreams and aspirations are her father and her boyfriend. "They're very supportive of whatever path I decide and they push me." Despite her father's inability to support her academically,

Alanza states her father is her biggest supporter. He told her that she did not have to do any cleaning or household chores; her only priority was education and only focus was doing homework and doing well in school. He provided for everything else saying, "I don't care if you don't do anything at home, as long as you bring home an A."

She receives academic support from her boyfriend, who also graduated near the top of his class from the magnet school and attends Rutgers majoring in mechanical engineering. "He understands exactly what I'm going through because he is going through it as well." She noted that they do homework together and test each other in preparation for exams and projects.

Alanza also has a cadre of friends who support her educational progress, although she likes to study on her own. When she entered Rutgers University, she was part of a program called B-Star or Business Students Transitioning at Rutgers. For nine weeks during the summer before her first semester she got to meet other students intending to enter the business school. The students who participated in the program created a "network of support" helping each other when they struggle.

Watching Brazilian soap operas when she was eight or nine years old, Alanza enjoyed seeing people in the stories "with degrees, who had an education, and were able to own things." She recalled thinking that she wanted to be able to "support her family, travel to far-away places and learn about different cultures." Both of her parents pushed college. Her mother did not have an education past high school and her father had some college education but never completed. However both parents knew "that the only way to have a future here in the United States was to have an education." So they always pushed her to get a college degree.

As a young child, she wanted to be a teacher but that faded when she became interested in a career in law. During high school, she was involved with the Newark Youth Court at Newark City Hall, a program that helped students prepare for a career in law and public service. Realizing she did not want to do this for the "rest of her life," she started focusing on her strength, which was mathematics. Thinking that a career in business would enable her to attain the economic security, she dreamed of doing accounting work. She likes "the nitty-gritty details of accounting" and is pursuing a business accounting degree in the Rutgers New Brunswick School of Business.

In pursuit of her dream she secured an externship with Johnson and Johnson across the street from the college. She is also planning to participate in a "co-op" program at Johnson and Johnson, in which she works six months, while still in school. "In my head, I see myself working at a place like Johnson and Johnson." There she can rotate jobs every few years and live in new places around the United States and world. "That's exciting to me, traveling like I saw in the soap operas when I was younger." She believes internships and externships with Johnson and Johnson will enable her to "get a foot in the door" for a future position. She is also gaining valuable business experience working part-time in the accounting department of a Newark-based company.

Her dream of working in business is mostly driven by her desire for the financial security her parents did not have. Her dream requires that she stay focused academically: "My vision really pushes me because I know that it is really competitive in securing a good job or a position at Johnson and Johnson." She knows the "penalty" for not achieving a high GPA - not achieving the future she dreams about. She also said her dad

raised her to be very independent. "I don't like to depend on others. I need to know that I can support myself with whatever life throws at me."

Alanza credits the Rutgers Future Scholars for helping her envision and get into college. She appreciates that the program pays the "gap" between her scholarship and the full cost of tuition and that "they guaranteed the money even when she was undocumented." She said that she remains in contact with her mentors at Rutgers Future Scholars, as "these relationships are important to me."

She has also determined that as an accounting major wishing "to make more money," she needs a CPA. She has carefully and deliberately planned the steps she needs to take to obtain a CPA license. Needing another 70 credits during her last two years of college, she noted that she'll "need to take summer and winter classes and an 18-credit schedule at one point. So I'm already planning for that because I want a CPA."

Alanza said that she did not "really go out much in high school. I was always mostly at home, studying, doing what I needed to do." She also had a job while in high school and therefore, "did not have much free time during the weekdays." On the weekends she prioritized homework, projects, and exams and tended to do homework "rather than going out with my family, which looking back I realized that maybe I should have gone out more and enjoyed more time with them."

Her big plan after finishing college is to secure financial stability so that she can buy a home with her father noting, "he has been supporting me for 20 years and so it's time that I gives back to him."

Diego. Alanza identified her boyfriend as the person in her life who has most influenced her educational aspirations and progress. He is a second year Rutgers New

Brunswick student, and attained a 3.08 GPA at the conclusion of his first year. He has known Alanza for six years, attending high school with her even though they were not dating then. Graduating with a class ranking of #14, he is Hispanic of Puerto Rican and Honduran descent.

He stated the magnet high school he and Alanza attended was "geared to preparing you for college." He said they learned how to study and approach academic work. He noted that their teachers routinely suggested helpful study habit techniques.

He described Alanza as a "stubborn" student but qualified that with, "stubborn in a good way." He said she really gives her all to her education. "She does not slack off one bit" and he noted her academic intensity is very "motivating to others" and whoever "surrounds themselves with her, succeeds as well." He believes that being around her has helped him academically, especially after his first semester, which he described as "rough." He said he has been doing a lot better, "significantly better," because of her and he called her "a good model."

Diego believes that her "morals" and the "way she grew up" contributed to her academic focus and success. He observed, "a lot of people put limitations on you because you are from Newark." Combined with the challenge of growing up poor, he thinks that motivated Alanza to not only become better but to propel herself forward in life as she does not want to go through the struggles her family went through.

He envisions that Alanza will be anything she imagines for herself in the future. He stated that she "works hard" for what she wants "dedicating herself 100 percent to achieve it." He said she takes concrete steps in the direction of making her dreams come true noting that they are like "stepping stones along the path."

Additionally, he said her focus on education comes from her father, who has said to both of them: "You do not want to do what I do. You don't want to work how I work, so just put your mind to something and go for it. Get good grades, concentrate on your studies, and do not end up working from 5am to 10 pm outside in the cold, rain, and snow."

Valeria

Valeria is an eighteen year-old Latina who emigrated with her parents from the Dominican Republic just as she was entering her freshman year in high school to the South Ward of Newark, NJ. Two years later, they moved to the Ironbound section of the city, though she continued attending a comprehensive high school in a different ward because of its English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) program. Despite knowing no English when she first entered high school, she graduated ranked #1 in her class, a significant accomplishment given her high school's low 61.21 percent graduation rate. Presently, Valeria attends her "first school of choice," Rutgers University Newark. She earned a 3.5 GPA at the conclusion of her first semester.

Valeria is an only child. Upon initially coming to America, she and her parents resided in Long Island where she was bullied for not knowing any English. She recalled being "sad" because she was bullied and because her mother could not find a job. They moved to Brooklyn but her mother was still unemployed and Valeria continued to be bullied. She said they "were disappointed in America and wanted to leave," and given her mother's inability to find work and the bullying she experienced, they decided to go back to the Dominican Republic. After spending a year back in the Dominican Republic, she and her mother returned to America when her parents separated.

She and her mother settled in Newark's South Ward living with an uncle. Because Valeria did not speak English, she was placed in a Newark comprehensive high school with an ESL program. Her mother found a job working in a factory and after two years they moved by themselves to the Ironbound. She noted that living in the Ironbound was safe in contrast to how dangerous it was in the South Ward.

Valeria recalled that she was originally afraid of attending her comprehensive high school because "a lot of people called it a horrible school as students were always fighting and getting hurt there. It was considered the worst of the worst." She noted that while the school was "chaotic," she felt her teachers and counselors supported her. As she became more involved she came to understand that "many of the problems in the school were not the result of students but the administration." Valeria said that most of her teachers were "good" although "every once in awhile, students had teachers that nobody liked." However, she stated that she liked "every one of her teachers" and has kept in contact with five of them since graduation. She also said the school's principals were supportive of her.

Valeria said she is a "competitive student" indicating she likes to be seen by others as "number #1." She has had this mentality from her earlier school years in the Dominican Republic. However, since her junior year in high school, she has tried to be not as competitive. "I didn't have to cry if I got a 95." She said fellow students would probably describe her as an "over-achiever" and indicated that she strives to over-achieve because "more doors open for you when you excel academically."

It was her high school counselors who got her thinking about the possibility of going to college. They noticed her good grades at the end of her freshman year and that

she was one of the top three students in the class. Though they encouraged her to participate in summer college readiness programs, she resisted. However, following her freshman year, one of her counselors insisted that she participate in the Youth Media Symposium saying, "'you are going and that's that.' The program exposed her to Rutgers University's Newark campus and afforded her the opportunity to meet other students and people connected with the university. She knew then she wanted to attend Rutgers Newark. When she was accepted into the Honors Living Learning Community at Rutgers with its free room and board, she accepted the offer even though she had acceptance letters from a number of other New Jersey colleges. "They were all backups. Rutgers was my #1 choice," she said.

As a young child growing up in the Dominican Republic, she dreamed about one day becoming a veterinarian. Although she did not have siblings growing up, she shared that she had "animals all the time." She noted that her mother wanted to pursue a veterinary degree in college but that ended when she married. "I wanted to take up the torch and continue." However, when Valeria reached tenth grade, she became interested in biology more generally. She now sees herself as a research biologist in the future, although she unsure of the specific aspect of biology she will pursue.

At eighteen, she knows that her interests are varied. For example, she said, "I love art and like to draw. I don't think I will major in art but maybe I will minor in it because I can imagine myself doing it when I am older." Valeria said she will "probably be involved in science with art on the side." She thinks about the future and what she might do in the field of biology and is seeking help from Rutgers Career Development Center to narrow her focus.

In addition to a career that appeals to her, she also dreams about one day owning a house, having a family and being financially secure. She also wants to buy a place for her mom "because her factory work is horrible living paycheck to paycheck." She knows she doesn't want to live like that and she doesn't want her mother to live like that either.

Valeria attributes her academic success to her dream of living a better life. "After seeing things around you going wrong, you have to decide you don't want to be a part of that in the future. You have to see that you are bettering yourself." She mused, "I think how my mom went to college but didn't finish. And I think how our life would be different if she had gotten that degree and had it in her hands right now."

She also has thought about the fact that "a lot of women in my family finish high school but don't attend college." She sees them getting married, having children, and being housewives. She does not have a problem with that but she does object to their dependency on somebody else. "What if the circumstances of their lives change? Their husbands are bad, alcoholic, or something that? They can't just say, 'you know what, I'm done. Bye.' They have to stay because they just don't have a job. They don't have money to leave. When you're educated you have options." She stated further, "If I want to leave, I will leave. I want to have enough money that I can do whatever I want. I'm not going to be controlled by anyone, living all unhappy." She sees education as a way to be financially secure and independent in the way she lives her life. "I am not going to end up in a situation that is beyond my control."

Valeria believes that if you want to do well in life, you cannot be slacking in school. "There's a lot of competition out there and if you are not the best you can be, then you're not going to get the best that's out there. You have to put the work into what you

are doing." She said this perspective drives her academic performance. For her, working hard extends to education. She said education is essential for future success: "The more education you have, the more it will open doors for you."

Valeria said her mother is her greatest and biggest supporter of her education, recalling she was the one person in her life who constantly checked her progress in school. She noted A's were expected. "If I brought home a grade that was not too good, she would ask what happened? And even if I said, 'oh my God, it was the hardest test in my life,' she was still going to ask what happened." Her mother always made sure she completed her homework and checked her notebooks "to make sure I was not slacking in school."

She also knows that her future depends on what she does right now in terms of doing well academically and securing meaningful summer work and internships that "align with my future dreams." People tell her that those types of internships can come later, but she said, "No it can't wait. Working at Burger King is not going to help my future." In searching for the right opportunity, she is not shy about asking for help and has sought assistance from the Career Development Center to find internships related to her biology major.

Valeria described the quality of her academic work as a "building block to where I'm going" and she's not afraid to use a math tutor twice a week if necessary. If she is "not good at something she just keeps polishing it up. I can't be mad at myself for failing a test. I just figure out how to do better next time. You grow from the experience."

When asked how her academic intensity influences her social life, she responded, "What social life? I've got none." She admits that she does make choices not to attend

parties or hang out with friends if she has academic work to do. She prioritizes academics over everything else. She noted that her roommates, boyfriend, and cousins are a support network but that she likes to study alone, stating that the only time she studies with others is when she needs help with something.

Ms. Silva. Valeria identified her high school guidance counselor as the person who most influenced her educational aspirations and supported her progress. Ms. Silva has been employed by the Newark Public Schools for twenty-one years, primarily as a teacher and five years as a guidance counselor. She is presently the Bilingual Assessment Coordinator at the comprehensive high school Valeria attended. Despite entering ninth grade not knowing any English, Ms. Silva said Valeria "picked up the language so fast that she was placed in English classes, and in her junior year tested out of bilingual education all together."

She stated that Valeria was "very committed to her work, had a vision of where she wanted to go, and was open to possibilities for her future." Highlighting Valeria's resiliency, she noted that Valeria used two bus transfers to get to and from school everyday. She also acknowledged that her family is very supportive of her and her educational pursuits, and shared a story about how her mother accompanied her to school to teach her how to use public transportation. "Her mother showed her what to do and that kind of support is immeasurable." Ms. Silva noted that Valeria's family, her mother, father (even though he does not live with them) and her cousins, all support her educational pursuits. She said the family values education and with that emphasis, "I think it becomes easier for the student to see where she wants to go."

Ms. Silva sees her role as helping Valeria progress to the next level academically and educationally. She linked her to college readiness programs and resources, strongly encouraging her to attend the Abbott Learning Institute's summer program at Rutgers Newark. Though Valeria was nervous about attending the program, Ms. Silva said her "resilience and her openness to possibilities" allowed her to believe that she could do it, which is "something that many other students do not have." A lot of students would say "I can't" but Valeria always says, "I can do it and that attitude means everything."

Ms. Silva always pictured Valeria as a doctor because "she knows how to study and sticks to what needs to be done." She noted her caring nature toward people and always wanting to do things that help or benefit others. She still sees the student as a doctor but more in the field of research, perhaps as a biological research scientist.

Mateo

Mateo is eighteen years old and was ranked #1 in his graduating class at a comprehensive high school in Newark, New Jersey. He is presently a first year student at Rutgers University Newark attaining a 3.625 GPA at the conclusion of his first semester and secured a scholarship that covers the full cost of his tuition.

He now lives in Newark's West Ward with his mother and father and three sisters. Mateo's family moved approximately eight times during elementary and middle school, each time requiring him to transition into a new school as his father searched for job opportunities. When Mateo began high school, his family settled into their present apartment in the West Ward.

He has one sister who is two years older and who did not graduate from high school due to mental health issues. When his mother is working, Mateo makes sure his

sister is okay and takes her medications. He has two younger sisters, one in the tenth

grade at a magnet school and the other in the ninth grade at different magnet school. He

said his mother and father "work a lot" in the same warehouse in Newark. Although his

mother graduated from high school, his father has an eighth grade education.

Mateo described his neighborhood as safe as he and his family live near a police

precinct station. He noted, however, that he and is family also live next door to a club,

which means "there are a lot of drunk and loud people late at night." He said he has

learned to sleep through the noise and has become adjusted to it.

He described his high school experience as a "roller coaster ride". When he first

arrived at the school, he said "there were a lot of riots," and lots of staff turnover,

including three principals in three years. Things calmed down when the district brought

in a new principal who stabilized the school.

Mateo "loved" his teachers and reported, "They taught me a lot; not just the

subject matter but about life too." He could "always go to his teachers and talk to them

when he needed somebody to talk to. They were really open." The most positive

influence on his educational aspirations and progress was his track coach who was also

his health and physical education teacher. "Coach really put life in perspective for me. He

taught me a lot of things."

Mateo described himself as an "adaptable" student, one who "knows how to get

out of my comfort zone." He said that he is also a "motivated" student, noting that he ran

track in high school and still managed to get good grades and graduate #1 in his class.

He credits his academic success to "a lot of hard work" and the desire in wanting something better for his life. He noticed that his mom and dad worked very hard every day trying to provide for the family, yet they still struggled, living paycheck to paycheck. He said that was not what he wanted: "I don't want to just survive; I want to thrive. I want to do better. I want to give them better. And I also want to show my little sisters that they can do better."

At eight years old Mateo dreamed of being a firefighter. His family was living in Pennsylvania near a firehouse, and he remembers seeing the firefighters outside cleaning their gear and trucks. "They were always nice to us and would provide cold drinks for the kids. I really wanted to be a firefighter." He doesn't know what happened, but he changed his mind as he got older thinking that he would go into the rescue business. As he began high school, though, he envisioned being a lawyer, a prosecutor and eventually a judge. "I thought I would make good money doing this work." During his senior year in high school, he shifted his vision once again when he decided to pursue a career in health as a pediatric doctor. This too shifted to his present interest in becoming a nurse.

His track coach who also taught health got him thinking about a career in nursing. He noted that Coach connected him one of the teachers at the school, who left teaching to pursue a nursing degree and then came back to teach at the high school. "I talked to him and became interested in the profession." He likes the idea of interacting with and helping people; making them better. After becoming a registered nurse in critical care, he would eventually like to be a certified nurse anesthetist.

With the vision of becoming a critical care nurse, Mateo said that he is "focused more than ever" on his academic work. "I may run into obstacles but I will stay focused

and plan my way around them." Because he cannot afford college without his scholarship money, he needs to keep his grades up. Mateo views education as a "tool" in his drive towards the future he has in mind. He remembered it was his English teacher who first talked to him about college. She told him "it would put him in a place where you will have a career; not a job." He also noted that during his senior year, the vice principal pushed him a lot about going to college, helping him with college applications, including the essays. He also shared that Coach played a big role in "pushing" him toward college.

Mateo said his mom and dad were always his biggest supporters about education. Even though they did not have an education beyond the eighth grade and high school, they constantly told him "to keep his grades up." They said "B's" were not acceptable and if he got one they would tell him he had to improve. He recalled a conversation with his mother at age thirteen: "Don't be like me; don't be like us; don't be stuck in this day-to-day thing trying to survive." He realized then that he wanted to get his family out of constant economic struggle.

Mateo knows that he needs to take concrete steps to achieve his dream of being a nurse and helping his family, economically. In addition to his academic focus, he networks and "talks to a lot of different people to acquire more knowledge." Coach has told him, "You're a student in life, you're always learning."

He said he as a few friends who "push me to stay focused on my academic goals." They support one another and push each other to get their academic work done. He and his friends socialize by going to park to play basketball, run, go for a drive, or go out to eat. "We just chill and talk," but he said, "we always do our homework first." Mateo has

had to make some hard choices to achieve his dream and vision for the future, including

cutting some people out of his life who didn't have the goals or see education as a main

focus to achieve their dreams. "I need to be with people who are doing better than me, so

I can better myself."

      Coach Williams. Mateo's most influential person is his high school track coach

and health teacher, Coach Williams. Coach has an Associate in Science Degree in Health

and Physical Education from Essex County College, and a Bachelor's Degree and

Master's Degree from Montclair State University in Health and Physical Education and

Educational Leadership. Beginning in 2004, he taught health and physical education and

coached the track team at a magnet school in Newark until the track program was

discontinued in 2015. From 2015 to 2017, he taught health and physical education and

coached the combined track team at Mateo's high school. Laid off at the end of the 2016-

2017 school year, Coach has been working to secure the certifications he needs to open

his own urban charter school.

      Coach said his relationship with Mateo is as "coach, teacher, and mentor." He

stated that the student is "different," indicating that he believes "there's a lot of challenge

that's left in him." He said he did not think Mateo was challenged enough to reach his full

potential in high school but believes now that he is in college, he is "tapping into his

realistic potential."

      Though Mateo was raised in an "economically challenged household," Coach

Williams said he has "used it to his advantage by finding a way to make a positive out of

the negative in almost every situation." The Coach also observed that unfortunately,

many of Mateo's peers have not figured out how to do that. Coach also stated that Mateo

grew up in an urban environment and resides in an area in which there is a lot of poverty. "For youths like him, survival is number #1. Just getting from home to school safely, without being mistaken as a gang member or being mistaken as a thug because you put on a certain jacket or coat is part of everyday life." He noted that Mateo was able to navigate through this challenging environment. Coach shared that the student "literally watched" his peers come to school and "not go into the building. They just sat across the street out front on the step and hung out all day long." Mateo associated with friends who had similar dreams for the future and were academically oriented.

Coach also noted that Mateo understood and accepted the idea that education was the pathway to whatever he wanted in life and "clearly saw the link." Coach said he and his wife, who the student also talked to often, always emphasized the importance of education as the "key to the future."

In addition to maintaining focus on his academic work, Coach also talked to Mateo about his future. "I envisioned him owning his own business, his own company some day. I see him as the boss." Coach's vision is grounded in his "natural leadership ability" and he believes the sky is the limit pretty much of where Mateo will set his boundary.

Realizing Mateo was deeply interested in college, Coach did all that he could to provide information and help him navigate his way without making him "dependent on me" for achieving the dream. Coach said having a vision of the future is key to student success telling his student athletes, "You have to see yourself there before you get there." He used this motto to help them see the future and "run through the scenarios they will

encounter along the way" believing if you see them in advance, "you will know what to do when they pop-up."

Despite the "very chaotic" learning environment of the high school, Coach noted, Mateo had teachers who were "very supportive of him and his dreams. They made sure he progressed, and held his feet to the fire."

Diego

Diego is a 20 year-old Newark, New Jersey magnet high school graduate, now a second year student at Rutgers University in New Brunswick. He ranked #14 in his high school graduating class. For the first five years of his life, he lived in the city's North Ward. When his mother and father divorced, he, his younger sister, and mother moved to the Ironbound section, where they still reside. He is Hispanic of Puerto Rican/Honduran descent but considers himself Honduran, like his mother. He said he was born in the United States and is therefore a U.S. citizen; his mother became a citizen when he was 8 or 9 years old.

His mother moved him and his sister to the Ironbound so she could be closer to her work but also because it was a safer neighborhood. Diego said his family struggled economically but he never complained because he knew his mother worked hard to give her best to him and his sister everyday. He noted that the Ironbound section of the city was not only safer but had a better quality of life and better elementary and middle schools. The move from the North Ward provided them with a "change of scenery," away from his father's family. He said his mom just decided to "get away from the negativity of the neighborhood and the situation of our personal lives." Diego has not had any contact with his father since he was 12 years old.

Describing himself as an academically "focused, motivated and hard-working" student in high school who "did not settle for anything less than a 4.0," he was motivated to do well because he wanted to please his mom. "With all that she was going through, I did not want her to worry at all about me." His greatest motivation was doing well so he could get his mom out of the "constant economic struggle." He also noted that his mother "embedded" in him and his sister the importance of education as the way to achieve a better life.

Diego noted he was rattled when he attained only a 2.87 GPA at the end of his first semester at Rutgers New Brunswick. While he thought that he had developed good study habits in high school, they did not work so well in college. He said he had to develop and improvise new study habits. He also relied on the help of his girlfriend to get back on track academically. He corrected course and is now on track to attain a 3.75 GPA at the end of his second year.

Since the age of 8 or 9, Diego dreamed of being involved with cars and engineering. " For as long as I can remember, I have always wanted to be connected to the automotive engineering field making cars more economic and efficient." That vision never wavered through middle school, high school, and even now that he is in college majoring in mechanical engineering and specializing in automotive engineering. He selected computer science as his minor to complement his primary interest.

The seed for becoming an automotive engineer was planted when he was younger and closer to his father. His father was a self-taught mechanic, who "could fix anything." Diego recalled going out with his father at night picking through trash to find things he

could fix. He remembered his father saying, "I'm going to fix that" and guesses he "got that engineering eye from him."

Diego is also motivated to do well academically so he can achieve the kind of financial security that will enable him to take care of his mother saying, "Whatever she wants or needs, I'll be able to provide. I just know that she struggled so I just don't want her to struggle at all."

He has realized for a long time that education is absolutely essential for a career in automotive engineering or engineering in general. To be an engineer "you need a degree and you need to be certified. Education is my only route. I definitely know that education is the only route to my future." He also understands that he needs to secure internships and work opportunities to position himself for a career in automotive engineering. He is presently pursuing an internship with NASA and is investigating possible internships at Honeywell. Because he knows that most engineering designers work in teams, he secured an event staff job at the Rutgers New Brunswick Busch Student Center, noting that all the work there is done in teams. He is also in training to be a manager to hone his leadership skills.

He stated that he has a good support network around him with his mother and girlfriend. When he struggled his first semester at Rutgers, it was Alanza who helped him get back on track. "She was a very big eye-opener for me." He called her a "good role model because she is always prepared and she helped him "balance academics" with his social life telling him to "get your priorities straight."

Diego's main concentration right now is his course work. He gets enough of the social side from his co-workers at the student center. He and Alanza study together and

he likes to get his homework done during the week so he can go home on the weekend to visit his mother and sister. He said he is "very intense" and "focused" on his academic work to the point of "literally getting up and secluding myself when friends want to socialize instead of study. My academic work comes first."

Finally, Diego viewed his family's economic struggle as a motivating factor as something he did want to continue in his life. "That's something I don't want to go through any more. Why continue it? Some people encounter struggle and dwell in it but not me. I am not embracing the negatives in life."

Alanza. Diego identified his girlfriend, Alanza, as the person who has most influenced his educational aspirations and dreams. She has known the student for six years but they have only dated for the last 2 years. Ironically, they attended the same preschool but then went to different elementary schools. She described Diego as a "fast learner" and indicated that he had it "pretty easy" in high school. She said he had to make adjustments in his approach to learning after his first semester in college noting, "he had some difficulties in the beginning but is improving each semester.

She stated that his family is very supportive of him and described how he had to mature at a really young age because of the difficulties his mom went through with her divorce. "He had to mature a lot faster than most kids do." Because he is committed to one day supporting his mom, he knows that the only way to do that is through "hard work and education." The future he sees for himself keeps him focused on his education.

She said he has some "really big dreams" and being "family-oriented," wants to help his mother by purchasing a house with her when he graduates. She told him if that is his dream, he has to move toward it and not just dream about it. "It is easy to daydream

but you need to take action." She said his mother is a very big supporter of him as '"she works very, very hard to make sure he has everything he needs and that he is protected."

Alanza said the biggest thing she does and they do for each other is to help each other stay focused. "When we are studying for tests or working on an important assignment, we do not distract one another at all. Even if we are in the same room together, we do not bother one another when we are studying."

She knows that he is committed and passionate about becoming a mechanical engineer and has talked to him about what that "entails" and what "type of job he will be able to obtain." She has encouraged him to find a mentor he can talk to about the career and to get some "hands-on" experience through internships. "I realize he is totally focused on his classes but he needs to fill out his resume with some relevant, hands-on experience. I nag him about it from time to time because it is important." She also encourages him to join engineering clubs on campus.

Ama

Ama is nineteen years old and a first year student at Rutgers University in New Brunswick majoring in engineering. Her GPA at the end of her first semester at Rutgers was 3.0. She was valedictorian of her graduating class at a magnet high school in Newark, New Jersey. Along with her mother and father, she resides in the South Ward of Newark. The family immigrated to the United States six years ago from Ghana, Africa. Describing her South Ward neighborhood as "a bit terrifying," Ama noted that they hear gunfire at night and sometimes during the day.

She lovingly described her mother and father as "typical African parents who were very strict, especially when it came to education." Her mother was very clear with

her: "Don't bring us any B's, only A's." They expected Ama to excel in school, which "meant getting the best grades" and held her accountable for results, but are also both very supportive of her educational progress. She said her mother and father both had some college in Ghana; her mother works in a nursing home and her father in a company that makes wires.

Coming to Rutgers New Brunswick from a very distinguished academic record at the magnet school, Ama found her first year college experience very challenging. After loading-up her schedule with the hardest, most challenging engineering courses and chemistry, (which she said, she "hates"), she ended her first semester with a 3.0 GPA. She started off with the hardest engineering courses because "she didn't come to college to play around - I wanted to get right down to business." Despite what she considered a first semester setback, she noted that she is a "strong, focused student," who will figure out how to right the ship. For the second semester, she has been "smarter in her course selections" and is doing much better.

She described her high school as "not the safest place in the world" but said her teachers were "great and learning from them was an amazing experience." The student-teacher relationships were always very supportive, especially for her. She described one of her math teachers as very encouraging and supportive and said they talked a great deal about her dream of becoming an engineer someday.

Although she said she was not a "more relaxed" student in Ghana, Ama said she had "intense" study habits in high school and still does. She said things changed when she came to the United States and "realized there were so many more resources available to students." She resolved to take advantage of those resources in high school and was

not shy about talking to teachers and asking for help when needed. Because she is interested in a career in engineering but not sure what specific field, she has talked to all of the Rutgers engineering professors for their input and guidance.

Since high school, Ama has envisioned becoming an engineer though she is still thinking about, exploring, and investigating the kind of engineer she will become. She is "leaning to" tissue engineering or electrical engineering and noted that she needs to declare a specific concentration for her second year of college. She said that her dream of becoming an engineer influences her level of academic intensity. "I realized that whatever I choose as my future, I need to work hard academically to achieve my dream." She fixated on engineering because of her ability to put things together and her "love" of math and physics. She was never bored by math and loved everything about numbers. In addition, math and physics came easy to her compared to English. "I just linked math and physics and realized engineering was my field." She also realizes that as an African American female, the path to becoming an engineer is going to be hard and said she will need to work extremely hard make it happen. A career in engineering and her dream of living a financially secure future require an education. "In addition to my spiritual focus, education is my number #1 priority." She believes that education and in particular a "college education just makes you more well-rounded and better positions you to be more successful in life."

She noted that her parents, especially her mother, were instrumental in instilling the importance and value of education. Ama and her parents believe that her doing well academically and getting a college education will help other family members, cousins,

navigate their way to college. "The education I gain here at Rutgers, will enable me to influence them in their educational pursuits."

Ama also participated in the Rutgers REACH college readiness program during her junior year in high school. She said the program encourages students to think about going to college and provided her the opportunity to take a 3-credit summer course on the Rutgers Newark campus.

Ama's parents are very supportive of her dream of becoming an engineer. Her mother said, "It is a great path and in the long term will help our family." She and her parents know that "it will not be easy" but with "hard work" it can be accomplished. Even when she brought her first semester grades home, her mother consoled her briefly and then said, 'OK, fine. Make up your mind and push forward. You can do it." After her first year experience, she realized that she needed to "work smarter and harder."

She is taking concrete actions to bring her engineering dream to reality and has been working with a Rutgers counselor to explore engineering fields to help her settle on the right one for her. She is involved in the Leadership Living Learning Community at Rutgers New Brunswick, which helps students develop their leadership skills and provides professional development for their career of choice. Most importantly, though, she said she is being smarter in her course selections having learned the hard lesson of loading up the semester with the hardest courses. She is balancing her courses better to make it more manageable and is also planning to take some of the hardest courses in the summer so she can concentrate on them more exclusively. In addition, she formed a group of five students who help each other study.

Ama firmly believes that who you associate with makes a big difference to academic success. "Friends have the biggest impact on all students and it is important that they have the same mindset and academic focus as you do." She indicated every one of her friends have "education as their top priority" and they "support one another" in the pursuit of their education.

She balances her social and academic life by becoming involved in various groups and organizations. For example, she is involved with the First Generation Union at Rutgers New Brunswick, which encourages high school seniors to think about college and attending Rutgers. She also visits her former high school to encourage students to attend college and help them navigate the application process. Involved with "RU Information", she works with the Rutgers Office to advise prospective students and answer their questions.

As far as her social life, she said she likes to shop. She is "not a partier" but she will go to a party every once in awhile. However, she said there is no socializing when she needs to take care of an assignment. "Academics are first."

Mr. Santiago. Ama identified her high school math teacher, Mr. Santiago, as the person who most influenced her educational aspirations and progress. He has taught math in the Newark Public Schools for seventeen years and has a Bachelor's degree in Mathematical Sciences and a Master's in Administration and Supervision. He described her as resilient and "a go-getter who does not take no for an answer." He also said she "was pro-active in never sitting back and waiting for things to come to her, persevering through really hard times, and never giving up." He also indicated she is unafraid of asking for extra help when she needs it.

Mr. Santiago stated he felt more like her "mentor" than teacher "because she confided in me all the academic difficulties she was having, especially coming from another country." He provided her with extra help during early morning hours or before class sessions and said she was so invested in her education that she made it seem like nothing else but school mattered.

As her teacher and mentor, Mr. Santiago regularly talked to her about her future. Because she was interested in medicine and math, he encouraged her to explore the field of biomedical engineering. He explained to her that work on the human genome requires a lot of math, science, and medical knowledge. They also discussed a possible career in engineering. As a mentor, he saw his role as providing her with options to research and consider.

Mr. Santiago stated that Ama was "100 percent" driven by her "career-oriented" vision of the future. Focused on engineering and attending Rutgers, she worked hard from the "get go" to "make it all happen." Her academic intensity was, he said, "all a part of her drive to accomplish her goals." He noted that her parent's Ghanian culture is "very strict on academics and education." He met Ama's father and noted that he was very interested in his daughter's education and wanted to make sure she did well. He explained to Mr. Santiago that he left his country and gave up everything so she could have a future and said his "daughter knows that we gave up a lot for her to be here so she could have a better future and career." Mr. Santiago noted that she and her family are very humble and focused on her pursuit of education as a way to live a better life. He also said she has brothers and sisters, and the family's "intention" is for Ama "to lead the way for them to also attend college."

Student Perceptions of the Effects of Poverty

To gain a better understanding of their experiences from the perspective of their environment, the students were asked to describe their home life, school environment, and neighborhood. While they were not specifically asked about their low SES status, their perceptions about poverty can be inferred from their individual stories. All of the students in this study are of low-income family socioeconomic status as indicated by their eligibility for Free and Reduced Lunch, while in the Newark Public Schools.

Low SES status. It is not surprising that the students in this study are of low SES status since Newark is considered one of the poorest cities in America with a poverty rate of 28.2 percent and a median income of $31,000 (Backstrand et al., 2018). The students are cognizant of their low-income status and are driven to shape a different, more financially secure future for themselves. While the students are a product of their low SES environment, each of them has formed a clear intention to change the narrative for themselves and their families. As Alexis pointed out, "I do not want to be a product of my environment." Alanza said, "It is not the life I imagine for myself." As will be discussed in chapters five and six, the students in this study envision a better life for themselves and their families. Some of them are keenly aware that their parents work hard in low or no skill jobs and live "paycheck-to-paycheck" to support their families. This is not the future the students see for themselves. They see themselves in the future as financially secure and working in a career that is meaningful to them and society.

Several of the students view their poverty as a motivating force in their life. For example, Diego shared,

> Coming from Newark a lot of people put limitations on you. That combined with
> the challenge of growing up poor motivated Alanza to not only become better but

to propel herself forward in life. She does not want to go through the struggles her family went through. She is striving for a better future. She is a 100 percent striver.

Alejandro and his sister Isabella are also motivated to create a different life for themselves and their mother. They believe what their mother constantly reminded them: that education leads to a good job, which means "no more poor." Valeria is also motivated to eliminate poverty from the narrative of her and her mother's life. "I want to buy a place for my mom because living paycheck-to-paycheck is horrible. I don't want to live like that and I don't want her to live like that."

Family life. The students in this study come from homes having a mix of family parental structures. Of the ten students, four were raised in a two-parent household, five were raised by a single parent, and one was raised by a single mother who died just as the student entered the ninth grade. After that, the student raised herself and siblings, mostly unsupervised even though her grandmother lived across the street. Whether raised by two parents or a single parent, all the students said they felt loved and supportive by their parent or parents.

Even though most of the parents had a limited education, they stressed the importance and value of education as a pathway to a better, financially secure future. Most of the students described their parents as very demanding expecting them to concentrate on their academic work and to bring home A's. Most of the students described their parent or parents as very protective and strict when it came to activities and relationships outside the home as the emphasis was on safety and education. With respect to schooling and their academic work, Sofia's parents said to her and her sister, "we work hard, you work hard too." Alejandro's mother restricted his and his sister's

access to the neighborhood in order to keep them safe from their dangerous

neighborhood.

Unsafe, Dangerous Neighborhoods. Each of the students, except those living in

the Ironbound section of Newark, described their neighborhood as unsafe and dangerous.

One of the most influential individuals interviewed for this study described the student's

neighborhood as an "urban environment where you don't even know if you're going to be

able to get to school safely and back." Other students described their neighborhoods as

"terrifying," "crime-ridden," "scary," "crazy, crazy, crazy," and a "bad place." Despite

the danger, however, they all seemed to accept conditions, indicating that they "feel

comfortable" living in their neighborhood or that they "feel at home" there. Taking an 'it

is what it is' attitude, one of the students said, "oh, well because we live here, this is what

happens." Caleb said, "I know people who were robbed and beat up, but I feel like that

could happen anywhere." Alexis said her neighborhood was "like every other

neighborhood in Newark with crime, drugs, police, and violence." She further stated, "On

my block, every one knew each other so it was like home but you still had bad apples in

the home, like drug dealers and things like that." Alexis' mother, said, "things can happen

everywhere and it's going to happen no matter what you do." Conversely, the Ironbound

was described as much safer than the other neighborhoods of Newark.

Despite their perception that their neighborhood was unsafe and dangerous, most

the students are not inclined to abandon or move away from their communities. They do

not see themselves living a better life separate and apart from Newark. For example, after

college Sofia and Jasmine envision working in or founding nonprofit organizations that

serve the needs of poor, underserved people. In addition to living and raising a family in

Newark, the city he loves, Caleb sees himself as the principal of the same comprehensive

high school he attended. Alejandro wishes to teach social studies and history in a Newark

public school, while Alexis envisions herself helping Newark's previously incarcerated

individuals as a community parole officer. A glimpse into why the students "love

Newark" and wish to be involved and connected to it was expressed by Jasmine:

> My neighborhood is very urban, so a lot of graffiti, trash, and yelling and loud, and noisy. I would also describe my community as somewhat loving but then violent. My neighborhood is a mix of love and hate and corruption all in one. By love, I mean that everybody in my community, we love each other. So it's like a family - really like family oriented. It's just like we fight, that's what families do.

Perhaps it is an innate desire grounded in love that prompts these students to support and

assist their neighbors as they would family members in need.

Positive Public Education Experiences. Despite the poor reputation of the

Newark Public Schools for its educational quality, the students in this study all said they

had positive educational experiences. These positive perceptions are mixed with negative

ones with research participants using such terms as "chaotic," "out-of-control," and "jail-

like." Jasmine referred to her comprehensive high school as a "jail because you had to go

through the scanners and have your bags checked just to get in." Ama described her

magnet high school as "not the safest place in the world." However, despite the perceived

negative environment of the comprehensive high schools and some of the magnet

schools, all students said they had very supportive and caring teachers and guidance

counselors. They all felt that they were well prepared for college by teachers and staff

who supported their academic growth and development.

However, several of the study participants noted that while their school

experience was positive, many students are not as fortunate. Students expressed the

concern that teachers pay attention and focus on students, like them, who are inquisitive,

interested, engaged and show potential, while drawing back from those who are disrespectful and do not value education. As one student said, "They were willing to teach you if you were willing to learn. If you weren't willing to learn - they were just like 'ok, I'm not going to waste my time on you. If you don't want to learn, I can use my knowledge for someone else who does want to learn.'" Reiterating, Alejandro said, "I feel like a lot of students, their teachers, their families, give up on them a lot earlier, if they don't show any sign of academic achievement in the early grades. When that happens, everyone kind of gives up on them."

He also recalled the "negativity" shown by certain teachers toward other students. Instead of affirming students or positively re-directing them, he stated some teachers use negative language, which evokes powerfully influencing images. He described how one teacher routinely said to unruly students, "What's wrong with you? You are ruining your life. You are going to be a criminal." Alejandro then said, "Instead of painting a different picture for them and they do paint pictures, they should paint a different picture." For this student, and the others interviewed for this study, teachers painted a picture of them as accomplished students on their way to college.

Upcoming Chapters

Using the language of the resiliency framework, the students in this study have beaten the odds in achieving remarkable academic success. Evidence of this success is their graduation from high school at or near the top of their class and their continued record of academic achievement at Rutgers University Newark or New Brunswick. How is it that they were able to beat the odds, while many of their peers have not? Alejandro mused that all urban students come from the same challenging environment yet he and Sofia and

the rest of the participants in this study are "driven" to succeed and progress forward.

Indeed, much has been written about hope, "grit," and perseverance (C. Anderson et al.,

2016; Dweck, 2006; Tough, 2012) as exhibited by students who beat the odds. Hopeful

about what? What is it that triggers grit? Persevere for what purpose? In progressing

forward, what is forward?

    In chapters five and six, I will explore the commonalities of the students'

experiences with anticipatory images as described in these textural individual profiles. I

have framed six themes, which capture the essence of these commonalities and will be

instrumental in answering the research questions. These profiles indicate that students

hold mental images of an ideal future, have had help in framing them from key people in

their lives, and are adept at planning and coordinating their way to the accomplishment of

their dreams. Perhaps it is the nature of their anticipatory images that triggers hope and

grit in resilient students and inspires an unrelenting drive to succeed and progress

academically.

    In reading chapters five and six, it is important to keep in mind that I am not

suggesting that that the framing of positive anticipatory images is the one and only way

for low-income, inner city students to beat the odds in overcoming the deleterious

structural effects of poverty. We still must fight and push back on structural forces that

frustrate and block the educational progress of low-income students. C. Anderson et al.

(2016) argue that we cannot "afford either/or thinking" when it comes to helping

disadvantaged youth. Like the emerging body of work around hope and grit as an

intervention strategy designed to help low-income, inner city students beat the odds, we

need to view the role positive anticipatory images of the future might play in advancing

student success as another element in the "family of ideas" (C. Anderson et al., 2016) that

enable students to progress educationally and in life.

Chapter Five

Emerging Themes and The Essence of Student Experience

Defining anticipatory images as those visions of the future that influence human behavior and other actions and the pathways taken toward the image, my study explores the images framed and used by academically successful low-income, inner city students who graduated from the Newark public schools and now attend college. Believing that the formation of positive anticipatory images by students may be a significant but overlooked and under-researched element of student academic achievement and progress, I have framed the following four research questions as the focus of this study:

1. Do academically successful low-income, inner city students who have graduated from an urban public high school and attend a four-year university frame and use anticipatory images to guide their academic achievement?

2. What are the anticipatory images these students frame and how do they frame them?

3. How do students use their anticipatory images to realize their imagined future?

4. How do others support students in the fulfillment of their anticipatory images?

This chapter will explore questions one and two, while chapter six will address questions three and four. The questions will be answered in the context of six themes, which I preliminarily framed during the literature review. As a result of my analysis of the data collected from the twenty interviews, the six themes continue to serve as a sound framework for answering the research questions. However, as I transcribed and coded the data creating an annotated summary of each interview in which I extensively quoted the students, I developed thematic categories. Interestingly, these categories support,

explicate, and further attenuate and elaborate the six themes. In chapters five and six, the thematic categories are used to explain each of the six themes. I extensively used and analyzed the quotations or statements from the research participants to support the six theme. To honor the voice of the study participants, I use their statements extensively throughout the next two chapters.

The next two chapters provides descriptive statements of the essence of the themes relative to student experiences with anticipatory images and their academic progress (Moustakas, 1994). These statements draw from the structural and textual descriptions captured in the student profiles (Moustakas, 1994). In this way, I hope to present the "true or deeper meaning" of the role of anticipatory images in the lives of high academically achieving students (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Questions and Themes

Research question #1 asks: Do academically successful low-income, inner city students who have graduated from an urban public high school and attend a four-year university frame and use anticipatory images to guide their academic achievement? My analysis of the interviews suggests that the simple answer to this question is yes. However, a deeper examination of the data and the thematic categories emanating from the interviews of the students and their most influential individuals reveals the depth of the anticipatory images they frame. Themes #1 and #2 inform the response to research question #1. Theme #1 is: High academically achieving students frame a positive self-concept image of themselves. This theme highlights how students in this study create positive images of themselves as accomplished students and adopt a work ethic designed to maintain and sustain that image. Theme #2 is: High academically achieving students frame anticipatory images,

which influence their academic drive and performance. This theme is based on the

finding that students frame a tripartite set of overlapping and mutually reinforcing

anticipatory images of the future that influence their drive and behavior in the direction of

those visions.

Research Question #1 and Theme #1

Figure 1 below illustrates the codes and categories that are instrumental in framing

Theme #1. During the interviews, students were asked to describe themselves as students.

Their responses were image provoking in that as soon as they responded with the

description, I immediately framed a mental image of the kind of student they are. I also

discerned that these are the mental images they hold of themselves and how they wish to

be seen by others. As I asked follow-up questions, I learned that the language used by

teachers can positively or negatively influence one's self-concept image.

Theme	**Categories**	**Codes**
Students' frame positive self-concept images of themselves	Positive self-concept images. Students embrace the positive self-concept image. Students strive to maintain/extend positive self-concept images. Labeling/self-fulfilling prophesy effect. Reinforcement/affirmation of positive self-concept. Positive self-concept and overcoming academic setbacks.	Student descriptions of themselves: very hard working, well prepared, engaged, self-motivated, and accomplished. Most influential persons descriptions of students as students = similar. Labeling and self-fulfilling prophecy; Students see themselves as accomplished and strive (are driven) to maintain the image; other people in their lives reinforce positive self-concept: Parents/parent; school

Figure 1. Codes and categories for theme #1

I am a well-prepared student. (Sofia)

I am a very hard working, motivated student. (Alejandro)

Students frame positive self-concept images. When asked how they and others

would describe them as a student, students framed a positive self-concept type image,

which they strive to maintain at all times. The two sample quotations or statements above

illustrate how students view themselves, specifically as very hard working, well prepared,

engaged, self-motivated and accomplished students. Once they label themselves as such

or are labeled by others in these terms, students strive to maintain the image. They create

and embrace the positive image and then take positive action to maintain or even

strengthen the image. For example, they work even harder or become more prepared academically. They see themselves maintaining top grades and doing everything possible not to slip backward. They are only interested in moving forward and being viewed as top students.

> She is very determined. (Alejandro)

> She always wanted to be the best and to do the best. (Alexis' mother Mrs. Carpenter)

Others reinforce the positive self-concept images of students. These two quotations are samples of the images held by the most influential persons identified by two different students. In every case, the influential people used words that affirmed and validated the positive self-concept image held by each of the students. Students were described as very determined, excellent, articulate, resilient, committed, and go-getters to name a few. Again, these are images students embrace and how they wish to be seen by others.

> If he keeps going on the track that he's going, he's going to end up somewhere like Rutgers University in New Brunswick. (Alejandro quoting his sixth grade teacher)

> I remember a teacher telling certain students, 'you're doing bad; you're ruining your life,' you're going to be a criminal.' Instead of painting a different picture for them and they do paint pictures, they should paint a different picture. They should say maybe the choices right now aren't the best and you should think about X, Y, and Z, you should think about college, maybe this, or maybe that. But instead it's no, you're going down the wrong path and you're going to ruin your life. We all grow up in a very similar environment and situations; we all had very similar families. Our lives and homes and things like that were similar. But some people are fortunate enough to get that one person who says: 'I think you're going to be great.' Children believe things like that. If you tell the child the tooth fairy is real, they're going to believe you. So if you tell the child you're going to be a criminal, they're going to believe you. (Alejandro)

The self-fulfilling prophesy of affirmation. In his interview, Alejandro described how certain teachers were negative toward other students. Instead of affirming students by pointing out things they do well, teachers magnified their deficits focusing on what they got wrong or what they were doing that was bad. Alejandro was not the only student in the study who described how teachers paid attention to students (like them) who showed promise and disregarded those who did not seem interested in school. He said he had teachers and other people in his life that affirmed him. He remembers with pride and a sense of accomplishment his fourth grade teacher telling his mother: "If he keeps going on the track that he's going, he's going to end up somewhere like Rutgers University in New Brunswick." These quotations illustrate the concept of the anticipatory principle positing that humans move in the direction of the images we project ahead of ourselves. We can paint pictures that are negative and point us in a negative direction or we can use language in a way that evoke images of a desirable, preferred, and ideal future. The self-fulfilling prophesy concept described by Alejandro might partially explain how the students in this study are able to overcome the daily challenges and stressors of inner city life to become academically successful by framing positive self-concept images of themselves.

> Jasmine is as successful as she is because she has adopted a help-seeking problem solving mindset. She always positions herself to turn defeats into learning experiences. If she gets a grade lower than she expected or receives a notation on a paper or does not understand something, she seeks the professor's feedback to learn how to correct the problem. (Ms. Spence)

Positive self-concept and overcoming setbacks. Finally, just because a student has a positive self-concept image does not mean he or she might not slip up. The sample quotation from Jasmine's mentor, Ms. Spence, is illustrative of how some of the students

were initially rattled when they did not do well on a test or a paper or did not attain the

GPA they were hoping to achieve in a particular semester. However, their positive self-

concept was strong enough for them to overcome the setback. They quickly identified the

positive actions they needed to take for corrective action. Such actions included engaging

a tutor or tutors or seeking out help, advice, and guidance from a teacher, counselor,

professor, or mentor. Coach Williams reinforced this theme when he said Mateo is

someone who "turns negatives into positives." In the case of Caleb and Diego, they

taught themselves new ways to study to be even more prepared. In effect, the students

viewed set backs as a learning experience and an opportunity to do better the next time.

Key Points About Theme #1: Students Frame Positive Self-Concept Images

The high academically achieving students in this study see themselves as hard working,

accomplished, dedicated, focused, and engaged students. They also want others in their

lives, such as parents, teachers, school officials and staff, peers, and other adults to also

view them as top-tier students. This positive self-concept image fuels their performance

and work ethic in their drive to maintain their high level of academic excellence. The

strength of their positive self-concept is such that in the event that they do poorly on a

test or assignment, or do not do as well as they would like during a semester, they view

this set back as an adversity to overcome and an opportunity to improve through

corrective action.

Research Question #1 and Theme #2

Theme #2 also addresses research question #1. Figure 2 depicts the codes and categories,

which help explain theme #2, that high academically achieving students frame

anticipatory images, which influence their academic drive and performance. All ten of the

students in this study hold three overlapping, mutually reinforcing images of the future.

First, they each have career aspirations, which are either abstract (general) or concrete

(specific). With respect to career images, I found that that the students transitioned or

morphed from abstract images to concrete images as they and their interests matured.

However, in some cases the students morphed from abstract images to concrete images

and then back again to abstract as they continued to think about a concrete image of their

ideal future.

Second, they frame and hold anticipatory images of a better, financially secure

life for themselves and their families, and third, they clearly see and embrace the linkage

between education and college graduation with the attainment of their career aspirations

and the better life for which they yearn. I refer to this as the college-going image of the

future.

Interestingly, two other categories of images were found during this study, which

are related to the three overlapping, mutually reinforcing images. First, some of the

female study participants hold images of living an independent life, meaning that they

wish to have the financial wherewithal to independently control their own lives. Second,

some students are motivated to avoid certain negative images of the future. For example,

they do not want to be homeless, so they take action now to avoid such a negative future.

Theme	**Categories**	**Codes**
Students' frame anticipatory images	Overlapping, mutually reinforcing anticipatory images Abstract and concrete career images. Morphing effect between concrete and abstract career images Images of a better, financially secure life Education as the pathway/college-going image Image of an independent life Negative images to	Students frame three key anticipatory images: Career images; Image of a better, more financially secure life; and Education as the pathway to the attainment of one's dreams and aspirations and a college-going image. Each of the students has career images that either specific or specific; the images shift over time. Some female students also frame an image of being independent. Some students hold negative images of the future, which are to be avoided. The image of disappointing a parent or parents evokes an emotional avoidance response.

Figure 2. Codes and categories for theme #2

Since middle school I have dreamed of opening a residential home for troubled, previously incarcerated adolescent girls or those who might be incarcerated. I feel like that's my passion, that's what I need to do and that's my purpose in life. (Jasmine)

At this point, I cannot picture what I will be doing in biology. If I had to pick, I would say research. All I know is that I will be doing some science-y things in biology. (Valeria)

When I was younger and lived in Pennsylvania we lived next to a firehouse. The firefighters were so nice to me and I imagined being one of them someday. I am

not sure what happened but I lost interest as I thought about going into the rescue business. In middle school and high school, I saw myself as a lawyer, then a prosecutor, and then a judge. During my junior year in high school, I shifted my focus on healthcare. As I conducted more research, I envisioned becoming a pediatric doctor, then a critical care nurse, and now I see myself as certified nurse anesthetist. (Mateo)

Overlapping, Mutually Reinforcing Images of the Future: Career Images

Abstract and concrete anticipatory images. Each of the students in this study mentally picture themselves in a certain career or vocation. For some students, the image is concrete (specific), while for others, they it is abstract (general). The first quotation is illustrative of a concrete image, while the second one represents an abstract image. Since middle school Jasmine has had an unwavering concrete image of her ideal future (opening a residential home for troubled adolescent females). Like a movie playing in her mind, she imagines helping and empowering young girls. Of her dream, she said, "I feel like that's my passion, that's what I need to do and that's my purpose in life." Valeria, on the other hand, is interested in a career in biological research but is not clear about the specific field of biology or the kind of research. Similarly, Ama pictures herself as an engineer (abstract image) but has not, as yet, focused on what kind of engineer (concrete) she wants to be.

Interestingly, as Jasmine matures and gains new knowledge from her college courses, she constantly thinks about the future and how to make her concrete image of the residential home even more concrete. Over time, she imagines specifically what the home will look like, the services and supports the young female adolescents will receive, and things that will make it "comfortable and homey." The image is so prominent in her mind that it drives her academic focus and intensity. Every thing she does academically is designed to bring her vision of the future to reality.

As he dreams about his specific career as an automotive engineer, Diego also thinks about his career choice in ways that that make the image more concretized. He actually envisions himself working for an auto manufacturer and "designing an innovation" that will revolutionalize the industry. The image propels him forward academically realizing that he cannot become an automotive design engineer without a solid, positive record of academic performance. The image enabled him to take corrective action following a first semester in college, in which he did not perform as well as he had hoped. He has since taken steps to significantly improve his GPA.

Morphing effect of career anticipatory images. The third quotation is representative of those students whose career anticipatory images morph from abstract to concrete as they mature and gather more information about their career interests. The quotation, in fact, depicts a student who morphed from a concrete image (firefighter) to an abstract image (rescue business) to another abstract image (lawyer), to a succession of concrete images (prosecutor and judge), back to an abstract image (healthcare), and a return to concrete images (pediatrician, critical care nurse, and certified nurse anesthetist). On the other hand, Jasmine has steadfastly dreamed about opening her residential home for troubled adolescent girls (concrete) since middle school and Diego has wanted to be an automotive engineer (concrete) since grade school. Their concrete images have held fast over time. However, their concrete images have become more specific with details over time. Table 3 illustrates the abstract and concrete career images described by the students and the morphing effect between abstract and concrete and vice versa:

Table 3: Abstract and Concrete Images of Student Research Participants

Student	Imagined Abstract Career Field	Imagined Concrete Career Field
Sofia	CEO/CFO in private sector (Then shifted back to the concrete)	1st: CEO of a nonprofit organization (then shifted to abstract)
Alexis	Lawyer; then criminal justice; then…	Community parole officer
Jasmine		Founder of a home for troubled adolescent females
Caleb		PSE&G CPA Accountant & Teacher/ HS Principal
Alejandro	Psychology, then a shift back to the concrete (History/Social Justice Teacher at Arts High School	1st: English teacher (then a shift to the abstract- Psychology) History/Social Justice Teacher at Arts HS
Alanza	Lawyer, then a shift to concrete	Business Executive/Accountant at J&J
Valeria	Research Biologist or something that combines science and art	Originally –Veterinarian Then – shifted back to abstract (Research Biologist)
Mateo	Fireman, then…Rescue Business (then a shift to concrete – Lawyer, Prosecutor, Judge) Health (Then shifted back to concrete – Critical Care Nurse Anesthetist)	Lawyer, Prosecutor, Judge, (Shifted to abstract – Health) Critical Care Nurse Anesthetist
Diego		Automotive Engineer
Ama	Engineering	Exploring potential engineering fields for area of concentration

Table 3

> There is a direct correlation between what I want for my future and how hard I work. (Caleb)

> When I sometimes feel like college is too much for me, I just realize that I have so much ahead of me and so much in my mind that I need to fulfill, that's what keeps on pushing me. So when I have tests and assignments, I don't really think about the tests and the assignments. I just think about what I want to do and what my

future is supposed to look like and that's what motivates me to do everything and get through everything. (Jasmine)

 I realized that whatever I chose as my future, I needed to work hard academically to achieve my dream. (Ama)

Academics are the priority. I didn't come to play around. (Ama)

The quality of my academic work is a building block to where I'm going. (Valeria)

Students excel whether the career images are abstract or concrete. I found that it does not matter if a student has an abstract or concrete career anticipatory image, he or she is still driven to excel academically. The first two quotations above are from students who have concrete images and plans for the future, while the last three are from students with abstract visions. Each of the students intuitively know that they need to work hard and excel academically if they are to achieve their dreams, whatever they might be. Every one of the students in the study believes that attaining a high GPA and graduating at or near the top of the class (in high school and college) is essential if they are to achieve their career goals. As Ama said, "Academics are the priority, I didn't come to play around."

My mother who did not graduate from elementary school said to me, 'Oh you have to go to school' because to do good in school means that you will get a good job and to get a good job means money. And, money means no more poor. (Alejandro)

My mother works in a factory here in Newark and it is horrible living paycheck to paycheck. I don't want to live like that and I don't want her to live like that. (Valeria)

I just wanted something better for my life. My mom and dad work their butts off every day trying to provide for the future, I just wanted something better for my life. They still struggle living paycheck to paycheck. I don't want that. I don't want to just survive; I want to thrive. I want to do better. (Mateo)

Overlapping, Mutually Reinforcing Images of the Future: Image of a Better,

Financially Secure Life

   Images of a better, financial secure life. These quotations exemplify that the

students in this study imagine living a better, financially secure life in the future. During

their interviews, they discussed how their parents or parent emphasized, stressed, and

"drummed into them and their siblings" the idea of working hard and doing well in

school in order to attain a better life. With respect to the first quotation, Alejandro shared

how his adoptive mother, who did not graduate from elementary school, stressed to him

and his sister, Isabella, the importance of education as a way out of poverty. Before she

died, Jasmine's mother, who did not graduate from high school, continually promoted the

image of a better life for her daughter and children:

> I didn't graduate high school so I want more for you than I want for myself. I want
> more for you. I want a better life for you. You can give yourself a better life, so
> why not do it. You can think of a brighter future.

Sofia's parents admonished her and her sister, "Listen, you're in school, you don't get to

slack off. We work hard, you work hard too." Sofia said this statement is emblematic of

"what they wanted me to be – successful in life and doing really well." Caleb experienced

a transient life, moving eleven times as a child with his single mother and sister. It is no

surprise that his primary vision for the future is to be financially secure with a stable

family life. "I love stability. So I know to be stable and have a family and do the things I

want to do, takes money."

   Given their low SES status, each student is driven to excel academically because

they have concluded it is the ticket to the attainment of a better life. In some cases,

students did not need their parents or parent to stress that need. With respect to the

second and third quotations, Valeria and Mateo, respectively reject any future that has

them "living paycheck to paycheck." They observed their family's situation for

themselves and embraced the image of a better life not only for themselves but to help

their families out of poverty. Valeria views her mother's work in the factory as "horrible

as she lives paycheck to paycheck." Her image of a better future includes buying a new

home for her mother. Mateo watches how hard his mother and father work to provide for

the family and concluded, "I just wanted something better for my life." Ama is expected

to excel academically and become an engineer to "lift the family," including her sisters,

to a better life.

> I definitely see education as a constant and basically the whole equation of my life, where I want to see myself. I value education a lot. (Sofia)

> To me education is very, very, very, important. Without education you're not going to get anywhere, you're not going to get any further than what you think you're going to get and I want to step over the line. In my neighborhood the line for most kids is high school. And I feel like once I went beyond high school and made it to Rutgers Newark, I knew that I was already past the line and realized there are many other lines that I had to pass. So education is so vital, and it's so important. Because without an education you can't even get a job, you can't even support yourself, so how are you going to function in life, you can't even be a vital citizen in society without an education. (Jasmine)

> I see and accept the value of education. I use it so I can flourish in the real world. Those students who do not succeed academically don't really see education as worth it. They don't really see what it can do for them. And they do not have anything that can replace education as their guiding light or special tool to get them where they want to be in the future. With an education, people tend to be more successful. Education is the pathway to getting where you want to go. **(**Caleb)

Overlapping, Mutually Reinforcing Images of the Future: Education and College as

the Pathway

> **The education as pathway and college-going images.** These statements are

emblematic of how students in this study embrace the image of education as the pathway

to the achievement of their dreams. To them, education is integral to attaining their ideal

career, which, in turn, is essential in achieving financial security and a better life. Their

image of education as the pathway to future success is inextricably associated with a

college-going image, in which they view college attendance and graduation as vital to

their dreams. Alanza's said her father constantly stressed:

> You do not want to do what I do. You don't want to work how I work, so just put your mind to something and go for it. Get good grades, concentrate on your studies, and don't end up working from 5am to 10 pm outside in the cold, rain, and snow. It's not ideal. It's no a joke.

> All of the students in this study recognize they cannot attain their career images of

the future or a better, financially secure life without education including college. In this

sense, the images are overlapping and mutually reinforcing. Career/vocational images

lead to a better, financially secure life, with education and college essential to attaining

both images.

> Interestingly, Caleb's quotation makes the observation that students who don't

succeed academically do not see education as "worth it." He said, "They don't really see

what it can do for them and have nothing to replace it as their guiding light or special tool

to get them where they want to be in the future." During her interview, Valeria wondered

what her mother's life and her life would be like if her mother had been able to go to

college. These observations illustrate that students see and value the linkage between

education and a different and better, financially secure life.

> My dad raised me to be very independent. I don't like to depend on others. I need to know that I can support myself with whatever life throws at me. (Alanza)

> A lot of women in my family finish high school but don't attend college. They got married. They had kids. They're housewives. I don't have a problem with that but I have a problem when they're dependent on somebody else. What if the circumstances of their lives change? Maybe their husbands are bad, alcoholic or something that? They can't just say, 'you know what, I'm done. Bye.' They have

to stay because they just don't have a job. They don't have money to leave. And when you're educated you have options. (Valeria)

The image of living an independent life. Another image that is related to the image of a better life is the image of living an independent life, which was expressed by several of the female students. These statements illustrate the desire of female students to be financially secure, so they can be independent in life. Alanza wants to be financially independent so she can effectively adapt to the curveballs that life throws at her. Valeria wants to be financially secure so she can walk away from a troubled relationship indicating, "I am not going to end up in a situation that is beyond my control."

> I want to avoid instability. I want a stable family life and financial security. I know what I want and what I don't want. I didn't like moving so I figured I needed to find a way to a life of stability. Because I didn't want to be homeless, I knew I had to focus on my education. That's probably the biggest motivation. (Caleb)

> I look at my cousins in Brazil right now; they are my age, and I think to myself, 'if I had stayed there, I would have been screwed, really screwed.' They are my age and married with kids and live paycheck to paycheck. That's not what I want. That's just not the life I've imagined for myself. (Alanza)

Avoiding the negative. In addition to framing a positive career and college-going image of the future, which drives them to succeed, some of the students are motivated by images of what they want to avoid in life. For example, Caleb wants to "avoid instability and homelessness" so he imagines a life of stability and plans what he needs to do to create a stable, financially secure life. He reasons that education is what he needs to "flourish in the real world." The second statement, which is attributed to Alanza is a classic case of avoiding the negative. Living poor, paycheck-to-paycheck, is "just not the life" she imagines for herself. Both Caleb and Alanza imagined a negative anticipatory image and used it to refocus on a more positive vision for themselves.

In an interesting twist of this negative image avoidance theme that emerged, some students whose parents expected them to bring home nothing less than an A imagined what it would be like at home if they did bring home a B or C or lower. The emotional reaction they experienced thinking about such an image was so negative that they decided they would not test it. For example, Sofia said, "I always tried to get A's and B's because I not going to see what it looks like to bring home a C." Caleb was driven to succeed because he did not want to experience the negativity of "letting the people in my corner down." Alanza believed her parents would send her back to Brazil if she did not do well in school and Ama said, " My mother was very clear with me, 'don't bring us any B's, only A's.' There was no way I was going to bring home anything less than A's."

Key Points About Theme #2: Students Frame Anticipatory Images

Again, the short answer to the question, Do academically successful low-income, inner city students who have graduated from an urban public high school and attend a four-year university frame and use anticipatory images to guide their academic achievement is yes. The longer answer is that students form positive, anticipatory visions of interlocking, mutually reinforcing images. Figure 3 below graphically illustrates the mutually reinforcing nature of the tripartite set of anticipatory images. The images are: (1) career/vocational images of an abstract or concrete nature; (2) a better, financially secure life; and (3) education and college as the pathway to the attainment of career/vocational goals and a better, financially secure life. Working in conjunction, these images are interdependent, interlocking and mutually reinforcing. Additionally, some of the female students in this study frame images of living an independent life in which they achieve the financial wherewithal to make their own decisions without being dependent on their

parents or a male. Finally, students see things in the future they wish to avoid, and refocus their vision on a more ideal, preferred future.
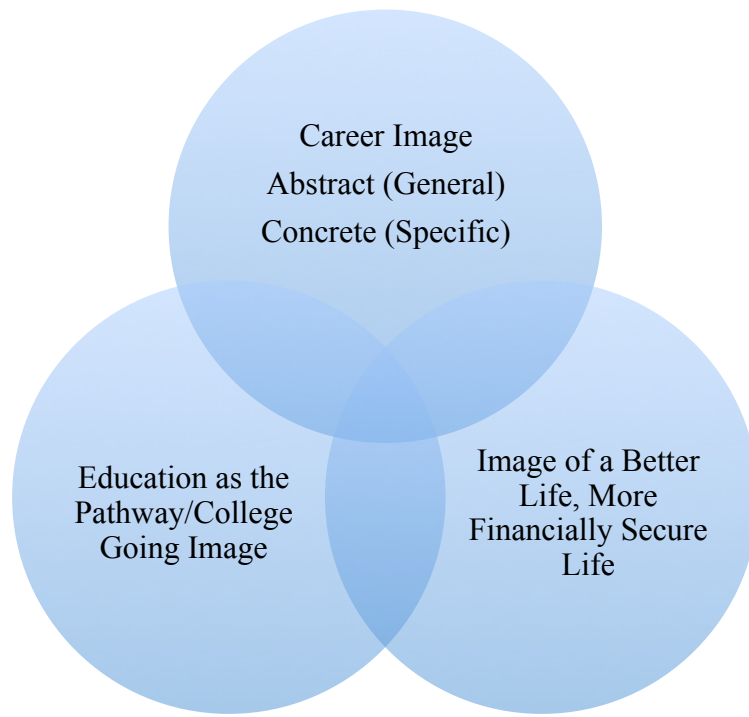
Figure 3: Overlapping, mutually reinforcing images of the future

Research Question #2 and Theme #3

Research question #2 seeks to explain how students frame and use anticipatory images. Figure 4 depicts the codes and categories, which help explain theme #3 that high academically achieving students frame anticipatory images with the help of others. Recapping, students do frame anticipatory images that entail three overlapping, mutually reinforcing images of (1) a defined career or vocation, (2) a better, financially secure life, and (3) education and college as the pathway to success. Additionally, some of the students see negative images to be avoided; while some students frame an image of being

financial independence so they can "control their own lives" no matter what life throws their way.

How do students frame anticipatory images? The students frame these images through combination of self-motivation and with the help of others in their lives. For example, the career/vocational images students imagine are primarily self-motivated with help from high school staff or teachers, peers, or a college professor or counselor. On the other hand, future oriented images of attaining financial stability and a better life are formed through self-motivation with the help of parents. The education as pathway and college-going images are also self-motivated with help primarily from parents. High school counselors, teachers, peers, and various college readiness organizations also play a significant role in helping students see the linkage between education and college and the attainment of their goals and aspirations.

Theme	Categories	Codes
Students form anticipatory images with the help of others	Self-motivated anticipatory images. Parents' role/framing certain anticipatory images but not career visions. Role of school administrators, staff, and teachers/help students frame certain anticipatory images. Role of peers/limited role in image formation. Role of mentors and college readiness counselors/ image formation of education as pathway/college going image	Students discussed how they frame career/vocational images. The discussion reveals they use a combination of self-motivation and help of other people in their lives, such as parents or parent, school administrators and staff and teachers, peers, mentors, and college readiness organizations. Self-motivated formation of anticipatory images; role of parents; role of school administrators, staff (counselors) and teachers; role of peers; role of college readiness organizations and mentors/counselors. Student responses indicate

Figure 4. Codes and categories for theme #3

I definitely imagined being a CEO/CFO myself. As a child watching TV, I saw women in business and power wearing suits. I think the idea of the suit really attracted me. The aesthetic of being a woman in a suit and helping other people or directing an effort that helps other people definitely resonated with me. I liked the image of it and the power structure behind it. (Sofia)

I know all the problems that girls encountered in my neighborhood, like a lot of teen pregnancies, a lot of violence, a lot of survival going on amongst the women,

trying to survive and trying to live right and trying to be a good example. So I feel like that's what encouraged me to want to open up a group home for women, for girls. (Jasmine)

I want to stay in Newark. I want to have something closer because this is my city. I love it here. I want to be here. So I'm going to work here. I want to start my family here. (Caleb)

Self-motivated framing of career images but with a little help from others.

These statements demonstrate that each student has a unique story about how they framed their career images. While the images are primarily self-motivated or self-conceived by the student, they do have help from key people in their lives. With regard to the first quotation, Sofia said her career vision was shaped by watching TV as a child and being mesmerized and drawn to the image of women in business and power wearing business suits. She said the image "resonated with her." In high school, her image shifted as she pictured herself working in the private sector as a CEO/CFO. She reasoned that to become financially secure, she should focus on a career in the private sector. Then, while in college, she credits the Rutgers Honors Living Learning Community (HLLC) with re-orienting her career back to nonprofit management. "I just saw myself getting into a nonprofit or public sector position where I could potentially help people. The HLLC program was a significant influence in helping me imagine a future of helping people."

Additionally, Alejandro, her best friend and most influential person, recalled that since grade 4 he had an image of her "working with and helping people." Never believing that the private sector should or would be her career of choice, he continually "pushed" her to think about a career in nonprofit management or the public sector. He strongly encouraged her to switch out of the Rutgers Business School and enroll in the School of Public Affairs and Administration so she could concentrate her academic attention on a

career in the nonprofit and public sectors. "I told her to look into SPAA and then within a week she had already met with the dean about transferring into SPAA."

Since middle school Jasmine dreamed of opening a residential home for troubled, previously incarcerated adolescent girls or those who might possibly be incarcerated. "I feel like that's my passion, that's what I need to do and that's my purpose in life." The seed of one day becoming a social worker was planted at age of seven or eight when a NJ Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) caseworker visited her home investigating a complaint. Jasmine recalled the caseworker as very kind and nice. She asked the lady a lot of questions like: "Who are you? What do you do?" She remembers the nice lady saying: "I'm a case manager; I go to people's houses to see if their children are alright and if they're not alright, we give them a better life. We give them better opportunities, better chances." She recalled the caseworker visited regularly, bringing toys and spending time talking to her and her siblings. Jasmine thought to herself that she wanted to be just like her. "I want to be the person a child or anybody can speak to - or just feel like welcoming." From that day, the image of that caseworker never left Jasmine's mind.

The image of opening a home for troubled female adolescent girls grew out of her experience growing up in Newark and seeing conditions and challenges that young females face. She envisions their lives can be improved with someone who is willing to intervene and provide them with a "welcoming and homey" environment, wrapping them in the services and supports they need to thrive and flourish. She originally thought that a degree in criminal justice was needed since they are young women who have been or potentially could be incarcerated. However, now she concludes that she needs a social

work degree because the ladies need social services and supports more than anything

else. She acknowledges that Ms. Spence, who is her mentor, and the courses she has

taken have helped her revise her image to that of a social worker. Finally, with respect to

the third statement, Caleb's self-motivated dream for a life of stability grew out of his

transient childhood and is grounded in the city he loves as he envisions working and

raising his family in Newark.

Table 4 illustrates overwhelmingly that the students' future career and vocational

images are primarily self-motivated with help from a people in their lives, such as school

and teachers, peers, college readiness organizations and college counselors or professors.

Interestingly though, the chart also shows that parents do not play a significant role in

helping students frame their career images of the future. They do, on the other hand,

support and encourage their children's hopes and dreams for the future. This will be

discussed later in this chapter.

Table 4: Formation of Future Oriented Career Image

	Formation of Future Oriented Images (Career Image of the Future)					
Student	Self	Parent	School Staff or Teacher	Peer	College Readiness Org.	College Counselor or Professor
Sofia	√			√	√	
Alexis	√					√
Jasmine	√					√
Caleb	√					
Alejandro	√		√	√		
Alanza	√					

Valeria	√		√			
Mateo	√		√			
Diego	√	√				
Ama	√		√			√

Table 4

I just wanted something better for my life. My mom and dad work their butts off every day trying to provide for the future, I just wanted something better for my life." Mateo

"She may not have been able to live a life where she could enjoy a lot of things but I want her to enjoy life later on. I plan to take care of her. Whatever she wants or needs, I'll be able to provide. I just know that she struggled so I just don't want her to struggle at all. (Diego)

'Oh you have to go to school' because to do good in school means that you will get a good job and to get a good job means money. And, money means no more poor. (Alejandro)

My mother and father expect me to achieve financial security as a way to lift the family including my sisters, to a better life. They expect me to navigate the way to college and a better life for her siblings. (Ama)

Self-motivated formation of the better, financially secure life image with the help of parents. The anticipatory image student's form of a better, more financially secure life is mostly self-motivated with a lot of help and encouragement from their parents. Table 5 illustrates the commonality of this student-parent dynamic in framing this particular anticipatory image:

Table 5: Formation of Future Oriented Better Life and Financial Security Images

	Formation of Future Oriented Images (Better Life – Financial Stability)					
Student	Self	Parent	School Staff or Teacher	Peer	College Readiness Org.	College Counselor or Professor
Sofia	√	√		√		

Alexis	√	√				√
Jasmine	√	√				√
Caleb	√	√				
Alejandro	√	√		√		
Alanza	√	√				
Valeria	√	√				
Mateo	√	√				
Diego	√	√				
Ama	√	√				

Table 5

With respect to the first statement, Mateo described his parents' economic

struggles and his family's life of poverty, as the self-motivating impetus for visualizing a

better, financially secure life. He knew what he wanted, visualized it, and committed

himself to the attainment of his dream. Like Mateo, Diego was strongly influenced to

work toward a better, financially secure life in an effort to care for his mother who

struggled economically to raise him and his sister. As illustrated by the third statement,

Alejandro's mother constantly instructed him and his sister, Isabella, that the way out of

poverty was schooling and a good job, which "means more money and no more poor."

Finally, the fourth statement from Ama illustrates how her parents place responsibility on

her to "navigate" the way to a better life for the whole family.

Sofia stated her parents, who immigrated to America from the Dominican

Republic, are "keen on education." Her parents view education as a key to a better life,

which to them "means financial security and a job that does not require physical labor."

Sofia said that their viewpoint about education is related to her Dominican culture and background. Her parents told her and her sister, "you're in school, you don't get to slack off. We work hard, you work hard too." She said this admonition is a "reflection of what they wanted me to be – successful in life and doing really well and that meant going to college."

Describing her mother before she died as "my number #1 supporter," Jasmine said her mother was relentless and "constant" in "pushing" her to pursue a better life. Her mom pushed her to attend school even when she was sick believing it was the way to a better, financially secure life. Jasmine remembers saying to her mom, "Mom, I'm sick, you're acting crazy." She also clearly remembers her reply: "I didn't graduate high school so I want more for you than I want for myself. I want a better life for you. You can give yourself a better life, so why not do it?"

The students in this study embrace and accept this image adopting it as their own. They do not mind that their parents continually stressed the idea of pursuing a better life because they already knew from observation that that their parents were struggling "paycheck to paycheck" to make ends meet. They already were self-motivated to pursue a better, financially secure life because they concluded that it was something they wanted for themselves.

> My mom drummed the idea of education as essential for our future into my siblings and me over and over and over. (Jasmine)
>
> Sofia's parents pushed school as super important. (Alejandro)
>
> Because I didn't want to be homeless, I knew I had to focus on my education. That's probably the biggest motivation. "Because I see and accept the value of education, I use it so I can flourish in the real world. (Caleb)
>
> I remember my fourth grade teacher saying to my mother, 'If he keeps going on the track that he's going, he's going to end up somewhere like Rutgers University in New Brunswick.' From that day forward my mother continually reminded me,

'Remember what your teacher said – you are going to college.' I never got tired of hearing my mother emphasize college because it was something I accepted and wanted. (Alejandro)

I just see a lot of support there for the value of education. The seeds of education are in Valeria's family. With the family's emphasis on education, I think it becomes easier for the student to see where she wants to go. (Ms. Silva)

Formation of the education as a pathway and college going images with the help of parents and others. The high academically achieving students in this study were strongly encouraged by their parents to view and embrace the image of education as the pathway to their educational and career aspirations and a better life. Coupled with this image is the recognition that attending and graduating from college is integrally linked to their long-term success. In other words, one cannot attain a desired, ideal career or vocation or achieve a better, financially secure life without education and, in particular, a college degree. This image is promoted and continually reinforced by parents or a parent and other adults in their lives and embraced or accepted by them as important and meaningful. Table 6 illustrates this powerful dynamic of parental involvement, self-acceptance by the student, and reinforcement from others:

Table 6: Formation of the Education as Pathway and College Going Images

	Formation of Future Oriented Images (Education as the Pathway/College Going Image)					
Student	Self	Parent	School Staff or Teacher	Peer	College Readiness Org.	College Counselor or Professor
Sofia	√	√	√	√	√	
Alexis	√	√				
Jasmine	√				√	√
Caleb	√	√			√	

Alejando	√	√	√	√	√	
Alanza	√	√			√	
Valeria	√	√	√		√	
Mateo	√	√	√			
Diego	√	√				
Ama	√	√	√			

Table 6

Jasmine's statement exemplifies the role of parents in fostering and nurturing education and attending college as the pathway to a better future. She described how her mother constantly "drummed" the importance of education into her and her sisters. Alejandro, Sofia's most influential person, shared that her parents "pushed school as super important." Sofia said they "pushed" education because they saw it as the key to a better life, which to them "meant financial security and a job." Alejandro, her mentors at NJ LEEP, and her teachers also played key roles in "pushing" her to see and embrace the value of education. She was caught in a vortex of image provoking relationships that reinforced her acceptance of education and college attendance as the pathway to the achievement of her dreams.

In the case of Caleb, going to college was a "foregone conclusion." His mother and sister were both college graduates so it was expected that he too would attend college. While his mother talked about the value of education and college for attaining a better life, his statement above points to the negative image she proffered as a motivating factor for him. She told him that at age 18 he would be out of the house. "Because I didn't want to be homeless, I knew I had to focus on my education." He knew that

education was the pathway to where he wanted to go in life saying, "I see and accept the value of education, I use it so I can flourish in the real world." Dr. Clinton, Caleb's high school principal, noticed when he first met him "college and success was in his future." As a result of this vision, the principal linked him to the Future Project, a program that helps high school students see college as a "stepping stone" to the future.

With respect to the fourth statement, Alejandro recalled how his fourth grade teacher told him and his mother that he was college material and could end up at Rutgers University in New Brunswick. From that day forward, he said his mother was insistent that he work hard and attend college. "Remember what your teacher said – you are going to college." The important part of this story is Alejandro's muse that he never tired of his mother's constant emphasis on education because "it was something I accepted and wanted." While parents stress, emphasize, and "drum" into their children the value and importance of education, the students in this study ultimately accepted and embraced the image as something they, indeed, wanted for themselves.

Finally, the last statement made by Valeria's high school guidance counselor emphasizes the key role parents and family play in shaping the education and college-going images formed by students. "The seeds of education are in the family. With the family's emphasis on education, I think it becomes easier for the student to see where she wants to go."

The three overlapping, mutually reinforcing images are linked and intertwined together. Students drive themselves to excel academically with the goal of getting into college and with a college education their prospects for landing a good job increase ultimately resulting in a better, financially secure life.

Key Points About Theme #3: Students Frame Anticipatory Images with the Help of Others

The answer to the research question: What are the anticipatory images these students frame and how do they frame them is that students frame three overlapping, mutually reinforcing images: (1) career/vocational abstract or concrete images; (2) a better, more financially secure life; and (3) education as the pathway and college going image. They also frame positive self-concept images of themselves as students that they strive mightily to preserve, maintain, and extend. Finally, the students in this study frame these images through a combination of self-motivation and help from parents and others, such as peers, school administrators and guidance counselors, and teachers, and college readiness organizations, such as RU NEXT, TRIO, NJ LEEP, and The Future Project.

Next Chapter

In chapter six, I will continue to address the remaining research questions and themes 4, 5, and 6. While chapter five focused attention on the kinds of anticipatory images students frame, how they frame them, and who helps them frame the images, chapter six addresses how students use the images and who supports and helps them in the process of attaining them. In essence, we are moving from an exploration of the essence of what the images are to how to make them work to achieve visualized aspirations.

Chapter Six

Emerging Themes and The Essence of Student Experience

In this chapter, I address research questions #3 and #4 and will do so in the context of themes #4, #5, and #6. The research questions are: How do students use their anticipatory images to realize their imagined futures and, how do others support students in the fulfillment of their anticipatory images? The themes which are used to answer these questions are: Theme #4: Using a variety of planning and evaluative techniques, high academically achieving students plan and coordinate their steps toward their anticipatory image; Theme #5: High academically achieving students are the beneficiaries of supportive relationships; and Theme #6: The educational and career aspirations and goals of high academically achieving students influence their social life.

Research Question #3 and Theme #4

Figure 5 below illustrates the codes and categories that are instrumental in framing theme #4. Once students frame their anticipatory images of the future, they use them as a planning tool in navigating their way in the direction of the vision. The anticipatory images in essence become an anchoring point in the future from which the student looks backward in planning the actions and coordinated steps needed to bring the preferred, ideal image to reality. In planning parlance this is referred to backcasting, whereby a desired future outcome is projected forward and then returning to the present, steps are planned and plotted to achieve the desired objective. The students in this study become master planners using their anticipatory images to envision their ideal future and then doing what they need to do to make it happen.

Theme	**Categories**	**Codes**
Students as Master Planners: Using a variety of planning and evaluative techniques high academically achieving students plan and coordinate their steps toward their anticipatory image	Students plan and do. Variety of planning and evaluative techniques: 1. Implementation intentions 2. Action Steps 3. Majors and course selections – decision making 4. If/Then evaluation 5. Anticipating and overcoming obstacles Students exhibit help-seeking behavior Images are fuel for academic drive and intensity	Students "plan everything." They discuss how their images of the future serve as a fixed point of reference from which they plan specific steps and actions to attain the image. They use a variety of planning techniques to help them evaluate and plan their way to the future they frame as ideal. If/then analysis Identification of things they need to do and then, plan and implement steps to accomplish the intention. Influencing decision-making: Majors/course selections. Students anticipate obstacles and plan ways to overcome them. Problem solving skills: Help seeking behavior; seeking the help, advice, guidance of others.

Figure 5. Codes and categories for theme #4

I plan everything. (Alejandro)

I surround myself with children and people who need me because that's preparing me to better understand youth and their needs. I am preparing myself by being in college and by taking the necessary steps to get to my goal. (Jasmine)

Alejandro's statement "I plan for everything" and Jasmine's quotation about

"taking the necessary steps to get to my goal" represent the ability of the student research

participants to visualize their dreams and then plan and coordinate, set goals, and think

about the steps they need to take to achieve their objectives. They use a variety of

planning techniques to facilitate their decision-making process, such as setting

implementation intentions and plotting action steps, scenario planning, particularly

related to forecasting obstacles and what they need to do to overcome them, backcasting

technique, and "if-then" evaluative analysis. These techniques are illustrated below.

> Sofia and I collectively pushed each other to become involved in as many school
> activities and programs as possible believing that participating in and leading
> school activities and clubs would better position us for college admission.
> (Alejandro)
>
> My courses and activities are tailored to the populations I want to teach and being
> a better teacher as a whole. I work hard, stay involved in extracurricular activities,
> and serve as a mentor because I want to be a teacher. If I really want to be a
> teacher, if I really want to work in education, I need to do these things now.
> (Alejandro)

Setting implementation intentions and back casting action steps. The students

in this study carefully and deliberately think about the things they need to do and the

steps they need to take to accomplish their dreams and aspirations. In this process of

making implementation intentions (making a commitment to achieve something) around

their anticipatory images, they initiate positive action to bring their visions to reality.

They plan what they need to do to get themselves into college with scholarships (because

they could not afford college otherwise) and they plan the steps they need to take to attain

their career and vocational goals.

As high school students, Sofia and Alejandro determined they not only had to

attain high grades, but they also needed to become involved in school activities believing

that participating in and leading such activities would better position them for college admission. Together they served as president and vice president of student council and in their senior year and when Alejandro became class president, Sofia became president of the student council. They were also involved in and led a number of other school activities and clubs.

Now at Rutgers New Brunswick, Alejandro is taking steps to position himself for a career in teaching. For example, he pays attention to recent hires in the Newark Public Schools noting the kind of teachers being hired. He serves as the academic chair of the Rutgers Puerto Rican Student Union, which plays an important role in social studies curriculum development at Rutgers, and he mentors students in the Newark Public Schools as part of the Future Project. In addition, he works with the Rutgers Equal Opportunity Fund program, which takes 100 incoming freshman students in a leadership development program. He stated, "I work hard, stay involved in extracurricular activities, and serve as a mentor because I want to be a teacher. If I really want to be a teacher, if I really want to work in education, I need to do these things now." Such statements illustrate that students make implementation intentions and then plan and execute steps that move them in the direction of their anticipatory image or images.

Alexis is a master of thinking and planning ahead. She has carefully planned her courses and credit loads to attain a Masters degree along with her bachelor's degree in criminal justice in five-years. Knowing she wants to become a community parole officer, she pursues internships with the NJ Parole Board, and works as a security guard for an area corporation. She has also secured a CPR license and Armed Security Guard License

and is learning how to handle firearms, as the license will be necessary for eventually

enrolling in the Police Academy, which she needs to become a parole officer.

> If I don't finish, I am not going to help at-risk adolescent women and if I can't do that, I'm not going to be able to do what I am called to do. (Jasmine)

> If I need a clean record for a career in community parole, then I need to avoid drama in my personal life. I imagine sitting across the table from a potential employer and being asked: 'have you ever been arrested? Have you ever been charged with this? Do you have any of this? Do you have any of that?' If I do, I will be disqualified for the job. (Alexis)

> Last semester I was taking Education Psychology, and to be honest, I thought I was going to fail. I knew if I got an "F", then this means that I won't be able to do X, Y, and Z, which means I won't be able to do X, Y and Z, which means I won't be able to do such or such. So, if I do well on this, what does this mean long term? If I don't do well on this, what does it mean long term? I always think about cause and effect essentially of what it all means. I ended up getting an "A" in the class because I focused on the end point; I started thinking about what does this mean for me, for my future, for my grades, and that's what I used to study for the mid-term. (Alejandro)

"If/Then" evaluative technique. Students in this study use subtle cognitive

planning techniques to evaluate situations to determine if certain activities will benefit

their short-term or long-term aspirations. Without thinking too much about it, students

use a mental simulation referred to as "If/Then" evaluative analysis. An example is

Jasmine's use of the technique in contemplating college graduation: "If I don't finish, I

am not going to help at-risk adolescent women and if I can't do that, I'm not going to be

able to do what I am called to do." This cognitive analysis pushes her to not give up on

difficult assignments or not be discouraged if she does not do well on a particular test or

assignment.

Alexis evaluates situations that others try to pull her into and looking ahead she

reasons, "If I need a clean record for a career in community parole, then I need to avoid

drama in my personal life." She actually looks into the future and visualizes herself

sitting across from a potential employer who is asking about her background and record.

She knows if she has done something negative, she will be disqualified and blocked from

the attainment of her dream. So what does she do? She steers clear of potential situations

that might blemish her record.

Alejandro said he uses If/Then evaluative analysis in reviewing everything "in

terms of what it means for his future and what role the action or behavior will play in my

plan." He shared the story of a psychology course he thought he failing and said to

himself, "If I get an F, then it means I won't be able to do X, Y, and Z, which means I

won't be able to do such or such."   He said he ended up getting an A for the course

because "I focused on the end point. I started thinking about what it means for me, for my

future, my grades." He even quit a part-time job foregoing the extra cash because it was

not contributing to his short-term academic goals or his long-term goal of becoming a

teacher.

> It's just all about how you go about overcoming obstacles, what your mentality is, how you plan, how you maintain your discipline. Discipline is a major thing to me. That's where it all starts. You need to have a strategy and have everything planned out. You need the discipline to execute over obstacles. (Caleb)

> I kind of think of everything like a chess match. I ask myself: 'how am I going to do this?' This is what I want, how am I going to get it, 'how am I going to go about it?' And of course, there are some things you really can't plan for, some things that are just going to come from the field. It is all about getting over it one way or another. (Caleb)

> You have to see yourself there before you get there. I try to help them see the future and run through the scenarios they will encounter along the way. If they see them in advance, they will know what to do when they pop-up. (Coach Williams)

Anticipating and overcoming obstacles. One of the most significant and

powerful planning skills the students in this study exhibit is the ability to anticipate

obstacles and plan strategies and steps to overcome them when and if they arise**.** The first

two statements, which are attributed to Caleb, demonstrate his ability to foresee obstacles and plan his way through and/or around them. He said he learned this skill from a Future Project counselor when he was in high school. Caleb said that he thinks about and anticipates potential obstacles "all the time" and how he will "deal with them." Illustrating a skill that belies his age he said, "I think of everything like a chess match."

Mateo's most influential person, Coach Williams, tells him and his other student athletes that having a vision of the future is the key to success. A skill that is used widely by world-class athletes, Coach stresses: "You have to see yourself there before you get there." He helps his students "see the future and run through the scenarios they will encounter along the way" reasoning that "if they see them in advance, they will know what to do when they pop-up." The skill and practice of anticipating obstacles-oriented scenarios and imagining how you they will overcome them is a master planning skill the students in this study apply when thinking about their short-term images or goals, as well as their long-term career and vocational aspirations.

> When I thought my future was going to be in business and accounting I enrolled in the Business School as a business major. But when I re-imagined myself as the CEO of a nonprofit organization, I switched my major to the public administration with a nonprofit concentration. (Sofia)

> I switched my major from criminal justice to social work because I think the adolescent females I want to help will need more social work supports and services than anything criminal justice can provide. (Jasmine)

> The moment I realized I needed a CPA, I made sure I acquired enough credits to get it by the time I graduate. I figured out that I'm going to have about 80 credits, so I need another 70 within two years. 'Can I do it?' I need to take summer and winter classes and an 18-credit schedule at one point. So I'm already planning for that because I want a CPA. (Alanza)

Planning and selecting majors and courses. The selection of majors and semester courses are influenced by the students' anticipatory career and vocational

images. For example, Sofia changed her major from business to nonprofit management as her career image of the future shifted from CEO/CFO in he business world to CEO/CFO of a nonprofit. She is now using her public administration courses to research and prepare for a career in the nonprofit sector. Jasmine changed her major from criminal justice to social work as her image of opening the group home providing social support services came into focus. She also selects courses related to nonprofit management as they are more aligned with her anticipatory image of the group home. Alanza clearly articulates how she plans and calibrates her credit loads to not only graduate with a business accounting degree but to also position herself to attain a CPA.

Clearly, anticipatory images prompt students to plan and make decisions in planning and executing actions, behaviors, and steps, which are designed and intended to move them in the direction of the image they project ahead.

> I maintain relationships and stay in contact with my NJ LEEP mentors. (Sofia)
>
> My RU Next/TRIO counselor is now my mentor. She supports me on my journey through college and helps me plan for my residential group home for adolescent teens. (Jasmine)
>
> Now, I have a different level of conversation with Caleb and other students: you're going to finish school, and you have a choice to make. I talk to them about how they are expediting their journey to their ultimate goal. I am hoping that I can be a tour guide to some of the stuff they may encounter as obstacles. (Dr. Clinton)

Developing and maintaining contacts and connections. In planning a path to attain their educational and career goals, the students in this study are prolific networkers. They maintain relationships, contacts and connections with people and organizations, which they believe support their progress. For example, Sofia maintains relationships with key mentors from NJ LEEP, Jasmine still talks to and relies on her RU NEXT/TRIO mentor for guidance and support, and Caleb communicates regularly with his most

influential person, the former principal of his high school. The principal states that he wants to be a tour guide for students as they progress into the future.

When they were in high school, the contacts and connections helped the students think about attending college and assisted them in navigating the college admissions process. Now that the students are in college, these contacts and connections are instrumental in helping them think about the future, such as attaining a higher-level degree, or what they need to do to better position themselves for their career of choice. Mateo maintains regular "check-ins" with Coach Williams, seeking his advice and guidance. Coach is more than happy to connect him to former students who became what Mateo hopes to be, a Critical Care Nurse Anesthetist.

> I don't mind asking teachers questions when I do not understand something. (Caleb)
>
> Jasmine is as successful as she is because she has adopted a help-seeking problem-solving mindset. She always positions herself to turn things into a learning experience. She seeks help whenever she needs it. If she gets a grade lower than she expected or receives a notation on a paper or does not understand something, she seeks the professor's feedback to learn how to correct the problem. (Ms. Spence)

Help seeking behavior. Another important element of the master-planning theme is that the students in this study are not afraid to seek or ask for help. Caleb and Alejandro readily admit they sought out tutors when they needed help with particularly challenging courses. They continue to use tutors even in college. Caleb also sought the help and guidance of fellow students in learning new study habits when he needed to "step it up in college." With respect to the second statement, Ms. Spence, Jasmine's mentor, points out that the student has learned the critical problem-solving skill of seeking help from others when she needs it.

Additionally, Sofia sought out the advice and guidance of NJ LEEP in planning and navigating her way to college. She did not hesitate to ask Alejandro for advice about attending college or selecting her major. She also relied on her English teacher and student council advisor for advice and guidance. Additionally, students said they do not mind asking teachers or professors questions when they do not understand something.

Valeria relied on the guidance counselor at high school for help navigating her way to Rutgers Newark and has asked the Rutgers Career Development Center for help narrowing her area of concentration in biology and for assistance finding related internships. Finally, Ama's math teacher in high school said she was not hesitant about coming to him for extra work and help when she did not understand something indicating, "She was so invested in her education that she made it seem like nothing else but school mattered. I found that very refreshing. No other student did that."

> Everything I do is tailored to future needs and my anticipated future responsibilities. "I work hard, stay involved in extracurricular activities, and serve as a mentor because I want to be a teacher. If I really want to be a teacher, if I really want to work in education, I need to do these things now. (Alejandro)
>
> I actively search for internships that align with my future dreams. Working at Burger King is not going to help my future. (Valeria)
>
> Even though I am just a freshman, to position myself for a career as a critical care nurse anesthetist, I am seeking internships in local area hospitals. (Mateo)

Dream inspired acquisition of practical experience. The students involved in this study actively plan, search for, and obtain internships in their fields of interest. The intention behind these internships is to better position them when the time comes for entry into their career of choice. Alejandro is involved in activities and experiences that are congruent with his plan to become a high school teacher. Volunteering his time with the Rutgers Future Scholars program mentoring high school students and encouraging

them to attend college, Alejandro believes he is gaining valuable experience that will serve him well in his future teaching career. In the process, he is developing the necessary skills and talent to be a successful teacher in the future.

The second and third quotes from Valeria and Mateo further exemplify that students are only interested in internships that move them in the direction of their ideal future. Clearly, working at Burger King will not help Valeria become a research biologist and Mateo knows he needs relevant experience if he is to become a critical care nurse anesthetist.

Additionally, Sofia takes advantage of opportunities at Rutgers to mentor students and volunteers in various nonprofit organizations that support the residents of Newark. Alexis actively pursues internships with the NJ Parole Board and works part-time in a security job with an area corporation. Jasmine works part-time in a nonprofit organization mentoring young women as that is consistent with her dream and Caleb performs part-time for the Future Project working with students at his former high school because he believes "working with students at my old high school is giving me experience toward a future in teaching. It is a step in the direction of teaching some day."

> The way I see myself in the future is definitely reflected in the way I write my papers. I see every assignment as a way to prepare for my career in public administration and nonprofit management. All my academic work is helpful to my development as a professional. I strive for straight A's and I'm engaged and involved in school and campus activities based on my dreams of the future. (Sofia)
>
> If community corrections is my dream, I need to graduate college with a high GPA. (Alexis)
>
> The future he imagines for himself is a powerful motivator for him. Dr. Clinton
>
> I know the penalty for not achieving a high GPA – not achieving the future I dream about. (Alanza)

Academic drive and intensity fueled by anticipatory images. The academic

performance of the students in this study is elevated as anticipatory images inspire their

drive and intensity. The first statement attributed to Sofia exemplifies how every one of

the students expressed the idea that they are driven and determined to succeed

academically based on their dreams for the future. The students and their most influential

persons described the level of their academic performance intensity using words like

determined, focused, driven, and intense. Alexis is driven to attain a high GPA because

she wants to fulfill her dream of working in community corrections. Knowing Caleb as

he does, Dr. Clinton said, "The future he imagines for himself is a powerful motivator for

him." Alanza said she knows "the penalty for not achieving a high GPA – not achieving

the future I dream about."

Key Points About Theme #4: Using a variety of planning and evaluative techniques,

high academically achieving students plan and coordinate their steps toward their

anticipatory image

The answer to the research question how do students use their anticipatory images to

realize their imagined futures, is students use them to focus their planning efforts in

achieving their visions. As master planners, they use planning techniques to accomplish

their goals and to move themselves closer to the realization of their dreams. These

planning techniques include the formation of implementation intentions for the things

they need to do to accomplish their visions, plotting action steps, anticipating obstacles

through scenario forecasting, and conducting mental If/Then evaluation of situational

decisions. Additionally, their anticipatory images influence and inspire their academic

drive and intensity to attain high GPA's. This is important because they all see a high

GPA as critical and essential to the achievement of their dreams.

Research Question #4 and Theme #5 and #6

An important finding of this study is that students not only frame anticipatory images that

influence their positive academic performance but are supported by key people in their

lives who help them move in the direction of those images. Consistent with the

educational resiliency framework, Figure 5 illustrates the codes and categories, which

frame theme #5 - that high academically achieving students are the beneficiaries of

supportive relationships. The students in this student are supported by their parents or

parent, school administrators and staff, teachers, peers, and community-based others,

including college readiness organizations, counselors, and mentors. Theme #5 addresses

research question #4, which explores how key people support students in the fulfillment

of their anticipatory images.

Theme	Categories	Codes
Students are beneficiaries of supportive relationships	Network of supportive relationships Affirming quality of support Key supportive relationships: Parental Support School administrator/staff and teachers Peer support/It matters who you associate with College readiness mentors/organizations Nature of support differs among key relationships	It takes a village – someone intervenes; Affirmation and supportive relationships; networks of supportive relationships. Key supporters in the network: Parents/parent; school administrators, staff (guidance counselors), teachers, peers, college readiness mentors/counselors; other adults. Each person in the students' network of relationships plays a different but important role in supporting the student. Images influence student academic drive and intensity.

Figure 6. Codes and categories for theme #5

It just takes one person to intervene to change the direction. I think that not a lot of children, students, ever get that intervention or if they do, it's not a powerful one. (Alejandro)

It takes just one person to intervene. Alejandro believes that he is as successful

as he is in his academics because he has had people in his life who have intervened on his

behalf. His statement above illustrates his "it takes a village" perspective and how

important it is in tipping the scales between an academically successful student and one

who is not. The students in this study are the beneficiaries of a network of supportive

relationships or people who are willing to intervene in their lives. These people affirm the

students' strengths and encourage their dreams and aspirations. Constructed around the

students are networks of supportive relationships of people who care about them, affirm

them, and go out of their way to support them in all they do. This network includes

parents or parent, other family members, school administrators and staff, teachers, peers,

and other adults, such as college counselors and professors, and mentors from various

college readiness programs. Table 7 graphically illustrates the depth of the supportive

networks supporting the students in this study.

Table 7: Nature of the Students' Network of Supportive Relationships

	A Network of Supportive Relationships					
Student	Parent(s)/ Family	School Staff or Teacher	Circle of Peers	College Readiness Orgs.	College Counselors/ Professors	Other Adults
Sofia	√	√	√	√	√	
Alexis	√	√	√		√	
Jasmine	√	√	√	√	√	
Caleb	√	√	√	√		√
Alejandro	√	√	√	√	√	√
Alanza	√	√	√	√	√	
Valeria	√	√	√	√	√	
Mateo	√	√	√		√	
Diego	√	√	√			√
Ama	√	√	√	√	√	

Table 7

My mother and father have always been supportive of my educational goals. (Sofia)

My mother is my biggest supporter. (Alexis)

My mother could barely read or write but she pushed us to do well in school. (Isabella, Alejandro's sister)

I never had to worry about coming home and opening the fridge and not having any food. He provided for my basic needs and my emotional ones without forcing me to do things at home that would take away from my education. Education has always been very important to my father. He told me, 'I don't care if you don't do anything at home, as long as you bring home an A.' (Alanza)

Parental and family support. By far and away the students in this study receive affirming, positive support from their parents or parent and their family. They receive this support whether they are raised by two-parents or a single parent, it does not seem to matter. These statements are indicative of the finding that parents leave the formation of anticipatory images up to their children but support and encourage whatever career image they choose. However, they support their educational pursuits and set expectations for academic performance and hold their children accountable for excellence.

As stated, parents do not appear to be predominately involved in prompting the student to dream about their future career, but do wholeheartedly support whatever their child chooses as his or her vocation of choice. Instead of seeding dreams, parents encourage and support their children's vision. On the other hand, parents strongly influence the image of education as the pathway to a better, financially secure future and encourage, track, and monitor academic progress in achieving that image.

During their interviews, students made such statements as "My mother and father have always been supportive of my educational goals" or "My mother is my biggest supporter" or "My mother could barely read or write but she pushed us to do well in school." With respect to her career/vocational dreams, Alanza shared how her father did

not require her to do home chores saying that her only responsibility was to get good grades.

> All my teachers were supportive of me. (Sofia)

> My freshman year high school honors English teacher was one of the first people to say, 'You remind me of myself and you're going to be a teacher.' I knew I wanted to be a teacher someday but hearing it from someone like that was motivating. A bunch of my other high school teachers knew I wanted to be a teacher and they were all – 'yes, do it, do it, do it.' Be a teacher.' (Alejandro)

> My math teacher encouraged me to pursue an engineering career and directed me to resources to help me consider my options. (Ama)

> My guidance counselor encouraged and helped me get to the next level in my education. She linked me to a college readiness program and any information and resources that came to her attention, such as the Rutgers Abbott Learning Institute program. (Valeria)

High School Staff and/or Teacher Support. In a limited number of cases, high school staff and teachers influence the career images of students. However, they all promote education and college as the pathway to the attainment of a viable career. Most importantly, they affirm the student and encourage his or her educational progression. In many of the cases, they help the student think about, plan, and navigate their way toward college acceptance. Every one of the students in the study talked about how affirming and supporting their teachers and guidance counselors were as they progressed through high school. Sofia's statement about feeling supported by her teachers was echoed by most of the other student participants. Alejandro recalled a fourth grade teacher telling his mother that if he keeps going the way he is going, he will one day attend college. He also shared a story about how his favorite high school teacher in his freshman year said, 'oh, you need to be a teacher, I know you're going to be a teacher' and how his other high school teachers affirmed his dream by saying, 'yes, do it, do it, do it. Be a teacher.'

Ama's most influential person, her math teacher, encouraged her in pursuing an engineering career and provided her information and resources to help her make an informed choice. Valeria was supported by her high school guidance counselor who strongly encouraged her to attend a college readiness program at Rutgers and provided her with information and guidance about attending college. Mateo, in particular felt supported by his English teacher, as well as his most influential person, Coach Williams, who was also his health teacher. Coach set academic standards for participation on the school's track team and "checked-in" regularly with the students to monitor academic progress.

Primarily, teachers and school administrators and staff supported and continuously told them that they "are going to college." The language here is important to note. They didn't say, 'you should go to college.' Their vocabulary was unambiguous and image provoking: "You are going to college." Mateo recalled Coach saying to him, "Straight-up, you are going to college."

> Who you associate with makes a big difference to academic success. Friends have the biggest impact on all students. It is important that they have the same mindset and academic focus as you do. (Ama)
>
> We just kept surrounding ourselves with like-minded people, people who were going to succeed. (Alejandro)
>
> I have had to cut a lot of people I knew in high school off. A lot of people in school didn't have goals and were not focused on their education. They did not do well and were setting themselves back. I needed to align myself with people who had goals like me. (Mateo)

Supportive Peers. The students in this study construct networks of supportive relationship around themselves. With respect to the first quotation, Ama emphasizes that whom you associate with makes a big difference in your academic success. Caleb's most

influential person, the principal of his high school, said that the peers' students associate with make the difference between moving in a positive direction in school and life or diverting into negativity.

Interestingly, students were clear about only associating with "like-minded" peers, which means the friends they "hang-out" with have similar educational goals and career/vocational aspirations. As evidenced by Mateo's third statement above, friends who are not supportive of the student's dreams are kept at arms length because they are not helpful or encouraging of the student. Caleb indicated the same sentiment, "I won't cut them off, or anything like that, but I reduce how much time I spend with them because I have other goals."

The students interviewed for this study highly value their "circle" of peers or friends. Each of them has a tight, close-knit circle of peers or several circles with whom they socialize and with whom they study. Every one of the students discussed the positive support they receive from their circle of peers and the stressed that they support one another no matter what.

These statements indicate that students are focused like a laser on attaining their educational and career dreams and aspirations and surround themselves with friends who share similar visions. If there are people who do not have similar aspirations or are not academically focused, then these high academically achieving students move on from them finding and surrounding themselves with those who do.

> So I joined NJ LEEP and it helped me to get a sense of where I was going. My mentors encouraged me to attend college and they helped me with my application and helped me do the FAFSA application. They really guided me. (Sofia)
>
> I knew right away that he (Caleb) was destined for college. I knew success was in his future." Because I saw college in his future I pushed him to be a part of The

Future Project Program, which helps students see the value of college and helps
them navigate their way in. (Dr. Clinton)

Thinking ahead and planning for college with the help of college readiness

organizations and mentors. Seven of the ten students in this study were supported by

college readiness organizations, which planted in the students' minds the images of

education as pathway and their going to college. These organizations also supported the

student in applying and navigating them through the college admissions process, as well

as the process for securing much needed financial assistance. In this study, students were

influenced by such organizations as NJ LEEP, RU-NEXT, TRIO, The Future Project,

Rutgers Future Scholars, the Abbott Learning Institute, and Rutgers REACH. The seven

students were mentored by individuals from these organizations from the time they

entered high school through graduation. The main focus of the mentors was to help the

students frame a college-going image and help them navigate the admissions process.

> I credit the HLLC program for helping me rekindle my interest and passion for
> the nonprofit and public sector. The program helped me realize that I could
> definitely see myself getting into a nonprofit or public sector position where I
> could potentially help people. (Sofia)

> I arranged to meet with every one of the professors in the School of Engineering
> to gather and learn as much information I could about each engineering field so I
> could make an informed choice about the discipline I wish to pursue. (Ama)

Supportive college professors and/or counselors. In half of the interviews,

students stated that Rutgers EOF counselors and professors are supportive of their

progress. Students seek and listen to the advice and guidance of professors relative to

their career aspirations and educational progress. In particular, four of the students in this

study are HLLC students. As such they attend Rutgers Newark free of charge and receive

attentive academic support and guidance relative to their future plans. The main goal of

HLLC is to help students from Greater Newark gain access to a quality higher education and to support them in navigating their way to completion. The influence of the HLLC program is illustrated in Sofia's case, in which she credits the program with helping her rekindle her interest and passion for the nonprofit and public sector.

Ama**,** in particular, met with every one of the engineering professors in the School of Engineering in New Brunswick to gather as much information as she could so she could make an informed choice about the engineering discipline she wished to pursue. Jasmine continues to benefit from a mentor relationship with her RU-NEXT/TRIO counselor now that she is in college. Her mentor, Ms. Spence, continues to help her think about and plan the founding of her group home and is also instrumental in helping her navigate her way through her college experience.

> The social worker was so nice and kind to me. I asked who are you? And she said 'I'm a case manager; I go to people's houses to see if their children are all right and if they're not all right, we give them a better life. We give them better opportunities, better chances.' And I kept asking her questions, like what better life, what do you do? So she used to come two days out of the week bringing us toys and playing games with us. I just loved talking to her because I wanted to be just like her – a person any child could speak to. Since the day I met the lady, I have thought about her and her occupation. The image has never left my mind. (Jasmine)

Other adults. For each of the students, it is remarkable that they had adults in their lives, who affirmed, protected, and supported them**.** When she was younger, the DYFS caseworker that came to Jasmine's home to investigate a complaint planted the seed in Jasmine's mind of one day becoming a social worker. After spending time with the caseworker during her visits, Jasmine imagined herself one day becoming "just like her." Jasmine said the image of the lady "never left my mind."
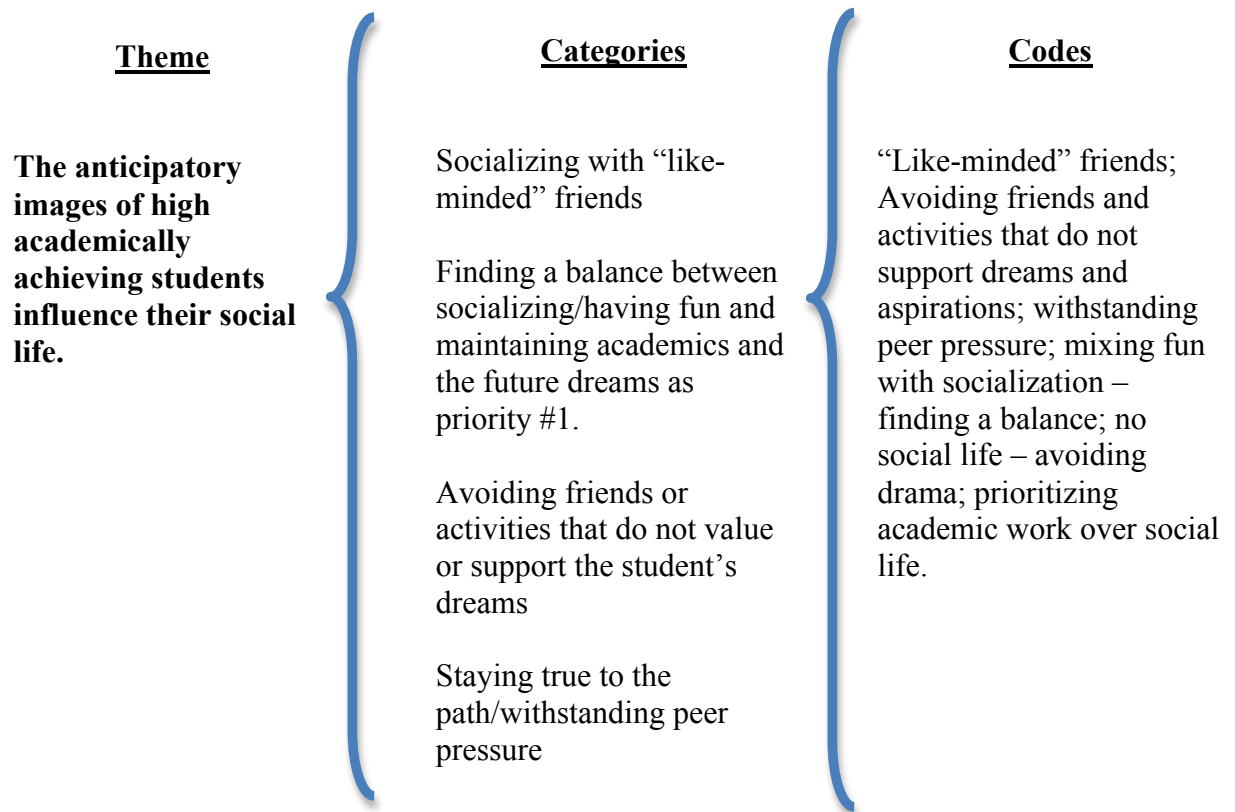
Dr. Clinton, the former high school principal and Caleb's most influential person stated it is important for students to develop "layers of protection" around themselves that "shield them from the negativity that is present." He said, this is why having a "system of adult support" around them is important because, "Without one, students become disconnected from school and the things that matter and instead connect with peers popular for their negativity."

Key Points About Theme #5: High academically achieving students are the beneficiaries of supportive relationships.

Theme #5, which is that high academically achieving students are the beneficiaries of supportive relationships answers research sub-question #3: How do others support students in the fulfillment of their anticipatory images? This study supports and reaffirms the "it takes a village" concept in helping students grow and develop as students. What the findings suggest is that the students have a constellation of positive relationships constructed around them and these caring people not only support them but also feed and nurture their anticipatory images. Most importantly, the people in the students' network of relationships are not only supportive but are unequivocally affirming.

Research Question #4 and Theme #6

Theme #6 also helps to answer research question #4: How do others support students in the fulfillment of their anticipatory images? In addition to the "it takes a village" constellation of supportive relationships that students construct around themselves, theme #6 as illustrated by the codes and categories of Figure #7 posits that the students in this study prioritize their academic work over their social lives.

Theme	**Categories**	**Codes**
The anticipatory images of high academically achieving students influence their social life.	Socializing with "like-minded" friends Finding a balance between socializing/having fun and maintaining academics and the future dreams as priority #1. Avoiding friends or activities that do not value or support the student's dreams Staying true to the path/withstanding peer pressure	"Like-minded" friends; Avoiding friends and activities that do not support dreams and aspirations; withstanding peer pressure; mixing fun with socialization – finding a balance; no social life – avoiding drama; prioritizing academic work over social life.

Figure 7. Codes and categories for theme #6

Sofia is an expert at mixing fun with work. (Alejandro)

I have found a way to always have fun with my friends, while doing homework. We listen to music and dance a little and then we do homework. But when there is a test or paper due, we are all about the work. Our academic work is our main priority. (Sofia)

I have no social life. I am planning to work in criminal justice so I stay away from drama in my personal life because any trouble you get into you have to disclose when you do applications for jobs. Parties? I avoid all of that. I work. I know how to occupy my time with other things. I'll pass on the party. I don't want to go out and that is the right thing to do. I'd rather go to work. My friends say 'all you do is work; all you do is work.' Yeah. That's what I do. (Alexis)

Socializing with like-minded peers/friends. As previously discussed, students

tend to associate with "like-minded" peers/friends who support their aspirations and are

driven by similar visions. However, even with their closest friends, the high academically achieving students in this study limit their social lives and place their educational pursuits and career aspirations as their main priority. Sofia has found a way to mix her need for a fun-filled social life with her academic work. When she and her friends get together, they listen to music and dance "a little" and then study. She has found a balance between having an enjoyable social life and getting her academic work done. However, whenever she has a test or a project due, academics take priority.

Alexis, on the other hand, said, "I have no social life." Because she is planning to work in criminal justice, she stays away from any "drama" that might derail her from achieving her dream. Jasmine said she and her friends "get the idea of prioritizing our academic work over other social, fun things. It is ok for anyone of us to say no sometimes." Caleb said he is successful because he is "able to withstand peer pressure." He said in high school he and his friends were into "fun and socializing" but now we are about helping and supporting each other do better." Alejandro and his friends prioritize academics over their social lives. And when asked how her academic intensity influences her social life, Valeria responded, "What social life? I've got none."

Key Points About Theme #6: High academically achieving students prioritize their academic work over their social lives.

In summary, the students' anticipatory images influence their actions and behavior including their social lives. Students subjugate their social lives to their academic work and progress. In other words, the students' positive anticipatory images influence positive action in focusing their time and attention in the direction of their academic work. Instead of socializing with friends, they serve in internships, clubs, or work in part-time jobs to

gain the relevant experience needed to position themselves for secure entry into their

career of choice.

Summary of the Role of Most Influential Persons

Since the most influential persons selected by the students are a significant and

important feature of this study, this separate section about the role they play in the

students' lives is provident in further describing the role of anticipatory images play in

the academic success of low-income, inner city students.

> She is an excellent student who always does her best. She is my shining star.
> (Mrs. Carpenter)

> She beats the statistic. People put labels on our children saying 'well you're from
> Newark; you're not going to amount to anything. But Jasmine is like a sponge
> ready to absorb and soak up everything. (Ms. Spence)

> He is quiet, curious, outgoing, and a smart individual. He has the drive and
> wherewithal to persevere through failure. (Dr. Clinton)

Reinforcing the positive self-concept of students. Each of the most influential

persons in this study validates the positive self-concept images framed by the students.

They are quick to affirm the students as excellent, hard working, focused, resilient, and

eager to learn. Each had positive and unique statements of the students as students. From

Alexis' mother, Mrs. Carpenter, who described her daughter as an "excellent student"

who always "does her best" to Jasmine's mentor, Ms. Spence who reinforces the image

of the student who beats the odds and is "like a sponge" when it comes to learning, to the

former high school principal, Dr. Clinton, who immediately identified the Caleb as

"curious and smart," these most influential persons and the others affirm and reinforce

the positive self-concept images students hold of themselves.

I always envisioned her working with and helping people. So I pushed her in that direction. (Alejandro)

You are first generation and will be the first one in your family to go to college and get a degree because you are capable in doing it. (Ms. Spence)

She does not want to go through the struggles her family went through. She definitely wants to better her own life and help the people around her. She is just striving for a better future. (Diego)

Assisting students in framing positive anticipatory images. These three statements are illustrative of the role the most influential persons played in helping students frame their positive anticipatory images. Even as Sofia considered various possible career choices related to business, Alejandro kept the image of her helping people in the forefront of her mind, suggesting she work in the nonprofit or public sectors. Today, her academic focus is on nonprofit management and public administration. Ms. Spence continually reminded Jasmine that she was college material and that she "will" be the first person in her family to attend college. Her use of the word "will," instead of could or might, provokes an affirmative, fated image of Jasmine's future. Diego reinforced the image of Alanza striving for a better life, one in which she and her family does not have to struggle economically. Taken together these most influential persons and the others assist students with image formation and reinforcement relative to the their visions of a better, financially secure life, a meaningful career, and going to and completing college.

I support and encourage him in whatever he want to do in the future but I always asked him questions so he thinks about the steps and things he needs to do to achieve his dreams. (Isabella)

I advise my students, 'you have to see yourself there before you get there.' I help them see the future and run through scenarios they will encounter along the way. If you see them in advance you will know what to do when they pop-up. (Coach Williams)

> Because he is interested in a career in automotive engineering, I encourage him to get a mentor in that field, as well as hands-on experience through internships. He needs to see the key steps on the way to fulfilling his vision. (Alanza)

Helping students plan their way to their dream. These statements exemplify the important role most influential persons play in helping students plan and coordinate their way toward their dreams. Like Isabella did with Alejandro, most influential persons helped the students think concretely about the steps and actions they need to take achieve their idealized future. Alanza made suggestions and sometimes "nagged" Diego to get a mentor and to arrange "hands-on" internships in his field of choice. In some cases the most influential person helped the students with planning techniques the way Coach Williams did with Mateo. The "see yourself before you get there" concept is an advanced planning technique that helps people visualize and imagine successful outcomes and what needs to be done to accomplish them. It is also a way to visualize obstacles and plan how to overcome them. Importantly, the most influential persons in this study were instrumental in helping the students develop as master planners of their futures.

> I feel more like her mentor than her teacher. When she had academic difficulties she came to see me early before the start of school or during free time for extra help. She also routinely asked me for extra work. (Mr. Santiago)
>
> I was there to help her the best I can. (Mrs. Carpenter)
>
> I help him stay focused on his academic priorities. (Alanza)
>
> I just provide as much information as I can to help him navigate his way without making him dependent on me for achieving his dream. (Coach Williams)

Supporting the student. Perhaps the most important thing the most influential persons do is support the students. Mr. Santiago felt more like Ama's mentor than her teacher, as he supported her development as a student and helped her navigate her way to a future in engineering. Like Ms. Silva did as Valeria's guidance counselor and Coach Williams did with Mateo, Mr. Santiago linked Ama with resources she needed to explore

her career choices. Alexis' mother saw her role as a helper. Knowing her daughter was

more advanced than her academically, she assumed the role of encourager, tracking and

monitoring her daughter's progress. Alanza did the same with Diego as she supported

him in staying focused on his academic priorities. In every case, the most influential

persons were there to support and help the student advance toward their stated dreams.

In summary, the most influential persons affirmed the positive self-concept of the

students, helped them think about and plan the steps they needed to take to accomplish

their intentions, and supported them in the process of goal attainment. It is not surprising

that the students have continued to maintain contact with their most influential persons

now that they are in college. Understandably, they have stayed connected with those who

they are related to or who are their best friends, but as Mateo does with Coach Williams,

the students "check-in" with their most influential person to update them on their

progress and to ask for advice and guidance.

Student Perceptions of their Most Influential Persons

Every one of the students has a constellation of people in their lives affirming and

supporting them on their journey to the future. This section summarizes how students

perceive the role of the their most influential persons.

> We motivate each other to join different programs, we send each other links to
> different opportunities, we tell each other to apply to internships, we really push
> each other and we're ambitious together and we're ambitious separately. And
> when we get together and become ambitious together, we're unstoppable. (Sofia)

Clearly, Sofia and Alejandro have a special friendship that has withstood the test

of time. Attending school together from pre-k through high school, they "pushed" and

"motivated" each other to excel in school. Interestingly, they credit the other for their

respective success. Sofia believes they are both "unstoppable" as a tour-de-force. Most of

the students in this study indicated they were motivated by their most influential person

and did not want to do let them down by poor or low academic performance.

> She was always there to help. Projects, homework, even if she didn't know, she
> was always there to help. She was always encouraging even if she didn't know
> the work. I don't know how to explain it. She is just very encouraging and
> supportive of me. (Alexis)

> Alexis recognizes that her mom cannot help her with the content of her academic

material. However, she does things for Alexis that are more important. Alexis sees her

mother has her biggest supporter and encourager." She welcomes her mother's

encouragement and appreciates that she tracks and monitors her progress. She also

appreciates that her mother stressed the value and importance of education as essential

for long-term success in life. Every one of the students in the study discussed the value

and importance of their most influential person as their primary encourager and

supporter.

> She helped me do everything for college, like every single thing. Without her help
> I wouldn't be in college. (Jasmine)

> She noticed my good grades and encouraged me to get ready for college."
> (Valeria)

> Coach played a big role in pushing me toward college. He said straight up: you're
> going to college. From there it was set, it was over, I'm going to college. (Mateo)

> These three statements illustrate how important some of the most influential

people were in encouraging and motivating the students to prepare for and attend college.

Jasmine does not believe she would be at Rutgers University Newark without Ms.

Spence's "prodding." Valeria shared that it was Ms. Silva, her guidance counselor, who

pressured her to attend a summer college readiness program, which inspired her to attend

college. Valeria clearly remembers her guidance counselor admonishing her about the

summer college readiness program, 'you are going and that is that." Coach Williams did

the same for Mateo saying, 'straight-up you are going to college.'

> He gives me gems of advice and guidance and even advises me about how to pursue the principal thing. (Caleb)

Like Caleb, the students respect and value the advice and guidance they receive

from their most influential persons who were high school teachers, administrators, or

counselors and continue to 'check-in" with them even now that they are in college. Caleb

said his former principal gives him advice and guidance as he plans to become a high

school principal someday.

> Alanza helped me get back on track when I struggled my first semester. She was a very big eye-opener for me. She told me, 'hey, you're off base here, you've got to get back on base.' She knew what I'm capable of and she saw that I wasn't living up to that. She said, 'don't make excuses. This is not you. This is not what you should be doing. Get your priorities straight.' (Diego)

Diego credits Alanza for helping him get back on track academically after a

challenging first semester at Rutgers New Brunswick. She encouraged him and held him

accountable for meeting his priorities. Mateo indicated that "check-in" with Coach

Williams does involve a "how are you doing in your school work" accountability type

conversation.

In conclusion, the students see their most influential persons as encouragers and

supporters and as people who continue to hold them accountable for progress in school

and in life. Most of them recognize that they would not be where they are today without

the help, support, guidance, and encouragement of these individuals.

Next Chapter

In chapter seven, I will present a "composite" description of the students' experiences with anticipatory images by integrating the "textural and structural" descriptions with the theoretical framework for this study (Moustakas, 1994).

Chapter 7

Composite Summary

This research proceeded from an inductive qualitative data research design. However, several theories led me to deductively frame my research questions. As discussed in the literature review, the relevant theories supporting this research include: (1) the anticipatory principle/theory of prospection (Cooperrider, 1990; M. E. P. Seligman et al., 2013; M.E.P. Seligman et al., 2016), and (2) the resiliency educational framework (Johnson, 1997; Tough, 2016; Williams & Portman, 2014). My findings support the argument that the anticipatory principle/theory of prospection may be an important but overlooked component of the resiliency educational framework. While supportive relationships, inclusive of parents, school staff and teachers, peers, and other influential adults, are a key element facilitating student academic success, the positive images they support or project onto the student may be a significant contributing factor.

The following questions were framed as the focus of inquiry for this study.

1. Do academically successful low-income, inner city students who have graduated from an urban public high school and attend a four-year university frame and use anticipatory images to guide their academic achievement?

2. What are the anticipatory images these students frame and how do they frame them?

3. How do students use their anticipatory images to realize their imagined future?

4. How do others support students in the fulfillment of their anticipatory images?

The discussion in this chapter will address each of these questions in relationship to the emerging themes, findings, and the supporting literature review. The chapter will

conclude with the limitations of this research study, its implications and recommendations, and possible areas for future research.

Figure 3 illustrates a theoretical construct, which links the Education Resiliency Framework (Johnson, 1997; Tough, 2016; Williams & Portman, 2014) with the Anticipatory Principle and its Positive Image/Positive Action Dynamic (Cooperrider, 1990) and the Theory of Prospection (M. E. P. Seligman et al., 2013) and its attendant concept of Pragmatic Prospection (Baumeister et al., 2016). With respect to Education Resiliency Framework, parents and family, school staff and teachers, peers, and other influential adults, do more than serve as a protective shield for the students. They help students frame positive images of an idealized future, teach them essential planning skills needed to achieve their dreams, and support them in their journey toward actualizing their visions. In this model, high academically achieving students apply appreciative competence in not only visualizing the future but also planning and implementing the steps they need to take to make their dreams come true. The Anticipatory Principle and Theory of Prospection are evident in the positive stories shared by each of the high performing students and the most influential people in their lives. This model suggests that students who develop anticipatory competence, which I refer to as the ability to think as concretely as possible in visualizing and planning for an ideal future may experience greater academic success and educational progress from elementary school through college.

Education Resilency Framework

Supporting Anticipatory Competence in Students
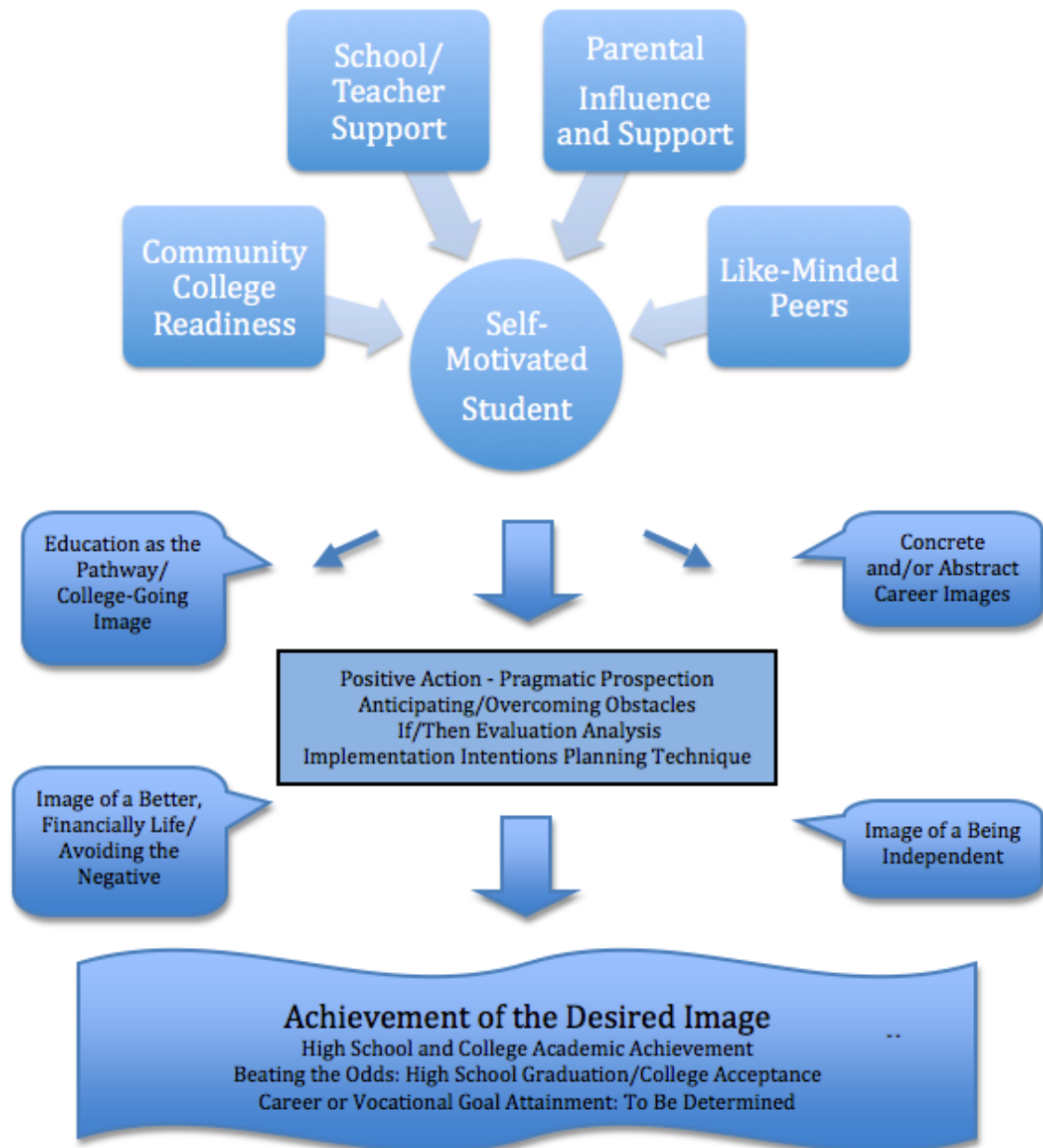
Figure 8. Theoretical framework for supporting the anticipatory competence of students

Research Question #1: Students Frame Anticipatory Images

With respect to research question #1, high academically achieving students do frame anticipatory images. Themes #1 posits that they form a positive self-concept image of themselves, which they strive to maintain and enhance, while theme #2 asserts that high academically achieving students frame positive anticipatory images which influences their academic drive and performance.

As discussed in the literature review, certain principles serve as the philosophical foundation for the practice of Appreciative Inquiry. One of those is the Anticipatory Principle, which posits that humans move in the direction of the images they project ahead of themselves. In his conception of the principles and practice of Appreciative Inquiry, Cooperrider (1990) conceptualized the "positive image – positive action" dynamic, arguing that humans first see the image and then take action to bring into reality. Similarly, The theory of prospection suggests that individuals possess the ability to mentally imagine what might happen in the future (M. E. P. Seligman et al., 2013; M.E.P. Seligman et al., 2016; Szpunar et al., 2014). M. E. P. Seligman et al. (2013) also argue that our futures are not preordained by our past but are a product of what we imagine. Interestingly, a teacher/track coach interviewed for this study routinely instructs his student athletes, "You have to see yourself there before you get there." He helps them to see or imagine a winning future and run through various scenarios they will encounter along the way. "If they see them in advance, they will know what to do when they pop-up," he said.

The findings of this study indicate that high academically achieving low income, inner city students do frame positive anticipatory images of the future. As discussed in

chapters five and six, the images framed are multi-faceted and interlocking. First of all, high academically achieving students frame positive self-concept images of themselves, which are affirmed and reinforced by other students and influential people in their lives, such as parents, school staff and teachers, peers and mentors, the key supportive relationships that defines the education resiliency framework. Once students frame and accept a positive self-concept, they take actions and exhibit behaviors designed to maintain and strengthen that image.

A tripartite set of three interlocking, mutually reinforcing anticipatory images. Successful students also frame a tripartite set of interlocking, and mutually reinforcing anticipatory images that propel them forward in the direction of these visions. These images include: 1) a career image, which may be abstract/general or concrete/specific; 2) an image of a better, more financially secure life; and 3) an image of education as their pathway to achieving their career and better life images. The education as the pathway vision is intertwined with image of attending and graduating from college. This study found that an abstract/general image of a future career or vocation held by a student is just as influential as a concrete/specific image in motivating a student in the direction of the image. In other words, it did not appear that students are any less motivated to excel academically or any less intense about their academic work, if the career image is abstract or concrete.

Anticipatory images morph between abstract and concrete. The findings also highlight two other interesting observations related to student anticipatory images. First, there appears to be fluidity or a morphing effect between career abstract and concrete images. In this study, there are students who initially framed an abstract career image,

which then morphed into a concrete image as the student matured and/or gathered more information or were inspired to pursue a concrete career/vocational vision. For example, Alexis initially framed an abstract image of working in the field of law. As she gained maturity and was exposed to new ideas, the image morphed into a vision of working in the criminal justice field. This abstract image later morphed into a vision of becoming a community parole officer when her professor, herself a former State parole officer, inspired her. There are also students like Sophia who framed concrete images, which then morphed into abstract images and later transitioned back to the concrete images. Some students at young ages framed a concrete image and maintained that image from middle school right into college. Finally, several of the students framed abstract images of a career field and are actively exploring a more definitive, concrete field of concentration. What is important to remember is that students progress educationally and academically in pursuit of their dream, whether it is concrete or abstract. A possible explanation for this effect is that the career image, be it abstract or concrete, is intertwined with the education as pathway/college-going image and the vision of a better, more financially secure life. It may be that for students to progress academically, all three images need to be working together in a mutually reinforcing fashion.

Two tangential, overlapping anticipatory images. Secondly, there are two other images that emerged from the interviews and are tangentially associated with the three overlapping themes. One is the 'living an independent life' image, while the other is the avoidance of certain negative images. The living an independent life image is closely aligned with the living a better, more financially secure life, except it is one that was expressed by several female students. It is a future image of being financially

independent so they do not have to depend on another person (a male) to be successful in life. They see themselves having the financial wherewithal to leave potential poor relationships or bad situations. Valeria expressed this image best: "I want to have enough money that I can do whatever I want. I'm not going to be controlled by anyone, living all unhappy. I am not going to end up in a situation that is beyond my control."

The other image that emerged is the one students wish to avoid, such as the possibility of being homeless, or living a life of family and economic instability, or living in poverty paycheck-to-paycheck. Students mentally see such images and are driven to succeed in their schooling to avoid the deficit later. As Alanza said, "That's just not the life I've imagined for myself."

Research Question #2: Students Frame Anticipatory Images With the Help of Others

With respect to question #2, which sought to identify how do students frame their anticipatory images, theme #3 asserts, they frame them with the help of other people in their lives. Students' career/vocational images of the future are primarily self-motivated and are framed with help of other people. Congruent with the resiliency framework, the other people who help students frame these images are parents, school staff and teachers, peers, college counselors and professors, and other adults. The same constellation of relationships that protectively shield students from stressful risk factors associated with the urban environment, are also influential and instrumental in shaping their images of the future.

This study indicates that each relationship plays an important and unique role in anticipatory image formation. First of all, students are primarily self-motivated in forming vocational images of their future. However, they do have help from certain

individuals in their lives. Interestingly though, parents do not play a significant role in helping their children in the formation of their career/vocational aspirations. They do, however, support the aspirations of their children whatever they might be. On the other hand, school staff, such as counselors, administrators, and teachers do influence the career/vocational images formed by students, by focusing on the student's strengths and asking questions, suggesting ideas, and encouraging the student to research certain career possibilities.

Through a combination of self-motivation and parental socialization, students frame images of a better, more financially secure future. Experiencing poverty and observing their parents struggle economically, the high academically achieving students in this study look ahead and see a better life for themselves and their family. For example, Alexis was driven to excel academically because she "did not want to be a product of my environment." Caleb sees a better, more financially secure family life for himself in the future, a life he did not have as a child. Valeria sees herself buying a new home for her mother and taking her away from the "horrendous" life of "living paycheck to paycheck." These images are prompted, influenced, and reinforced by parents, who continually "stress" the idea of working hard to attain a better, more financially secure life. Alejandro's adoptive mother who had no education and could barely read and write continually stressed that he and his sister could achieve a better, more financially secure life through education and hard work.

The third overlapping and mutually reinforcing education as the pathway-college going image is primarily self-motivated with very strong parental influence. The high academically achieving students in this study cognitively reason they need to do well in

school in order to achieve their dreams, visions, and aspirations for the future. For them, doing well in school means working hard to be at or near the top of their class. They see education and college as instrumental "stepping stones" in achieving their career/vocational dreams and ultimately a better, more financially secure life.

This study illustrates that parents play a significant role in helping their children shape the education as pathway/college-going image. Parents of students in this study exhibit a full range of educational attainment from no education at all (Alejandro's mother), to parents with only some high school education, to those who did graduate from high school, to parents who have some college, to those who graduated from college. In every case, the parents or parent instinctively encouraged the student to pursue their education and to attend college. Alejandro indicated his mother did not have any education, could barely read or write, but continually and relentlessly stressed the importance and value of education as the pathway to a better life. She was adamant that he and his sister attend college.

Not to be overlooked are the various organizations based in Newark, which are working to increase the number of urban students who attend college. As they began middle school or high school, five of the students in this study were influenced by counselors in these organizations to imagine themselves attending college. Coach Williams, Mateo's most influential person, points out that this is no small task as many "urban" students need help overcoming the "roadblock of questioning their worth." He remarked that urban students are used to having and expecting less of everything. With this in mind, the task of re-shaping or re-framing that deficit-based image to a college going image requires continuous attention and reinforcement. It is no wonder that

programs like Rutgers Future Scholars identifies potential college-going students in the

seventh grade and works with them through high school graduation to help them think of

themselves as college going material. These college readiness organizations also help the

student navigate their way to their college of choice supporting them through the

application and admissions process.

Additionally, students were influenced by other adults in their lives, such as

school guidance counselors, as in the case of Valeria, school administrators, as in the case

of Caleb, and by teachers. Once school administrators and staff identify a student as

"college material," they continually reinforce that image through conversations,

questioning, and linking the student to resources they need to make an informed decision.

In effect, school officials, staff, and teachers along with college readiness organizations

working in conjunction with parents, serve as an image framing vortex that strongly

influences the student to "picture" themselves attending college as just part of their

destiny and as an essential "stepping stone" to their ideal and imagined future.

Research Question #3: Students Are Master Planners of their Idealized Future

Research question #3 sought to describe how students use their anticipatory images to

realize their imagined future. Theme #4 explains that students use their images as anchor

points for making decisions and planning the steps they need to take to bring their visions

to reality. The students in this study are master planners, using a variety of planning and

evaluative techniques to plan and coordinate their steps toward their educational and

vocational dreams.

Congruent with Cooperrider's positive action side of the positive image – positive

action dynamic, (M. E. P. Seligman et al., 2013; M.E.P. Seligman et al., 2016); Szpunar

et al. (2014) argue that "pragmatic prospection" enables people to mentally envision a desired future or outcome and then plan the "pragmatic steps" leading to the desired, preferred ideal. They proffer that through mental outcome simulation and process simulation, people enact the visions they cognitively imagine. In their theoretical construct, mental outcome simulation is the image of the desired ideal future and process simulation is the visualization of the planned steps and actions that are needed to bring the imagined image to reality.

This study reveals that high academically achieving students are 'master planners' mentally simulating desired and preferred ideal futures for themselves and planning proactive steps to bring those images to reality. After mentally simulating the three overlapping, mutually reinforcing images (career/vocational, a better, more financially secure future, and education as the pathway/college-going image) they plot and plan specific things they need to do to achieve those images. In essence, they connect the positive image with the positive action side of Cooperrider's theoretical construct and exhibit the type of pragmatic prospection discussed by Seligman and his colleagues.

Use of planning techniques. As Alejandro said, "I plan for everything." This study illustrates that students create plans and set goals, create implementation intentions, anticipate obstacles and plan ways to overcome them, and conduct mental if/then evaluative analyses, and envision future scenarios that influence their actions and behavior in the present so as to effect their future.

Planning steps in the direction of their anticipatory images. Specifically, the students planned, coordinated, and took specific steps to bring their imagined futures to reality. Taking a long-view, students began planning and taking steps in middle school

and throughout high school to get themselves into college. For example, they did what they had to do to maintain a high GPA because a high GPA would help their chances of getting into college. They participated and took leadership roles in extracurricular activities reasoning that colleges will look favorably at such activities. Some students engaged tutors to help them with challenging course content. Alexis carefully planned and coordinated her college course schedule to make sure she had the right number of credits to qualify for a 5-year Master's degree in criminal justice. With the goal of becoming a parole officer, she executed the necessary steps to acquire needed licenses and take firearms training in anticipation of eventually attending a police academy, which is required of new parole officers. In effect, she anticipated attending the police academy and took steps to gain the requisite experience, licenses, and training to qualify for admission. Like the other students, her decision-making and planned actions were carefully and deliberately aligned with her career/vocational dreams.

Anticipating that they will need practical, relevant experience to break into their career of choice, students executed steps to secure such experience though internships, part-time employment, mentoring, or volunteer work. As one of the students said, "Everything I do is tailored to future needs and my anticipated future responsibilities."

Use of if/then evaluative analysis. M. E. P. Seligman et al. (2013) points to the use of "If/Then" evaluative analysis as a key component of pragmatic prospection. This technique was evident in the mental practices of students in this study. Students mentally evaluate situations and make decisions and take actions congruent with their anticipatory images. For example, Alexis uses if/then evaluation to keep her focused on her dream. "If I need a clean record for a career in community parole, then I need to avoid drama in my

personal life." Consequently, she steers clear of parties and other things that could lead to

trouble. In her head Jasmine reasoned, "if I don't not finish (college,) I am not going to

help at-risk adolescent women and if I can't do that, I'm not going to be able to do what I

am called to do." As a result of this mental evaluation, Jasmine stays focused and works

even harder to excel academically. Alajandro used the same technique to attain an A in a

course he thought he might fail.

Overcoming obstacles. Congruent with the concept of mental contrasting, a

pragmatic prospection technique (Baumeister et al., 2016; Kappes & Oettingen, 2014),

students in this study anticipate roadblocks and make plans to overcome them. Caleb

learned from the Future Project the skill of thinking about potential obstacles and getting

around them and now anticipates obstacles "all the time" thinking about "everything like

a chess match." Alanza views her anxiety about public presentations as an obstacle to her

academic and future career success and takes steps to deal with the problem through

comprehensive preparation.

Research Question #4: Students Construct a Constellation of Supportive Relationships

Themes #5 and #6 provide answers to the fourth research question about how other

people support students as they move in the direction of their anticipatory images.

Theme 5 asserts that high academically achieving students are the beneficiaries of a

constellation of supportive relationships, while theme #6 describes how anticipatory

images affect their social lives.

Consistent with educational resiliency framework, the highly academically

achieving students in this study construct and benefit from a constellation of positive,

affirming relationships, which serve as a protective barrier against risk factors attendant

with the urban environment. This study found that parents, school staff and teachers, peers, and other adults and organizations support the dreams of the students and help them navigate their way to their futures.

Parental and family support. Every one of the students in this study had affirming, caring support from their parents and family. Whether raised by one or two parents, the students benefited from the affirming, caring support of at least one parent. In this study, students were supported and encouraged in their academic endeavors by both parents or a single parent or predominately by one parent in a two-parent household.

In this study, parents supported and encouraged their children to pursue their dreams, whatever they might be. While parents were not significantly involved in shaping the career/vocational dreams of their children, they were obsessive in continually emphasizing "education, education, education" as the pathway to a better life. While they were not capable of helping their students with academic content, they play the role of chief encourager setting expectations and holding their children accountable for positive results (good grades). In addition, some of the parents tracked and monitored the completion of homework and assignments. One of the parents even tracks progress now that the student is in college. Many of the students used the word "pushed" to describe how their parents stress education. As one student said, "my mother and aunt pushed me to do well in school believing that doing so would lead to a better future."

High school administrators and staff and teachers. The education resiliency framework argues that high school administrators and staff (i.e. guidance counselors, coaches, etc.) and most importantly, teachers, play an essential role in supporting the academic progress of successful students. This study clearly illustrates in every case this

is indeed true. This was evident in the case of the student supported and guided by his high school principal, as well as almost every other student who reported the invaluable support of a key influential teacher. While teachers and other school administrators and staff did not play a major role in shaping the career/vocational images of the students, (although in some cases they did), they were influential in helping the student see the value of education and going to college as the pathway to their idealized future.

A circle of peer support. High academically achieving students tend to surround themselves with "like-minded" friends who similarly share aspirations for a certain career and a better, financially secure life and believe that education and college attendance is the pathway to that image. The dream is so pronounced and guiding that students will limit their interaction with those who do not share their dreams or who try to distract them from the pursuit of their vision. Former high school principal, Dr. Clinton cautioned that choosing the 'right peers' is absolutely critical to the academic success of students. He discussed how negative peers can and do pull students in negative directions, while, positively oriented peers can and do influence positive behavior, actions, and academic habits. In most of the cases, students used study groups to support their academic work.

College readiness organizations. In over half of the cases, students engaged with college readiness organizations to help them navigate their way to college. Organizations like NJ LEEP, Rutgers Future Scholars, The Future Project, RU-NEXT/TRIO, and the Abbott Learning Institute helped to shape or reinforce the college going image in students and then helped them over multiple years to navigate their way into college. While primarily focused on the college-going image and navigational support, these organizations helped the students think about their future career/vocational dreams.

Clearly, the study illustrates how important the education resiliency framework is helping students 'beat the odds' educationally. This study demonstrates that a key aspect of this framework is the constellation of supportive relationships, which help students frame or reinforce the three interlocking, mutually reinforcing images of the future and supporting their progress as they move toward their ultimate vision.

Academics take precedence over social lives. Theme #6 posits that the educational and career aspirations and goals of high academically achieving students influence their social lives. This theme supports the Positive Image/Positive Action Dynamic, in which students frame a positive and direction-invoking image of the future and positively act on that image in aligning their social lives around the vision. Students take positive action in the direction of the vision by constructing supportive relationships in their lives. They have figured out that they need positive, supportive relationships as a key element of realizing their dreams. If there is a potential relationship that can help them achieve their dream, they proactively search out and connect with that person. They associate with and socialize with like-minded friends/peers. Most significantly, they choose not to socialize with those who are not academically oriented. They and their friends prioritize their academic work over their social lives. For all of them, academics come first.

Human agency. The thoughts and actions of the students in this study support and reinforce the concept of human agency (Bandura, 2006). In each of the individual cases, the students exhibited self-efficacy and power in directing their thoughts and actions in pursuit of given images and objectives. The formation of the three mutually reinforcing images of the future, a certain career, a better, more financially secure life,

and education and college as essential to their attainment were borne out of individual agency. Even though the students had help from others in forming these images, it was their own individual volition that embraced them as meaningful. Their use of images as anchors for setting goals and planning and coordinating their way in the direction of the images exhibits power and agency in shaping and directing the course of their lives. Actively constructing a constellation of supportive relationships, associating with like-minded peers, and pursuing and securing practical experience to better position themselves for the futures they imagine all illustrate agency in striving toward their ideal, preferred images.

Anticipatory images, goal setting, and motivation. While not specifically a focus of this study, there is a chicken and egg question relative to what prompts what. Do anticipatory images prompt goal setting or vice versa? Are students motivated by anticipatory images or by goals? This study suggests that high academically achieving students envision a preferred, ideal anticipatory image and then take positive action to bring the vision to reality. The desired anticipatory image, in effect, motivates him or her to press forward with goals, implementation intentions, planning around and through obstacles, and cognitively evaluating situations and decisions with the ultimate decision being the one that moves him or her toward their vision. For example, it is the image of one day becoming a community parole officer, which prompts Alexis to imagine herself sitting across from a prospective employer being questioned about whether there is something in her background that would preclude her from being employed as a parole officer. She actually sees herself having that crucial conversation with a potential employer. The image of becoming a community parole officer is so motivating that she

avoids putting herself in compromising situations by avoiding parties. Instead she

concentrates on her academic work and developing relevant work experience in her field.

Coach Williams instructs his athletes, "You need to see yourself there before you get

there." The anticipatory image is foundational to goal setting and together they motivate

positive action. While this needs to be studied further, is it possible that anticipatory

images are anchoring points for the setting of goals and in motivating action in their

direction. I do not suggest that goals are not a motivating factor. They are. However, this

study suggests that anticipatory images and attendant goals work in tandem to produce

positive action in the direction of both the image and the goal.

Poverty and image formation. I have stressed in this paper that poverty matters.

If we truly wish to improve the lives of all low-income, inner city students, we need to

address, mitigate, and eradicate the effects of poverty and discrimination in their lives as

these conditions hold people back and down thus inhibiting economic and social

mobility. However, the question of poverty prompts a question that needs to be further

explored: How do low-income, inner city students who have not been exposed to the

same opportunities as affluent students, who are privileged to live in homes and

communities and attend schools bubbling with images of opportunity and hope, form

images they have never experienced? While this study did not specifically address this

question, the findings do suggest possible answers.

First, with respect to the formation career images, the students investigated ideas

that came to them from television shows, teachers and or guidance counselors, family

members, such as Caleb's aunt who works at local utility, mentors connected with

college readiness organizations, such as NJLEEP and Rutgers Future Scholars, and

others, such as the social worker in Jasmine's life. Interestingly, parents support the interests of their children but did not have direct involvement in provoking their career image ideas.

Second, because they are affected by poverty and are keenly aware of their low SES status, the students in this study were both self-motivated and driven by their parents to imagine living a better, financially secure life in the future. I am not sure how they imagined what such a life would look like since they had not been exposed to it but they seemed to know intuitively that it entailed a good, well paying job, decent housing, and a safe neighborhood. Some of them imagined being better off than their parents not living paycheck-to-paycheck. Their parents knew and ingrained into their children the image of a good, well paying job in which they did not have to do manual labor or work outdoors in bad weather at all hours of the day and night. Students observed what life was like for their parents and imagined something better for themselves and their families, while at the same time their parents re-enforced the image of them living a better, financially secure life.

Finally, the idea of attending college is often out of the question for low-income, inner city students. Such prospects are typically not conceived or pursued given the cost of a college education even for academically gifted students. Research indicates that for students whose parents did not attend college, the prospect of them going to college is low. So, how is the college-going image planted in the mind of a low-income, inner city student? This study indicates that parents and others play a critical and important role in helping students see themselves as college material. The parents in this study with limited education "drummed" into their children that education was the pathway to a better,

financially secure future and this image included attending and completing college. Alejandro shared that his mother who did not have an eighth grade education but she pushed the importance of education and college for him and his sister. He said she had no idea what the concept of college was but she pushed it anyway because in the end it meant, "no more poor." It was left to him and his sister to define the specifics of the college image. The parents and students in this study instinctively knew that people with more education do better in life. In addition to the role parents' play in helping students form an education as pathway image, teachers, guidance counselors, principals, peers, and mentors from college readiness organizations also play a key role. This constellation of support exposed students to the importance of education and the image of college attendance. This network helped the student explore, investigate, and navigate their way through high school and into college. Exposed to such ideas and possibilities, the students exercised agency in further exploring, investigating, and defining their images and then took positive action in the direction of those visions.

Limitations of Research

It is difficult to establish an unequivocal association between students who are high academic achievers and the value of their framing positive anticipatory images. There are several reasons why this is the case:

First, this study involved just ten students. With such a limited number of students, it is impossible to ascribe association to the many thousands of low-income, inner city students attending public high schools across America.

Second, this was a qualitative study, relying on students' recollections of what they might have imagined when they were younger. As such, the responses might be

influenced by a more favorable interpretation of the past or fading recollection. This limitation was mitigated through triangulation using the students' most influential person to verify the stories told by the student. In addition, it was challenging for the most influential people in this study to know, exactly, what the students imagined.

Third, as was stated in the methods section, it is not clear if low performing students have differently constituted anticipatory images or none at all. A broader study that compares and contrasts the anticipatory images of a cross-section of students from low performers to high performers is needed to ascertain a clearer understanding of the role of anticipatory images in the academic performance of low-income, inner city students. Additionally, the study did not seek to compare or contrast the anticipatory images of low-income, inner city students with their counterparts in charter schools or suburban districts.

Fourth, while it was interesting to hear to the students' stories about their dreams and aspirations, it was difficult to truly measure anticipatory images and their effect on drive and performance.

Clearly, this was a qualitative study relying on the recollection and recall capacity of students to share stories about their dreams and aspirations and what drives them to succeed academically and in life. Are positive anticipatory images the answer to their success or are their other variables involved, such as high quality teachers and a broad and rigorous curriculum? Yes, there are other variables that should not be discounted. But I suggest that the positive image/positive action dynamic should not be overlooked as a possible element of student achievement.

Implications of Findings and Recommendations

When I interviewed Dr. Clinton, the former principal of Caleb's Newark public high school, we met in his office in a private charter school in an urban New Jersey city. The elementary students who attend his school are exposed to college banners, which line the hallways and are taught in classrooms named after America's prestigious institutions of higher education. The classroom right across from the office where we met was referred to as Stanford. From an early age, school staff and teachers inculcate the students with images of them attending college and not just any college but a prestigious one. It is anticipated these students will continue to attend this same charter enterprise through high school and during these years be exposed to ever increasing and intensive college going images.

The students are not the only ones inculcated with the college going image. Their parents or caregivers are too. It is likely that parents who enroll their children in this charter school already value education and see college as very important to their child's future. Nonetheless, the school strongly encourages parents to embrace this mindset. Dr. Clinton is confident that a very high percentage of the low-income students in his school will, indeed, graduate from high school and be admitted to the finest colleges.

Miraculously, the ten high academically achieving students in this study embraced the value of education and envisioned themselves attending college without the laser-like concentration that Dr. Clinton's charter school environment brings to bear on its students. Their career and vocational aspirations, as well as their vision for a better, financially secure life and seeing education and college as the pathway to the fulfillment of their dreams, were largely self-motivated and, most significantly, supported and

affirmed by parents, teachers, and peers. Their stories paint a picture of a potential and significant connection between the positive image/positive action dynamic and academic success.

The students in this study can be considered positive outliers. Their stories of academic success are not shared by most inner city students even though they grew up in the same challenging, low resourced neighborhoods and attended the same quality starved schools. They do not have access to the intensive resources and attention provided in charters schools like Dr. Clinton's school, yet they succeed academically in an environment in which many of their peers do not even graduate from high school.

I believe that positive outliers have much to teach us. If we can learn what makes these students academically successful, I believe it is possible to extend those lessons more broadly to improve the lives of many more low-income, inner city students. If we find everything about poverty and its effects unacceptable, wasteful, and an affront to human dignity, and believe, as I do, that education is a key vehicle for breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty, then we need to do everything in our collective power to affect better educational outcomes for all low-income students. From a deontological perspective, it is our collective moral imperative to affirm the human dignity and freedom of low income, inner city students by helping them break the cycle of poverty and its effects that holds them back and down rendering them "powerless and alienated" (C. Anderson et al., 2016).

To achieve this vision we need to find ways to ensure children are better housed, better fed, and better cared for. Their parents need to earn enough to support their families at a dignified and stable standard of living. We need to apply evidenced-based

models to improve the quality of education for low-income children. We cannot leave any stone unturned in this effort to improve the lives of our poorest citizens, particularly our children. I believe this study suggests there might be some stones still left unturned. Like recent academic success interventions emphasizing the development of hope and grit in low-income students, developing the anticipatory competence of children should be further investigated as a promising addition to the "family of ideas," (C. Anderson et al., 2016) which are intended to change the life-course narrative for urban children and families.

The following recommendations and future directions emanate from the findings of this study:

School and classroom college-going environment. As early as elementary school, students should be exposed to school and classroom environments that foster the image of education and college as the pathway to a better, financially secure life. Some people will say, 'but some children are not meant for college.' That is nonsense and is just an excuse for not putting in the hard work and attendant attention on behalf of difficult and challenging students. Who are we as adults to limit possibilities for students at such a young age because we think they may not be cut out for college? From the testimony of several of the students in this study, we know when this happens teachers shift their attention away from such students and focus on those who do show promise.

From elementary school through high school, public schools should create and foster a college-going culture much like Dr. Clinton's charter school. Students need to be inculcated with the education as pathway/college-going image daily. When the time

comes, if the student chooses not to attend college for whatever reason, then that will be his or her choice and not one forced on him or her because of the inattention of others.

Teaching students anticipatory competence. As early as elementary school, students should be taught skills and practices that enhance their 'Anticipatory Competence.' Students should be encouraged at an early age to dream about their future[2]. They should also be taught age appropriate executive function skills, such as how to plan ahead, how to think about and overcome obstacles, how not be discouraged or demoralized by setbacks but energized and motivated to press-on with corrective action. These skills should be continuously developed and improved with maturation through middle school and high school. Upon high school graduation students should have a fully developed and sophisticated arsenal of planning skills, that include: setting and planning implementation intentions, establishing measurable goals, tracking and monitoring progress, making corrective adjustments, foreseeing obstacles and ways to overcome them, and conducting "If/Then" evaluative analysis. By the end of high school, students should be anticipatory competent "master planners" in their own right. Teacher education and continuing professional development should be modified to ensure new teachers and those already in the field know how to deliver strengths-based, affirmation for all students, as well as to teach them the pragmatic prospection/executive function skills they need to be academically successful.

Promoting the power of affirmation. School staff and teachers should be reminded about the power of affirmation in the development and progress of students.

---

[2] Results already demonstrate that high quality early childhood education leads to better outcomes in school and life. Although this study did include the impact of early childhood, we need to ensure that the following K-12 experience builds upon and extends that foundation.

Every one of the students in this study received positive affirmation from 'certain' school staff and teachers. School cultures should exude positive affirmation. The students in this study were lucky they had people in their lives that affirmed them. It should not be a question of luck, but rather the norm for all students. Though it will take work and effort to reframe negative, difficult, challenging situations into an affirming learning experience, it can be done. This requires that school staff and teachers adopt a strengths-based model for conversing and interacting with students.

Affirming parental support. Parents of low-income, inner city students should be advised about the power of affirmation in raising resilient children. No matter their level of education, they should know that one of the most important things they do as parents is to help their children see a better life ahead and constantly remind them that education is the key that unlocks the door to that life. Like the parents in the study, it is not necessary that they help their children with academic content (there are other people who can do this) but they do need to constantly stress and reinforce the education as pathway/college-going image and set educational and academic expectations, monitor progress, and hold their children accountable for results. This could be a huge game-changer for many low-income, inner city students.

I would like to see early childcare or early education organizations and other nonprofit, community based organizations assume the mission of helping parents see the positive influence of affirmation in raising children, as well as the importance of parental engagement in the education of their children. Parents need to know that they do not have to be proficient in academic content for their children to be successful, just adamant and

insistent that their children act with the end in mind and work diligently in making it happen.

Supporting and expanding the reach and competency of college readiness organizations. A surprising finding of this study was the role college readiness organizations and mentors play in helping incoming high school freshmen see the value of education and the possibility of college in their lives. I would like to see the reach of these organizations extend into elementary school. Students need to be inculcated with these images at an early age and have those visions sustained and reinforced over multiple years. I fear that for many students beginning this process in the eighth grade may be too late. Although it was not the purpose of this study to evaluate how these organizations do what they do or if they are effective, I would like to ensure their counselors and mentors are trained and competent in the positive image/positive action dynamic, as well as teaching students the use of planning techniques attendant with pragmatic prospection. These organizations can be a real force in ensuring that more low-income, inner city students graduate from high school and attend and complete college.

Promoting "like-minded" peer relationships. It is important for parents, schools, and other community based organizations to encourage students to connect with and associate with peers who are "like-minded" when it comes to education and having positive career/vocational dreams of the future. I know it is easier said than done. But much like the process image formation, it is something that needs to be stressed, emphasized and reinforced constantly. Students should be encouraged to form study groups at an early age. This process can be facilitated in elementary school and further

developed with use as students' progress through high school. The findings of this study suggest that 'students who study together, progress together.'

A possible positive deviance project. Practitioners of positive deviance argue that solutions to social behavioral problems reside in the community in which the problem exists. It is based on the observation that in every community there are certain individuals or groups whose behaviors and strategies enable them to solve problems their peers cannot despite having access to the same resources or faced with the same challenges. Because people support that which they help to create, it is essential for the solutions to be conceived and driven by the community. Positive and lasting change is achieved when the community discovers successful strategies and behaviors and develops its own plan for positive change.

Following such a model, I envision the formation of a group of students and their parents and other community stakeholders, public school teachers and guidance counselors coming together to study the behavioral habits and practices of high academically successful students and their families. I see information developed by this group disseminated widely to other students and families and the group identifying strategies and an action plan for replicating them more widely across the community to other students and their families. Such a community-based group can be an effective vehicle for outreach to families who can benefit not only from the message but the planning behaviors and tools it disseminates.

I also envision this group being facilitated by Rutgers Newark or a sponsoring community-based organization. The word facilitate is carefully chosen because in a positive deviance project, which in many respects resembles participatory action

research, the initiative needs to be organized and led by the *community for the community.*

The attractiveness of these recommendations is that they are low-cost and do not require the expenditure of political capital. They do not call for the additional outlay of public dollars or legislative approval. However, they do need public schools to re-orient practices and priorities and for people to do their jobs a little differently in emphasizing and encouraging children to think about the future and seeing the value of education and college as the pathway to a better future.

Future Research

There are a number of research possibilities that would further elaborate and extend the findings of this dissertation.

First, it may be beneficial to follow the students of this study longitudinally to see how their anticipatory images influenced college completion and beyond. Did anticipatory images continue to play a significant role in college completion? Did their images continue to morph or evolve? Did the students attain the career/vocational images they envisioned in high school and during their early college experience?

Second, it may be instructive to study the role anticipatory images play in the educational progress relative to low-income, inner city students at various performance or achievement levels. For example, do students who are in the lowest quartile of the class hold anticipatory images? What do they look like and do those images move the students in a particular direction? Do students who drop out of high school, hold anticipatory images and do those images move them in a particular direction?

Third, another interesting study would following elementary school students longitudinally exploring their anticipatory images and educational progress beginning in the fourth grade with follow-up in the sixth grade, eighth grade, ninth through twelfth grade and periodically after high school. The study cohort should include a cross-section of low to high performing students.

Four, a study of the college-going image provoking practices and school climates of public high schools, which have a reputation for such activity in comparison with those schools that do not concentrate as much or at all, would be instructive in evaluating the effect of those activities on graduation rates and college acceptance and attendance rates. Also, it might be instructive to compare and contrast the effectiveness of different types of schools, such as comprehensive, magnet, charter, and private in developing anticipatory images in students.

Lastly, I think it would be an interesting project and one more attuned to positive change to conduct participatory action research engaging students, parents, school administrators, guidance counselors, peers, and other community based organizations in a study of the role of anticipatory images in academic success and educational progress and having this community-based group strategize and implement to ways to reach all inner city students, their families, school staff, and teachers in the process of influencing and supporting the anticipatory competence of students.

Closing

In conclusion, I want to thank the participating students and their most influential other persons and acknowledge the important role they played in this study of the anticipatory

images guiding student academic behavior and progress. I wish them continued success

as they continue their academic journey and beyond.

Bibilography

Achinstein, B., Curry, M. W., & Ogawa, R. T. (2015). (Re)labeling social status: Promises and tensions in developing a college-going culture for Latina/o youth in an urban high school. *American Journal of Education, 121*(3), 311-345.

Alliance for Excellent Education. (2006). Healthier and wealthier: decreasing health care costs by increasing educational attainment. *Issue Brief*.

Alliance for Excellent Education. (2018). High School Graduation Rates and Secondary School Improvement 2015. from https://all4ed.org/issues/high-school-graduation-rates/

American Public Health Assocciation. (2010). Public health and education: working collaboratively across sectors to improve high school graduation as a means to eliminate health disparities. *(Policy 20101)*.

Anderson, C., Turner, A. C., Heath, R. D., & Payne, C. M. (2016). On the meaning of grit and hope and fate contro and alienation and locus of control and self efficacy an effort optimisjn and…. *Urban Review, 48*(2), 198-219. doi: 10.1007/s11256-016-0351-3

Anderson, E. (1999). *The code of the street: Dececy, violence, and the moral life of the inner city*. NY, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

Anyon, J. (1997). *Ghetto schooling: A political economy of urban educational reform*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Anyon, J. (2005). What counts as education policy? Notes toward a new paradigm. *Harvard Education Review, 75*(1), 65-88.

Apple, M. W. (1995). *Education and power, second edition*. New York and London: Routledge.

Athanases, S. Z., Achinstein, B., Curry, M. W., & Ogawa, R. T. (2016). The Promise and Limitations of a College-Going Culture: Toward Cultures of Engaged Learning for Low-SES Latina/o Youth. *Teachers College Record, 118*(7).

Backstrand, J., Donalson, K., & Ratani, P. (2018). Post-secondary outcomes of Newark high school graduates (2011 – 2016): College matriculation, persistence, & graduation. Newark, NJ: Rutgers School of Public Affairs and Administration.

Bandura, A. (2006). Toward a psychology of human agency. *PERSPECTIVES ON PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE, 1*(2), 164-180.

Barsics, C., Van der Linden, M., & D'Argembeau, A. (2016). Frequency, characteristics, and perceived functions of emotional future thinking in daily life. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology, 69*(2), 217-233. doi: 10.1080/17470218.2015.1051560

Baumeister, R. F., Masicampo, E. J., & Vohs, K. D. (2011). Do conscious thoughts cause behavior? *Annual Review of Psychology, 62*, 331-361. doi: 10.1146/annurev.psych.093008.131126

Baumeister, R. F., Vohs, K. D., & Oettingen, G. (2016). Pragmatic prospection: How and why people think about the future. *Review of General Psychology, 20*(1), 3-16. doi: 10.1037/gpr0000060

Berliner, D. C. (2006). Our Impoverished View of Educational Research. *Teachers College Record, 108*(6), 949-995.

Bohon, S. A., Johnson, M. K., & Gorman, B. K. (2006). College aspirations and expectations among Latino adolescents in the United States. *Social Problems, 53*(2), 207-225.

Borman, G. D., & Rachuba, L. T. (2001). Academic success among poor and minority students: An analysis of competing models of school effects. Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk: Johns Hopkins University.

Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (1976). *Schooling in capitalist America*. London: Routledge.

Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (2011). *Schooling in capitalist america: Educational reform and the contradictions of economic life*. Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books.

Brooks-Gunn, J., & Duncan, G. J. (1997). The Effects of Poverty on Children. *The Future of Children, 7*(2), 55-71. doi: 10.2307/1602387

Broome, N. (2018). *AN EVALUATION OF NJ LEEP: AN EXAMINATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM FOR LOW-INCOME AND FIRST-GENERATION HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NEWARK, NEW JERSEY.* (Ph.D. Dissertation), Rutgers University Newark, Graduate School Newark.

Bryk, A. S., Sebring, P. B., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S., & Easton, J. Q. (2010). *Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago.* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Castelfranchi, C. (2005). Mind as an anticipatory device: For a theory of expectations. *Brain, Vision, and Artificial Intelligence, Proceedings, 3704*, 258-276.

Catsambis, S. (2001). Expanding Knowledge of Parental Involvement in Children's Secondary Education: Connections with High School Seniors' Academic Success. *Social Psychology of Education, 5*(2), 149.

Ceballo, R. (2004). From barrios to Yale: The role of parenting strategies in Latino families. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 26*(2), 171-186.

Ceja, M. (2004). Chicana College Aspirations and the Role of Parents: Developing Educational Resiliency. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 3*(4), 338-362.

Center for School Health and Education. (2012). The Dropout Crisis: A Public Health Problem and the Role of School-Based Health Care: American Public Health Association.

Christian, B. M., Miles, L. K., Fung, F. H., Best, K., & Macrae, C. N. (2013). The shape of things to come: Exploring goal-directed prospection. *Consciousness and Cognition, 22*(2), 471-478.

Clark, R. M. (1983). *Family life and school achievement: Why poor Black children succeed or fail.* Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press.

Cooperrider, D. (1990). Positive image positive action: The affirmative basis of organizing. In S. Srivastva (Ed.), *Appreciative management and leadership: The power of positive thought and action in organizations.* San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. London, United Kingdom: Sage Publications, Inc.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *The flat world and education: How America's commitment to equity will determine our future*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Deming, D. (2009). Early childhood intervention and life cycle skill development: Evidence from Head Start. *American Economic Journal Applied Economics, 1*(3), 111-134.

Desmond, M. (2016). *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. New York: Crown Publishers.

Dodge, K., Bai, Y., Ladd, H. F., & Muschkin, C. G. (2016). Impact of north carolina's early childhood programs and policies on educational outcomes in elementary school. *Child Development, 00*(0), 1-19.

Dowick, P. ((n.d.)). Self model theory: learning from the future. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews-Cognitive Science, 3*(2), 215-230.

Duncan, G. J., & Murnane, R. J. (2014). *Restoring Opportunity: The Crisis of Inequality and the Challenge for American Education*. Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard Education Press.

Duran, B. J., & Weffer, R. E. (1992). Immigrants' aspirations, high school process, and academic outcomes. *American Educational Research Journal, 29*(1), 163-181.

Dweck, C. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success – how we can learn to fulfill our potential*. New York, New York: Ballantine Books.

Dyce, C. M., Albold, C., & Long, D. (2013). Moving from college aspiration to attainment: Learning from one college access program. *The High School Journal, 96*(2), 152 - 165.

Edin, K., & Kefalas, M. (2011). *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood before Marriage*. Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press.

Edin, K., & Nelson, T. J. (2013). *Doing the Best I Can: Fatherhood in the Inner City*. Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press.

Fan, X. (2001). Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: A growth modeling analysis. *Education Psychology Review, 13*(1), 1-22.

Farrell, E. (1994). *Self and School Success. Voices and Lore of Inner-City Students*. Albany, NY.: State University of New York Press.

Freudenberg, N., & Ruglis, J. (2007). Reframing School Dropout as a Public Health Issue. Preventing Chronic Disease: Public Health Research, Practice, and Policy. Volume 4, Number 4: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Fuligni, A. J. (1997). The academic achievement of adolescents from immigrant families: The roles of family background, attitudes, and behavior. *Child Development, 68*(2), 351-363.

Fullan, M. (2014). *Big-City Reforms: Lessons from New York, Toronto, and London*. New York: Teachers College Columbia University.

Furstenberg, F. F., Jr., Cook, T. D., Eccles, J., Elder, G. H., Jr., & Sameroff, A. (1999). *Managing To Make It: Urban Families and Adolescent Success. Studies on Successful Adolescent Development*. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press.

Geary, P. A. (1988). *"Defying the odds?": Academic success among at-risk minority teenagers in an urban high school*. National Center on Effective Secondary Schools, Madison, Wisconson. Retrieved from https://login.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED296055&site=eds-live

Gershenfeld, S., Hood, D. W., & Zhan, M. (2016). The Role of First-Semester GPA in Predicting Graduation Rates of Underrepresented Students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 17*(4), 469-488.

Gilbert, D. T. (2006). *Stumbling on happiness* (1st ed. ed.). New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Goldenberg, C., Gallimore, R., Reese, L., & Garnier, H. (2001). Cause or effect? a longitudinal study of immigrant Latino parents' aspirations and expectations, and

their children's school performance. *American Educational Research Journal, 38*(3), 547-582.

Gutman, L. M., & McLoyd, V. C. (2000). Parents' management of their children's education within the home, at school, and in the community: An examination of African-American families living in poverty. *Urban Review, 32*(1), 1.

Halx, M. D., & Ortiz, M. (2011). Voices of Latino male high school students on their disconnect with education: Perspectives of "drop-outs" and those on the brink. *Latino Studies, 9*(4), 416-438. doi: 10.1057/lst.2011.49

Hao, L., & Bonstead-Bruns, M. (1998). Parent-child differences in educational expectations and the academic achievement of immigrant and native students. *Sociology of Education, 71*(3), 175-198.

Hara, S. R., & Burke, D. J. (1998). Parent involvement: The key to improved student achievement. *School Community Journal, 8*(2), 9-19.

Harper, S. R., Harris, F., III, & Institute for Higher Education, P. (2012). Men of Color: A Role for Policymakers in Improving the Status of Black Male Students in U.S. Higher Education: Institute for Higher Education Policy.

Hill, N. E., & Torres, K. (2010). Negotiating the American dream: The paradox of aspirations and achievement among Latino students and engagement between their families and schools. *Journal of Social Issues, 66*(1), 95-112. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-4560.2009.01635.x

Hitlin, S. (2006). Parental influences on children's values and aspirations: Bridging two theories of social class and socialization. *Sociological Perspectives, 49*(1), 25-46. doi: 10.1525/sop.2006.49.1.25

HLLC. (2017). Welcome to Honor Living and Learning Community. from http://hllc.newark.rutgers.edu

Horn, L. J., & Chen, X. (1998). Toward resiliency: At-risk students who make it to college. Washington, DC: US Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Howard, T. C. (2003). "A Tug of War for Our Minds:" African American High SchoolStudents' Perceptions of their Academic Identities and CollegeAspirations. *High School Journal, 87*(1), 4-17.

Hulme, E. (2001). Anticipatory consciousness: A learning paradigm revisited for college students. *NASPA Journal, 39*(1), 41-52.

Ibañez, G. E., Kuperminc, G. P., Jurkovic, G., & Perilla, J. (2004). Cultural Attributes and Adaptations Linked to Achievement Motivation Among Latino Adolescents. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence, 33*(6), 559.

Jarrett, R. L. (1999). Successful parenting in high-risk neighborhoods. *Future of Children, 9*(2), 45-50.

Johnson, G. M. (1997). Resilient at-risk students in the inner city. *McGill Journal of Education, 32*(1), 35-49.

Kaplan, E. ((n.d.)). "It's going good" Inner-city black and Latino adolescents' perceptions about achieving an education. *Urban Education, 34*(2), 181-213.

Kappes, A., & Oettingen, G. (2014). The emergence of goal pursuit: Mental contrasting connects future and reality. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 54*, 25-39. doi: 10.1016/j.jesp.2014.03.014

Kirkpatrick Johnson, M., Staff, J., Schulenberg, J. E., & Patrick, M. E. (2016). Living Healthier and Longer: A Life Course Perspective on Education and Health. *Handbook of the Life Course Volume II*, 369.

Kirp, D. L. (2004). Life Way After Head Start, p. 32. Retrieved from https://login.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsnba&AN=107D40516BFA9B07&site=eds-live

Ladd, H. (2012). Education and poverty: Confronting the evidence. *Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, 31*(2), 203-227.

Land, A. L., Mixon, J. R., Butcher, J., & Harris, S. (2014). Stories of Six Successful African American Males High School Students: A Qualitative Study. *NASSP Bulletin, 98*(2), 142-162.

Lee, J. O., Kosterman, R., Jones, T. M., Herrenkohl, T. I., Rhew, I. C., Catalano, R. F., & Hawkins, J. D. (2016). Mechanisms linking high school graduation to health disparities in young adulthood: a longitudinal analysis of the role of health behaviours, psychosocial stressors, and health insurance. *Public Health*. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2016.06.010

Lemann, N. (1991). *The promised land: The great Black migration and how it changed America*. N.Y.: Vintage Books.

Lessard, A., Butler-Kisber, L., Fortin, L., & Marcotte, D. (2014). Analyzing the Discourse of Dropouts and Resilient Students. *Journal of Educational Research, 107*(2), 103-110.

Leventhal, T., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2003). Moving to opportunity: an experimental study of neighborhood effects on mental health. *American Journal of Public Health, 93*(9), 1576-1582 1577p. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.93.9.1576

Lombardo, T. (2016). Future Consciousness. *World Future Review (Sage Publications Inc.), 8*(3), 116-140. doi: 10.1177/1946756716673636

MacLeod, J. (2008). *Ain't no makin' it: Aspirations and attainment in a low-income neighborhood*. Boulder, Co.: Westview Press.

Marsh, H., & Martin, A. ((n.d.)). Academic self-concept and academic achievement: Relations and causal ordering. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 81*(1), 59-77.

Martinez, G. F., & Deil-Amen, R. (2015). College for All Latinos? The Role of High School Messages in Facing College Challenges. *Teachers College Record, 117*(3), 1-50.

Mayo, A., & Siraj, I. (2015). Parenting practices and children's academic success in low-SES families. *Oxford Review of Education, 41*(1), 47-63. doi: 10.1080/03054985.2014.995160

McHatton, P. A., Zalaquett, C. P., & Cranson-Gingras, A. (2006). Achieving success: Perceptions of students from migrant farmwork families. *American Secondary Education, 34*(2), 25-39.

Miller, S. (Writer). (2017). Meet the woman who broke barriers as a hidden figure at the US Navy. Good Morning America.

Morales, E. E. (2010). Linking Strengths: Identifying and Exploring Protective Factor Clusters in Academically Resilient Low-Socioeconomic Urban Students of Color. *Roeper Review, 32*(3), 164-175.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, Ca.: Sage Publications.

National Center for Educational Statistics. (2018a). NAEP Mathematics Report Card 2017 https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/math_2017/#states/achievement?grade=8

National Center for Educational Statistics. (2018c). NAEP Reading Report Card 2017. https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_2017/#nation/achievement?grade=8

National Center for Educational Statistics. (2018f). Public High School Graduation Rates (May 2018).

Nicklaus, J., Bowden, J., & McQueen, J. (2005). *Golf My Way: The Instructional Classic, Revised and Updated*. London: Simon & Schuster

NJ Department of Education. (2017). 2016 Graduation Rates. http://www.state.nj.us/education/data/grate/

NJ Department of Education. (2018). *2017 Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates*. DOE Data Home: NJ Department of Education Retrieved from http://www.state.nj.us/education/data/grate/2017/.

Noguera, P., & Wells, L. (2011). The politics of school reform: A broader and bolder approach for Newark. *Berkeley Review of Education, 2*(1).

NYU Steinhardt. (2015). New Teachers, Urban Schools, and Dropouts: A National Problem. Retrieved from: http://teachereducation.steinhardt.nyu.edu/new-teachers-urban-schools-dropouts/

O'Connor, C. (1997). Dispositions toward (collective) struggle and educational resilience in the inner city: A case analysis of six African-American high school students. *American Educational Research Journal, 34*(4), 593-629.

Pezzulo, G., & Rigoli, F. (2011). The Value of Foresight: How Prospection Affects Decision-Making. *Frontiers in Neuroscience, 5*(79). doi: 10.3389/fnins.2011.00079

Poli, R. (2014). Anticipation: A new theory for the human and social sciences? *Cadmus, 2*(3), 23.

Prabhakar, J., Coughlin, C., & Ghetti, S. (2016). The Neurocognitive Development of Episodic Prospection and Its Implications for Academic Achievement. *Mind, Brain, and Education, 10*(3), 196-206. doi: 10.1111/mbe.12124

Putnam, R. D. (2015). *Our kids: The American dream in crisis*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Ravich, D. (2010). *The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education*. New York: Basic Books.

Reis, S. M., & HÉBert, T. P. (2007). Supporting academic achievement in culturally diverse and academically talented urban students. *Counterpoints, 306*, 233-244.

Reynolds, A. J., Ou, S.-R., & Topitzes, J. W. (2004). Paths of effects of early childhood intervention on educational attainment and delinquency: A confirmatory analysis of the Chicago child-parent centers. *Child Development, 75*(5), 1299-1328.

Reynolds, A. J., Richardson, B. A., Hayakawa, M., Englund, M., & Ou, S. (2016). Multi-site expansion of an early childhood intervention and school readiness. *Pediatrics, 138*(1), 1-11.

Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., Ou, S. R., Robertson, D. L., Mersky, J. P., Topitzes, J. W., & Niles, M. D. (2007). Effects of a school-based, early childhood intervention on adult health and well-being - A 19-year follow-up of low-income families. *ARCHIVES OF PEDIATRICS & ADOLESCENT MEDICINE, 161*(8), 730-739.

Ruglis, J., & Freudenberg, N. (2010). Toward a Healthy High Schools Movement: Strategies for Mobilizing Public Health for Educational Reform. *American Journal of Public Health, 100*(9), 1565-1570. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2009.186619

Sadovnik, A. R., Cookson, P. W., & Semel, S. F. (2012). *Exploring education: An introduction to the foundations of education (4th ed.)*. New York: Routledge.

Sánchez, P., & Machado-Casas, M. (2009). At the intersection of transnationalism, Latina/o immigrants, and education. *The High School Journal*(4), 3.

Sandel, M., Faugno, E., Mingo, A., Cannon, J., Byrd, K., Garcia, D. A., . . . Jarrett, R. B. (2016). Neighborhood-Level Interventions to Improve Childhood Opportunity and Lift Children Out of Poverty. *Academic Pediatrics, 16*(3, Supplement), S128-S135. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.acap.2016.01.013

Schreiner, L. A. (2010). The "Thriving Quotient": A New Vision for Student Success. *About Campus, 15*(2), 2-10.

Schweinhart, L. J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., BArnett, W. S., Belfield, C. R., & Nores, M. (2004). The high/scope perry preschool study through age 40: Summary, conclusions, and frequently asked questions. Ypsilanti, MI.

Seabrook, J. A., & Avison, W. R. (2012). Socioeconomic status and cumulative disadvantage processes across the life course: implications for health outcomes. *Canadian Review of Sociology-Revue Canadienne De Sociologie, 49*(1), 50-68.

Seligman, M. E. P., Railton, P., Baumeister, R. F., & Sripada, C. (2013). Navigaiing Into the future or driven by the past. *PERSPECTIVES ON PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE, 8*(2), 119-141.

Seligman, M. E. P., Railton, P., Baumeister, R. F., & Sripada, C. (2016). *Homo Prospectus*: Oxford University Press, Incorporated.

Sherman, L., Norman, S., Franklin, L., Arigbon, B., & Kulak, A. (2002). Taking care of business: A strong work ethic keeps three top students at "Jeff" moving toward their goals despite the tribulations of their struggling urban high school. *Northwest Education, 8*(1), 46-51.

Spreng, R., & Levine, B. ((n.d.)). Doing what we imagine: Completion rates and frequency attributes of imagined future events one year after prospection. *Memory, 21*(4), 458-466.

Szpunar, K. K., Spreng, R. N., & Schacter, D. L. (2014). A taxonomy of prospection: Introducing an organizational framework for future-oriented cognition. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 111*(52), 18414-18421. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1417144111

Tavory, I., & Eliasoph, N. (2013). Coordinating futures: Toward a theory of anticipation. *American Journal of Sociology, 118*(4), 908-942. doi: 10.1086/668646

Taylor, S. E., Pham, L. B., Rivkin, I. D., & Armor, D. A. (1998). Harnessing the Imagination: Mental Simulation, Self-Regulation, and Coping. *American Psychologist, 53*(4), 429-439.

Tough, P. (2008). *Whatever it takes : Geoffrey Canada's quest to change Harlem and America*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Tough, P. (2012). *How children succeed : grit, curiosity, and the hidden power of character*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Tough, P. (2016). HOW KIDS REALLY SUCCEED. *Atlantic, 317*(5), 56-66.

Tyson, K. (2011). *Integration interrupted: Tracking, Black students, and acting white after brown*: Oxford University Press.

Vadeboncoeur, J. A., & Vellos, R. E. (2016). Recreating social futures: The role of the moral imagination in student-teacher relationships in alternative education. *International Journal of Child, Youth, and Family Studies, 7*(2), 307-323. doi: DOI: 10.18357/ijcyfs72201615723

Valadez, J. R. (2008). Shaping the Educational Decisions of Mexican Immigrant High School Students. *American Educational Research Journal, 45*(4), 834-860.

Vasquez, N. A., & Buehler, R. (2007). Seeing future success: Does imagery perspective influence achievement motivation? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 33*(10), 1392-1405. doi: 10.1177/0146167207304541

Vaughn, M. G., Salas-Wright, C. P., & Maynard, B. R. (2014). Dropping out of school and chronic disease in the United States. *Journal of Public Health, 22*(3), 265-270. doi: 10.1007/s10389-014-0615-x

Wang, M. C., Haertel, G. D., Walberg, H. J., Mid-Atlantic Lab. for Student Success, P. P. A., & National Research Center on Education in the Inner Cities, P. P. A. (1997). Fostering Educational Resilience in Inner-City Schools. Publication Series No. 4.

Weinger, S. (1998). Children living in poverty: their perception of career opportunities. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services, 79*(3), 320-330.

Williams, J. M., & Portman, T. A. A. (2014). "No one ever asked me": Urban African American students' perceptions of educational resilience. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 42*(1), 13-30.

Wilson, W. J. (1996). *When work disappears: The world of the new urban poor*. N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf.

Winfield, L. F. (1994). Developing resilience in urban youth. Urban Monograph Series. North Central Regional Educational Lab, Oak Brook I. L.

Zetlin, A. G. (1998). School success: Top students in an inner-city school. *Pi Lambda Theta*(3), 151.

Appendix A. Interview Questions for Student Participants

1. Reflecting on your experience in high school and college, what were the most influential factors that helped you be academically successful?

2. While in high school and college, please describe the future that you imagined for yourself?

3. How did this imagined future influence your academic behavior, focus and actions?

4. How did you perceive the role of education in your imagined future?

5. How did you frame your imagined future? Who helped you frame it? And – how did he/she or they help you?

6. Who most supported and encouraged you in the fulfillment of the future you imagined for yourself? What was the form this support?

7. Please describe the steps did you took to bring your imagined future to reality.

8. How did your imagined future influence the way you prepared for academic work, such as tests, papers, and projects?

9. Please describe how the future you imagined for yourself influenced your academic goals.

10. Please describe how the future you imagined for yourself influenced your personal and social life?

11. What do you think enabled you to be so academically successful while others were not?

While I anticipate the questions will allow study participants to share their story including their family and home life, I will use follow-up questions to gain an understanding or family structure, parenting styles, and dynamics within the home.

Appendix B. Interview Questions for Most Influential Other Participants

1. Why do you think (name of student) was so academically successful in high school and college compared to other students who were not?

2. How did you support the academic achievement of (name of student)? What kinds of things did you do to support (name of student)?

3. From your earliest recollection, what kind of future did you imagine for (name of student)?

4. How did this imagined future change over time if at all?

5. Please describe the things that you did to promote this imagined future in (name of student) life?

6. What can you tell me about the future (name of student) imagined for himself/herself? In what ways was his/her imagined future similar or dissimilar with the future you imagined for him/her?

7. How influential was this imagined future in driving (his/her) academic achievements?

While I anticipate the questions will allow study participants to share their story including their family and home life, I will use follow-up questions to gain an understanding or family structure, parenting styles, and dynamics within the home.