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CHAPTER

Poverty and Learning

Robert Balfanz, Richard Lofton, Paula Kim-Christian, Logan McDermott, Emily Clark

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Abstract

This chapter critically examines the current understanding of the relationship between poverty and learning. It finds that most of the prior and current research on poverty and learning is informed by flawed measurement of poverty, is undercontextualized, and lacks specification in its theorization of how poverty can affect learning. The chapter shows how poverty can affect learning through three avenues: individual well-being and development, opportunity to learn, and institutional and interpersonal interactions that can impede learner agency. It concludes that a better understanding of poverty and learning needs to be built on better measures, greater emphasis on protective factors and individual agency and resiliency, and a more expansive view of what learning is and where it occurs.

Keywords: poverty, learning, intersectionality, protective factors, resiliency

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Learning is a cognitive, social, and emotional process that is shaped by external factors that influence students' well-being, development, interpersonal interactions, and educational opportunities (Alexander et al., 2009; Jones & Kahn, 2017; Sameroff, 2010). When examined through an economic, environmental, social, structural, and relational lens, poverty is often a significant determinant of learning (Sameroff, 2010). Poverty is a description of an economic state associated with physical and mental hardship—coupled with a sociopolitical experience that some students encounter in their homes, schools, and communities—that interacts with their learning. Much of the psychological and educational research that highlights the intersection of poverty and learning has focused on limited topics and narrow conceptualizations. This approach has reinforced two widely held "truisms" contending that poverty impedes learning, and repeated efforts to limit or break this association have not worked. These two entrenched truisms have not been fully questioned and as a result we are still at the surface level when it comes to understanding poverty and its impact on learning. To help move the field beyond the stalemate of these two truisms, we suggest in this

chapter that poverty is not only associated with economic and mental hardship but is also linked to dynamic social and political factors that can impede learning. While we offer this critique, we also highlight potentially more productive routes that explore the agency, resiliency, placemaking, and social interactions that students and their families living in poverty experience. We argue that this more expansive approach, can destabilize the deeply held truisms and mitigate the economic, mental, political, and social processes that impede learning for students who are confronted with poverty.

In the *Oxford Dictionary of Psychology*, a cultural truism is defined as "a proposition that most members of a cultural group accept without question and have never heard questioned" (Colman, 2009). While researchers have brought great attention to poverty and its impact on learning, we contend that the literature neither sufficiently addresses the multifaceted dynamics of poverty and its impact on learning, nor fully explores and cultivates the protective factors of students and their families as social agents. Much of the research examines poverty and learning as static rather than social constructs that can be exposed, mitigated, and dismantled through resiliency, self-efficacy, and social justice. This chapter unpacks two truisms we uncovered in the literature and strives to move the discourse toward a more fruitful direction by acknowledging the social constructs of poverty and the protective mechanisms that students have and can build upon to mitigate the effects of poverty and bolster their cognitive and educational development.

We reviewed the literature from the last 10 years in psychology, education, and sociology to explore and complicate the two truisms of poverty and learning. We first destabilize the fixed notion of poverty by highlighting how it is a social construct that is often measured in different and imprecisely defined ways. Moving away from measurements of poverty defined as household income, we explore concentrated poverty to uncover how it can be associated with time, space, and placemaking. We then unpack the truism that poverty impedes learning by exploring the pathways by which various experiences associated with poverty may affect the brain and learning. Beyond acknowledging the social construction of poverty, we bring attention to the intersections of poverty and the social constructions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and immigration and documentation status. Many students who are confronted with the burdens of poverty also occupy marginalized identities and experiences of power and privilege that produce distinct routes, challenges, and inequalities. Importantly, we move beyond the truisms to resist the notion of students as static individuals who are stuck in place—rather, we center them as dynamic social actors who are capable of producing and accessing protective factors through supporting structures. To that end, we reconceptualize the relationship between poverty and learning by examining research that addresses protective factors associated with learning and conclude by extending the conceptual treatment of learning beyond traditional academic and educational outcomes.

Defining and Measuring Poverty in the Context of Learning

The Social Construction of Poverty

In the often taken-for-granted truisms about poverty and learning, poverty is considered to be related to static economic factors rather than social and political processes that are socially constructed (Boateng, 2014). When researchers examine poverty, they often explore the lack of personal, household, or cultural resources. In this light, researchers associate poverty with conditions such as food insecurity, lack of adequate shelter, inability to receive sufficient physical or mental health care, exposure to environmental toxins, and lack of safety (Gochfeld & Burger, 2011; Lipton & Ravallion, 1995; Richards & Leonor, 1982; Sharkey, Tirado-Strayer, Papachristos, & Raver, 2012; Streeten, 1981). Connecting these circumstances of poverty to educational outcomes, researchers produce the truism that poverty impedes children's healthy development and learning opportunities. While these findings provide important insight, researchers often leave poverty and the people who endure it as fixed and static entities, rather than acknowledging poverty as a malleable social construct and the people as dynamic social actors who endure, resist, and mitigate poverty.

Grappling with the social construction of poverty leads us to explore how people endorse ideologies that leave poverty fixed and static. In the United States, people often associate academic and financial success with meritocracy. Meritocracy supports the idea that if people work hard and have merits, they will enjoy benefits commensurate to their labor. Regardless of race and gender, many Americans consciously or unconsciously contend that individuals' merits and choices will remove them from poverty (Huston & Bentley, 2010). In addition, in the last 50 years, a culture-of-poverty paradigm that focuses on individual merits and behavior and suggests that people's cultures prevent them from escaping poverty has driven popular discourse (Lewis & Lewis, 1959; Moynihan, 1965). Both ideologies emphasize changing personal characteristics rather than the economic and political processes that produce structural barriers and inhibit structural supports.

However, much of the literature that explores poverty and learning has not sufficiently interrogated how current and historical economic arrangements, social exclusion, and racial oppression have produced and continue to reinforce poverty. Moreover, these factors act as structural barriers to critical social and educational resources within and outside school walls. Children who experience poverty are more likely to attend underfunded schools that lack adequate heating and cooling and even functioning bathrooms, as well as encounter unequal access to well-trained, experienced teachers and rigorous educational opportunities such as "gifted" programs and Advanced Placement courses (Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, & Wheeler, 2006; Crabtree, Richardson, & Lewis, 2019; Olszewski-Kubilius & Corwith, 2018; Park, Goodman, Hurwitz, & Smith, 2020; Yaluma & Tyner, 2018).

The literature broadly presents poverty as an "ecological risk factor" that constrains students' ability to access resources, opportunities, and experiences, as well as safe and supportive environments necessary for learning (Osher, Moroney, & Williamson, 2018). Beyond questions of access, a growing share of the evidence base has examined the ways in which learning opportunities central to educational attainment are shaped by interpersonal and institutional interactions that perpetuate or mitigate deficit-oriented perspectives of children who experience poverty. These interpersonal and institutional interactions, in turn, are informed by social constructions of race, ethnicity, immigration, disability, gender, and sexuality, and the intersections of these constructs with poverty. Poverty thus involves:

- Economic, political, and social interactions
- Social exclusion

- Unmet basic needs
- Racial oppression
- Structural barriers
- Interpersonal and institutional interactions
- Inability to systemically build upon agency, resiliency, placemaking, and protective factors

It is essential when examining connections between poverty and learning to clearly specify the aspects of poverty that are under consideration. We argue that the literature has not fully examined the intersectionality and dynamic factors comprising the social construction of poverty, which often leads researchers to uncritically reinforce the aforementioned truisms. Next, we explore how social science researchers measure and define poverty, how poverty is defined for the purposes of access to governmental programs, and how researchers examine concentrated poverty.

Exploring Established Measures of Poverty

When discussing poverty, researchers and policymakers often use distinct terms interchangeably. "Poor," "high-poverty," "low-income," and "low socioeconomic status" are used to reference a set of economic conditions and social experiences. However, investigating the relationship between poverty and learning requires clarity in identifying the environments and experiences of the individuals being studied.

Poverty is not a monolithic concept but instead operates differently when it comes to time and space. For example, a child living in a low-income environment for part of their childhood may experience vastly different conditions and corresponding impacts on learning relative to a child living in concentrated, intergenerational poverty for their entire life. Furthermore, there may be distinct educational experiences, opportunities, and resources for a White student from a low-income household in a middle-class suburban area compared to a Black student from a similarly low-income household attending a predominantly Black, racially segregated, underserved school. Often, consumers of research must use contextual clues to infer the specific environment experienced by the individuals in the study. When reviewing the literature on poverty and learning, we discovered that far too often, neither the consistency and duration nor the relative and absolute levels of economic deprivation of the individuals examined in a study are established. This is driven by significant limitations of the measures of poverty most commonly available, as well as academic conventions that tolerate imprecision when examining the impacts of income-based poverty. Therefore, it is critical to understand how social science researchers measure poverty. In the following subsections, we lay out the various measures used to determine how poverty is defined globally and in the United States. This section examines the effectiveness of existing poverty measures in capturing the lived experiences of those in poverty, as well as the challenges associated with creating more accurate measurements.

Federal Poverty Thresholds in United States

In the United States, the Census Bureau uses an annual survey that is sent to a representative sample of households in order to set poverty thresholds that account for inflation and are specific to family size, composition, and age of family members. Poverty status is assigned by comparing total family income against an established federal poverty threshold (FPT) (Department of Education, 2021; Jiang, Granja, & Koball, 2017). For example, a hypothetical family with five members—a father, a mother, two children under 18 years of age, and one great-aunt—would have its total household income assessed against the corresponding FPT for its family size and composition. For this family, in 2019, the FPT was set at $31,000; while they would be considered poor if their income was $30,000 and below the FPT, they would be considered low-income but not poor with a household income of $32,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). The Census Bureau categorizes each member of a family as in "deep poverty" or "severe poverty" when their household income falls below 50% of the relevant FPT. Extending the example above, the hypothetical family of five would be considered to be living in deep poverty if the total household income was less than $15,500 in 2019 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

Unlike the U.S. Census Bureau, the World Bank defines "extreme poverty" as an income of $1.90 per person per day, which is the equivalent of $3,467.50 per year for a family of five (World Bank, 2015). Given this international poverty line, individuals with incomes below this global threshold are categorized as having equivalent experiences of extreme poverty whether they live in the United States or a developing country.

Limitations of these official measures of poverty have been well documented. The U.S. Census notes that its annual surveys exclude individuals and families who are homeless and incarcerated, placed in nursing homes, or experiencing living situations without conventional housing (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Importantly, the poverty thresholds used to estimate official poverty and deep poverty statistics are uniformly applied across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In other words, the FPTs do not account for variation across states or adjust for differences in cost of living by urbanity. Moreover, these poverty measures omit debt, informal household income, tax credits, and in-kind transfers and benefits (e.g., subsidized housing and Medicaid), and apply arbitrary definitions of the family unit (Brady & Parolin, 2020; Meyer et al., 2021).

Eligibility for Federal Programs Aimed at Poor and Low-Income Families

Often studies do not have access to family income data and use available proxies, such as eligibility for federal or state programs targeted to low-income or poor families. While this approach allows for the operationalization of a study, it can also obfuscate the extent to which the population studied lives in poverty, is low income, or a combination of both. Federal agencies, for example, set criteria—ranging from 125% to 185% of the federal poverty guidelines (FPG)—for eligibility to participate in certain programs, including those intended to promote learning (e.g., Head Start) and healthy development (e.g., Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program [SNAP], Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children [WIC]).

Student eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) has been the primary proxy measure of poverty in educational research. Children from families with incomes between 130% and 185% of the relevant FPG are eligible for reduced price meals through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP); those from households with a total income equal to or less than 130% of the relevant FPG are eligible for free meals (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2021). Though widely used, FRPL has also been subject to long-standing scrutiny concerning its appropriateness and quality as a proxy for poverty (e.g., Entwislea & Astone, 1994; Harwell & LeBeau, 2010; Hauser, 1994; Kurki, Boyle, & Aladjem, 2005). Unable to capture the complexities of poverty and variation in local costs of living, the dichotomous structure of FRPL—students are either eligible or not eligible—further limits the measure's usefulness and ability to measure students' access to

economic, social, and cultural resources (Harwell & LeBeau, 2010; Hauser, 1994; Kurki, Boyle, & Aladjem, 2005; Michelmore & Dynarski, 2017).

More recently, FRPL as a proxy measure for poverty has diminished in utility. The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) in the Healthy, Hungry-Free Kids Act of 2010, and policy changes broadly implemented during the 2014–2015 school year, allowed universal enrollment in the National School Lunch Program among schools or local education agencies (LEAs) with 40% of students with direct certification of need (Cookson 2020; Domina et al., 2018; Koedel & Parsons 2020). As a result, the long-standing practice of identifying "high poverty schools" as those in which 75% or more of students are eligible for FRPL now also captures schools in which 40% of students live in families with incomes up to 130% of the poverty level. While students who attend high poverty schools are likely to encounter some shared challenges, variation in students' experience of poverty is masked by proxy measures that are unable to convey nuance or heterogeneity.

Poverty Defined by Income vs. Low Socioeconomic Status

The official federal poverty thresholds and guidelines serve statistical and administrative purposes by defining poverty through household income. However, to better capture the complexities of poverty, social science researchers have constructed measures of socioeconomic status (SES). Although there is no one universally accepted standard or definition, measures of SES tend to incorporate an individual's relative social position with their economic situation, often combining occupational status, family income, parental marital status, and parental education into a single indicator. The resulting measure incorporates individual and environmental factors into one measure of relative social stature (Ensminger & Fothergill, 2014).

Designations of "low" household SES, relative to other households in the population of study, are intended to provide additional insight into students' lived experiences and the conditions that mediate their learning. For example, some literature argues that student access to social capital and networks, as well as cultural capital and informal knowledge regarding schooling, comprise critical elements of their academic outcomes (Harwell & LeBeau, 2010; Walpole, 2003). This suggests that other factors associated with poverty, such as neighborhood makeup and work opportunities, may have an impact on opportunities for student learning in a given community.

However, noting that different SES constructs produce inconsistent results with variable predictive value, Bradley and Corwyn (2002) underscore that some composite indicators appear to reflect the same underlying, interrelated phenomena that exert different influences that shape the lived experience of poverty. Other SES composite indicators appear to "tap into" different underlying phenomena, point to correlations with different mediating and moderating variables, and perform differently across ethnic and cultural groups (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002).

Payne and Biddle (1999) and Harwell and LeBeau (2010), moreover, note that education research studies rarely explicate how SES composite measures are conceptualized, defined, and expected to interact with outcomes of interest. Given the lack of consistency concerning the construction of SES measures, as well as the absence of clarity regarding the theoretical assumptions and parameters of SES composites, application and interpretation of SES measures can present challenges across education research, practice, and policy (e.g., Harwell & LeBeau, 2010; Haug, 1977; Hauser & Warren, 1997; Oakes & Rossi, 2003).

Concentrated Poverty: Space, Time, and Placemaking

Living in poverty is not static but a dynamic social process that involves time, space, and placemaking. Researchers have often measured poverty through myopic views focusing on family-based income, without adding the complexity of neighborhoods, the duration of time that social actors spend across multiple spaces, and how people are making place and protective factors in these areas. Since William Julius Wilson's book *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987), some researchers have moved beyond household income to explore how concentrated poverty affects children and their families (Massey & Denton, 1993; Sampson, 2012; Small & Newman, 2001). Over the last 30 years, scholars have used terms like concentrated effects, concentrated poverty, and concentrated disadvantage to shed light on the effects of neighborhood poverty on the lives of residents in socially isolated and racially segregated neighborhoods. While researchers generally agree that concentrated poverty refers to a high percentage of poor people living in a particular area (Wilson, 2013), there is disagreement about the specific percentage of poor people who must live in an area for it to be considered concentrated poverty. Although some researchers consider an area where 20% to 40% of households are poor to be one of concentrated poverty, others set the threshold to 40% or more (Jargowsky, 2013, p. 30).

Researchers who examine concentrated poverty have brought great insight into how communal poverty shapes the lives of individuals. Concentrated neighborhood poverty is associated with long-term neighborhood disinvestment and disempowerment (Turner et al., 2014). In these areas, people are more likely to encounter low-quality housing, higher eviction rates, food deserts with limited access to healthy food but easy access to unhealthy foods, insufficient heat in the winter and air conditioning in the summer, and fewer recreational opportunities, parks, and trees (Desmond, 2017; Harrison & Popke, 2011; Morland, Wing, Diez Roux, & Poole, 2002; Thomson, Simcock, Bouzarovski, & Petrova, 2019; Walker, Keane, & Burke, 2010; Wen, Zhang, Harris, Holt, & Croft, 2013). They are also more likely to be near toxic chemicals or emissions, liquor stores, and crime and violence (Garo, Allen-Handy, & Lewis, 2018; Gochfeld & Burger, 2011; Moore & Diez Roux, 2006; National Research Council, 2009; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1999; Walker et al., 2010).

In addition to concentration, the duration of poverty matters, including the number of years a child experiences poverty and the extent to which their family has experienced intergenerational poverty (Bossert, Chakravarty, & D'Ambrosia, 2019; Moore, 2001; Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2010; Wodtke, 2013). Many neighborhoods with concentrated poverty are also sites of intergenerational poverty (Butler & Grabinsky, 2020; Sharkey, 2014). Students and their families faced with circumstances of concentrated poverty are often viewed as being "stuck"; researchers often do not acknowledge them as social actors within their communities and the ways in which they make meaning out of their lives. Although the social construction of race and racial segregation has produced many places of concentrated poverty and intergenerational poverty (Imbroscio, 2021; Rothstein, 2015), researchers are beginning to examine these social actors as resilient individuals who are engaged in placemaking. According to Hunter, Pattillo, Robinson, and Taylor (2016), Black placemaking "refers to how urban black Americans create sites of endurance, belonging, and resistance through social interactions" (p. 1). Moving in future directions to destabilize the fixed notion of poverty and the truisms we find in the literature, we contend that researchers must move beyond a view of static individuals to understand social experiences where individuals are making meaning of their lives, producing protective factors, producing their own knowledge, and creating their own space amidst the circumstances of poverty.

In this section, we explored the social construction of poverty and its measurement within the learning context. Poverty is not one stable variable but rather must be understood by untangling economic, social, and political interactions; unmet basic human needs; social exclusion; racial oppression; structural barriers, interpersonal and institutional interactions; and the acknowledgement and strengthening of protective factors. We contend that the way social science researchers have often examined poverty and learning has

failed to involve the multiple components that comprise poverty, and as a result we continue to reproduce the same two truisms.

Examining the Impact of Poverty on Learning

Multiple studies over the past half-century or more have found significant and meaningful associations between family, neighborhood, and school-level poverty and academic achievement. This is what drives the truism that poverty impedes learning. In other words, this relationship appears enduring, despite decades of school reform efforts to disrupt it. However, the central argument of this chapter is that this in part results from most studies unpacking neither poverty nor learning and viewing both in the broad aggregate, often through underdefined proxies. To propel fresh insight, after briefly reviewing the evidence linking poverty with lower academic achievement and attainment, this section will focus on examining the relationship between poverty and learning in three ways: (a) when poverty has a direct impact on well-being, and through it learning; (b) as a socially and politically constructed experience, which impedes learning through denial of educational opportunity; and (c) when it engenders interpersonal and institutional responses which undermine learner's agency.

The Making of a Truism: Examining Poverty/Low Income/Low SES and Academic Achievement

Despite inconsistencies in measuring and defining poverty, the evidence base broadly substantiates a negative association between income-based poverty or low SES—at the family, neighborhood, and school levels—on student's academic achievement (Reardon, 2018). This relationship has persisted when examined across multiple cohorts of student over decades, through meta-analysis of hundreds of studies, or following students longitudinally over time. Reardon's (2011) examination of the relationship between family socioeconomic characteristics and academic achievement, for example, finds a large and growing income achievement gap between low- and high-income families across a 40-year period. Noting systematic measurement concerns in Reardon's (2011) study, Hanushek, Peterson, Talpey, and Woessman (2020) find the income achievement gap between low- and high-income families has persisted but not grown over time. Taken together, however, recent contributions to the evidence base suggest a modest but statistically significant positive association between family income and student achievement (Dahl & Lochner, 2012; Duncan, Morris, & Rodrigues, 2011; Hopson & Lee, 2011; Ladd, 2012).

Research has shown that family poverty and low SES is associated with lower levels of language development and readiness for school. Fernald, Marchman, and Weisleder (2013) found that detectable gaps in the language processing and vocabulary abilities of infants as young as 18 months based on SES. Furthermore, they argue that, by 24 months of age, infants from high-income backgrounds are reportedly six months ahead of low-income infants in terms of language development (Fernald et al., 2013). Similar results were also seen in Bogotá, Colombia, where Rubio-Codina, Attanasio, Meghir, Varela, and Grantham-McGregor (2015) found evidence suggesting that, between the ages of 12 and 42 months, the gap in cognitive skills and fine motor skills between low- and high-income children increases substantially. Other researchers have associated poverty with lower levels of self-regulation and kindergarten readiness skills(Coley & Baker, 2013; Hair, Hanson, Wolfe, & Pollak, 2015). Exposure to poverty also has an impact on educational attainment. Duncan, Ziol-Guest, and Kalil (2010) found that the likelihood of high school graduation and lifelong earnings were both reduced by early childhood poverty. Additionally, they found that childhood poverty was more damaging to long-term achievement outcomes than other measures including health and behavior (Duncan et al., 2010).

Researchers have also examined the effect of concentrated poverty within neighborhoods on educational outcomes. A meta-analysis conducted by Nieuwenhuis and Hooimeijer (2016) found a significant association between individual educational outcomes and neighborhood poverty in the United States and Europe; moreover, the authors suggest that a larger neighborhood effect in the United States may be tied to greater concentration of disadvantaged groups. This relationship between neighborhood poverty and student outcomes is present in early childhood settings, particularly in research regarding the Head Start program. McCoy, Connors, Morris, Yoshikawa, and Friedman-Krauss (2015), using national-level data, demonstrated that an increase in neighborhood level poverty is correlated with lower student gains in early math and literacy skills, as well as lower classroom quality. In Chicago, Sampson, Sharkey, and Raudenbush (2008) found that children who stay in low-income neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage for longer periods of time experience reduced growth in verbal ability which could translate to a full year gap in learning (Burdick-Will et al., 2011; Sampson et al., 2008). The negative impact of neighborhood poverty on academic achievement continues through adolescence. Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health) to explore the relationship between neighborhood poverty and student-reported grade point average (GPA), Gordon and Cui (2018) found a decline in adolescent student achievement with an increase in neighborhood poverty across all racial groups in the study. The probability of high school graduation is also reduced by living in an impoverished neighborhood, and is further reduced among students who have spent the entirety of their childhoods in low-income neighborhoods (Crowder & South, 2011).

Researchers have also leveraged longitudinal and panel data to detect the effect of poverty duration and seasonality on educational outcomes. Michelmore and Dynarski (2017) found a negative association between eighth-grade standardized test scores and the duration of time identified as eligible for the FRPL school nutrition program; furthermore, students who qualify every year between kindergarten and the eighth grade scored on average nearly one standard deviation below their peers who never qualified for FRPL (Michelmore & Dynarski, 2017). Moreover, Duncan et al. (2010) found that poverty later in life was less damaging to long-term outcomes than early childhood poverty.

Other research has examined the effect of school-level concentrated poverty on academic outcomes. Using original data to replicate James Coleman's foundational Equality of Educational Opportunity report from 1966, Borman and Dowling (2010) applied multilevel statistical modeling to distinguish variance in ninth-grade verbal test achievement attributed to school-level effects from variance attributed to family characteristics. Finding that attending a high-poverty or highly segregated school has a "profound effect" on student achievement, Borman and Dowling (2010) assert that school-level effects are stronger than that of individual-level race or SES.

Examining test scores in Maryland, Henneberger, Rose, Mushonga, Nam, & Preston (2019) found lower test scores in Algebra and English among students experiencing poverty both at an individual-level and at the school-level; their findings suggest that 56% of the total variance in Algebra scores and 53% of the variance in English scores can be explained by school-level factors, with the remaining variance explained by individual student demographics. Furthermore, they found the effect of poverty on test scores to be higher for Black and Latinx students than for White students; conversely, the effect on test scores was lower for Asian students relative to their White peers (Henneberger et al., 2019).

Additionally, Henneberger et al. (2019) found a strong negative relationship between the odds of students graduating high school and the amount of time that students experience poverty directly and through attending a high-poverty school, attributing 71% of the variation observed in on-time graduation rates to school-level factors rather than individual demographic characteristics. When compared to peers who had not experienced poverty or attended a high poverty school, White students who had experienced above-average time in poverty yet attended an average level of poverty school had an 81% probability of graduating high school on time. Furthermore, White students who experienced a high level of poverty and attended a

high poverty school had a 54% probability of graduating high school on time. The study found similar outcomes for other racial groups across the state, as well as similar effects on the probability of postsecondary attendance after on-time high school graduation (Henneberger et al., 2019).

Taken together, we find substantial evidence that children who live in poverty do worse in school as it has been formally and historically organized and its outcome measured. But what this research has not answered is why: why does living in poverty leads, on average, to lower academic achievement and, more specifically, how does it impedes learning or students' ability to translate their learning into academic achievement.?

How Poverty Impacts Learning: Three Pathways

We explore three distinct pathways through which poverty can affect learning. We begin this section by detailing how poverty affects well-being and development and through them learning. Then we examine how the social and economic construction of poverty can lead to a denial of educational opportunity.We conclude by showing how the intersection of poverty and race, immigration status, disability, and gender can undermine learning through institutional and individual responses that weaken learner agency.

Impacts of Poverty on Learning Through Well-Being and Development

Poverty has detrimental effects on well-being and undermines healthy development. Children who are hungry, have not slept well, have untreated health conditions, are exposed to violence, and are under constant stress typically have less energy and cognitive focus to devote to learning.

Health Care.

Children living in poverty are more likely to have limited access to adequate healthcare, which may result in minor health problems developing into more serious illnesses as a direct result of not having access to timely and appropriate treatment (Jensen, 2009). Students in poverty with poor eyesight are less likely to receive eye examinations in a timely manner, and often receive infrequent and inadequate care (Basch, 2011). Additionally, students living in low-income neighborhoods with limited access to healthcare are more likely to have sleep problems relative to their peers who reside in more highly resourced neighborhoods (Singh & Kenney, 2013). Smaldone, Honig, & Byrne (2007) argue that children experiencing sleep problems at home are more likely to have problems in school as reported by their parents. Beyond sleeping difficulties, living in a low-income neighborhood has been associated with a higher probability of suffering from obstructive sleep apnea (Spilsbury et al., 2006).

Students living in poverty develop asthma at higher rates— partially due to environmental factors associated with poverty— and are at higher risk of not having access to inhalers, facing substantial medical costs, experiencing higher rates of hospitalization, and missing school days as a result of their medical condition (Akinbami & Schoendorf, 2002; Farmer, Nizeye, Stulac, & Keshavjee, 2019; Gottlieb, Beiser, & O'Connor, 1995; Jensen, 2009; McConnochie et al., 1999; Nurmagambetov, Kuwahara, & Garbe, 2018). Rates of hospitalization are particularly high among Black children who live in urban environments (Farmer et al., 2019).

Food Insecurity and Income Instability

Volatility and uncertainty associated with poverty has consequences for educational outcomes. Gassman-Pines and Bellows (2018) show how the timing of receiving federal funding for food purchases (SNAP) affects within-month student achievement. Finding that test scores peak three weeks after SNAP transfers, Gassman-Pines and Bellows (2018) suggest that variability in nutrition intake and food insecurity-related stress affect test performance. Comparing children who face chronic food insecurity with those who have consistent access to food, Christian and Dillon (2018) find that chronic food insecurity has effects similar to those of droughts or major conflicts; they find, on average, a 5.18% to 9.03% reduction in longer-term educational attainment. More broadly, large shifts in family monthly income are associated with lower rates of class engagement and an increase in negative and exclusionary behavioral consequences (Gennetian, Wolf, Hill, & Morris, 2015).

Housing Insecurity.

Student learning is also closely tied to housing insecurity. Estimates suggest that more than 1.3 million children enrolled in U.S. public schools experienced homelessness during the 2018–2019 academic year (National Center for Homeless Education, 2021). Importantly, this is likely to be an undercount of homeless children and youth because it does not include students enrolled outside the public school system, those who experience homelessness only during the summer months, or those who have dropped out of the school system (National Center for Homeless Education, 2021). Reporting to the U.S. Department of Education indicates that approximately 12,400 public school districts enrolled homeless students during the 2015–2016 school year; among these districts, 242 noted at least 1,000 students experiencing homelessness, and 20 districts accounted for 12% of the total number of enrolled homeless students (National Center for Homeless Education, 2018). As such, homelessness is a major issue among high-poverty school districts located in urban settings including Chicago, New York City, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Clark County in Nevada (National Center for Homeless Education, 2018). Across the U.S., nearly a third of families with children under 18 years old experienced a high housing cost burden, spending at least 30% of their monthly income on housing (Yamashiro & McLaughlin, 2021).

Children experience homelessness in a variety of ways including staying in shelters, on the streets, in temporary housing, or with relatives. Housing insecurity and homelessness are consistently associated with lower grades, disproportionately high rates of absenteeism, delayed social and emotional skill development in elementary school, as well as higher rates of disengagement and exclusionary discipline (Dworsky, 2008; Murphy & Tobin, 2011; National Center on Family Homelessness, 1999; Rouse & Fantuzzo, 2009).

Exposure to Violence.

In New York City, low-income students exposed to violent crime up to seven days prior to taking standardized tests on average scored lower on English Language Arts exams relative to their peers who were not exposed. The impact was particularly large for Black low-income students (Sharkey, Schwartz, Ellen, & Lacoe, 2013). Additionally, Sharkey et al. (2012) found that students in Chicago who had been recently exposed to community violence exhibited lower levels of attention and impulse control in the classroom.

Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Children living in poverty typically do not experience one or two hardships that affect their well-being. The cumulative impact of multiple hardships has been examined through research on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs); this body of research has shown that exposure to multiple experiences that negatively impact well-being in childhood can have long-lasting effects, including success in school. The original list of ACEs included seven categories: psychological abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, household substance abuse, household mental illness, mother treated violently, and criminal behavior in the household. Felitti et al. (1998) examined questionnaire data completed by adult members of a large health maintenance organization and found a strong relationship between experiencing four or more of these challenges and negative long-term outcomes that include increased health risks for substance abuse, smoking, depression, as well as adult diseases such as cancer and heart and lung disease. Researchers, however, subsequently argued that the original ACEs study largely reflected the experiences of White middle- and upper-middle-class individuals and failed to account for challenges faced by those experiencing poverty, people of color, and other marginalized groups.

Through extensive interviews with young adults who grew up in low-income communities in Philadelphia, Wade, Shea, Rubin, and Wood (2014) found that participants identified additional stressors, including exposure to violence and criminal behavior, personal victimization, bullying, economic challenges, and discrimination. Other researchers drew from a large, representative, community-based health survey of a population in Southeast Pennsylvania to administer a follow-up survey that found 63.4% of respondents experienced at least one of the expanded ACEs (Cronholm et al., 2015). Furthermore, 13.9% of the follow-up sample experienced an expanded ACE but none of the traditional ACEs and would not have been identified in earlier studies limited to traditional ACEs (Cronholm et al., 2015).

Importantly, not all individuals from low-income backgrounds experience ACEs—that is, ACEs can affect children from across the spectrum of socioeconomic backgrounds—however, risk of exposure to ACEs is substantially greater among those who live in poverty and are members of marginalized groups (Cantor, Osher, Berg, Steyer, & Rose, 2019; Giovanelli, Reynolds, Mondi, & Ou, 2016). In one analysis of Chicago residents who were born in high-poverty neighborhoods and identify as people of color, 62% of survey participants retrospectively reported experiencing at least one ACE by the age of 18, 37% experienced at least two ACEs, and 13% experienced four or more ACEs (Giovanelli et al., 2016). As such, researchers have extended their examination of ACEs to address explicitly the role of individual, family, and ecological risk factors tied to poverty (Cantor et al., 2019).

Beyond negative effects on physical health and well-being, evidence suggests that exposure to traditional and expanded ACEs correlates with factors affecting learning and student achievement in school. In their analysis of traditional ACEs measures, Jimenez, Wade, Lin, Morrow, and Reichman (2016) found that among students entering kindergarten, those who had already experienced three ACEs were more likely to exhibit below-average language, literacy, and math skills. Students with multiple ACEs were also more likely to have higher levels of teacher-reported aggression and attention problems when compared to their peers who had experienced zero ACEs (Jimenez et al., 2016). Bethell, Newacheck, Hawes, and Halfon (2014) also applied largely traditional measures of ACEs that included a measure for economic hardship in their examination of school success factors; the study found that students with at least two ACEs were more likely to repeat a grade and reported lower engagement in school. Using longitudinal data with participants from low-income neighborhoods in Chicago and traditional measures of ACEs that had been adjusted slightly to account for economic hardship, Giovanelli et al. (2016) found that students who experienced at least two ACEs were approximately 57% less likely to graduate high school and 33% less likely to attend college compared to those who had not experienced any ACEs. Stempel, Cox-Martin, Bronsert, Dickinson, and Allison (2017) found that experiencing one ACE is associated with chronic absenteeism, particularly if students had witnessed community violence; moreover, missing at least 15 days of school was more likely

among students experiencing two or more ACEs. Taken together, researchers have begun to establish the negative effects of ACEs on physical health, well-being, learning, and educational outcomes, and have increasingly taken care to examine the experiences of individuals from low-income and racially marginalized backgrounds.

Child Development.

Beyond direct impacts on well-being, poverty also affects human development, which in turn affects learning. Poverty is tightly linked to limiting the time and resources parents can invest in child development. While severe poverty in developing countries present challenges associated with the financial costs of sending children to school (e.g., tuition fees, transportation costs, and uniforms) that can prevent enrollment (van der Berg, 2008), families of limited means and relative poverty in the United States are less able to purchase child enrichment goods and services (e.g., private tutoring, books, technology, summer camps, and travel) that promote learning, development, and educational attainment (Kaushal, Magnuson, & Waldfogel, 2011; Osher & Chasin, 2016). While low-income parents on average have increased their investment in their children's education over the past 30 years, they have not been able to keep pace with rapid increases made by more affluent parents (Duncan & Murnane, 2014). Moreover, parental stress associated with low family income serves as a mediating pathway to children's behavioral and cognitive development (Cheung & Wong, 2021).

Higher-income families are also able to spend more time interacting with their children, relative to low-income parents and caregivers who may need to take multiple jobs to support basic family needs or engage in shift work that coincides with out-of-school time. Researchers have noted other differences in parent-child interactions that contribute to early school readiness gaps; for example, high-SES parents have more opportunities to read to their young children, engage in conversations that integrate a broader array of vocabulary, and employ practices that aim to promote cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and behavioral competence (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Hart & Risley, 1995; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Bradley and Corwyn (1999) find these differences across racial and ethnic groups and note that crowded home environments with more children constrain lower-SES parents' ability to allocate time and attention among siblings (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002).

Many low-income parents, however, are able to provide sufficient care and time for their children despite the demands of their employment and environment (Osher, Cantor, Berg, Steyer, & Rose, 2020). In other cases, adolescents experiencing poverty must take on caregiving roles to support their younger siblings or older relatives in multigenerational households. Girls, particularly those in developing countries or daughters in culturally conservative backgrounds, may feel pressure to take on household responsibilities (Dodson & Dickert, 2004; van der Berg, 2008). The demands of low-wage jobs, coupled with the challenges associated with obtaining childcare, place single-parent households with limited social support at heightened risk of relying on adolescents as a survival strategy. Dodson and Dickert's (2004) review and qualitative findings underscore the gendered nature of family labor, as well as the opportunity cost among girls from low-income families who must take on sibling care duties that contribute to chronic tardiness, occasional absence, withdrawal from extracurricular activities, decreased engagement in school, and eventual dropout.

Finally, poverty directly affects students from a young age as their brain development and physiology are influenced by environmental stressors, which in turn affects their learning and educational outcomes. Shonkoff and Garner's (2012) seminal work on toxic stress presents a framework that connects early experiences, environments, and poverty-related adversity to genetic predispositions with long-term implications on brain architecture, learning impairments, behavior, and well-being.

Noting that continuous exposure to poverty and poverty-related adversity serves as a source of chronic stress that then affects students' physiological reaction to other stressors, Heissel, Adam, Doleac, Figlio, and Meer (2021) examined changes in low-income students' physiological responses during high-stakes standardized testing relative to regular school weeks. Using saliva-based measures of cortisol, a stress hormone that can hinder concentration in large amounts and signal disengagement in small amounts, the study finds correlations between high-stakes testing and change in cortisol patterns, as well as associations with lower test performances among those with the greatest cortisol changes (Heissel et al., 2021).

One consequence of exposure to poverty and poverty-related adversity is that individuals experience heightened levels of chronic stress that have substantial implications on the developing brain and long-term cognitive function (Blair & Raver, 2014; Cantor et al., 2019; Evans & Schamberg, 2009; Johnson, Riis, & Noble, 2016). Johnson et al. (2016)'s review on the neuroscience of poverty elevates material deprivation and stress as environmental mediators that link socioeconomic status to brain development. Specific regions of the brain—such as the prefrontal cortex, amygdala, and hippocampus—support emotional regulation, memory, language, and higher-order cognitive processes; emerging research indicates that students exhibit differential ratios of region-specific volume and ratios by SES (Hanson et al., 2013; Noble et al., 2015). Increased exposure to poverty is correlated with an overall reduced volume of gray matter in the frontal and temporal cortex of the brain as well as the hippocampus (Blair & Raver, 2016). The parts of the brain most affected by gray matter development are associated with school readiness skills, and the largest gaps are seen among students from the most impoverished homes (Hair et al., 2015).

Importantly, research on brain plasticity—that is, environmentally induced changes in the brain—underscores the role of sensitive periods in which the developing brain is particularly susceptible to the detrimental effects of poverty (Johnson et al., 2016). While specific mechanisms of neural plasticity have yet to be understood, the malleability of brain development during periods of rapid growth has been of deep interest to researchers who seek to mitigate negative environmental influences and alter long-term trajectories (Cantor et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2016; Lipina & Posner, 2012).

In the context of learning environments, Cantor et al.'s (2019) review describes the role of conditions for learning (CFL), including students' sense of physical and emotional safety, belonging, and relational trust and attunement to others, which can help promote positive developmental relationships that mitigate the effects of chronic stress. Alternatively, negative CFL can further disrupt learning if students perceive an absence of safety that triggers their physiological stress responses, heightens anxiety, and inhibits memory and concentration (Cantor et al., 2019; Shackman et al., 2006).

Conclusion.

Poverty can affect well-being, development, and learning through multiple avenues. However, it is important to note that not all children who live in poverty have similar experiences; the specific impact of poverty varies based on each child's circumstances, resiliencies, and mitigating and mediating factors. For example, the extent to which children living in poverty experience food scarcity, housing insecurity, and community violence varies by time and place. This further makes the case that contextualization is essential when analyzing the effects of poverty on learning,.

Impacts of Poverty on Learning Through Social/Political Actions That Impede Opportunity to Learn

The experience of living in poverty goes beyond direct impacts on well-being and development. The experience of being poor is also socially and politically constructed. In the United States, for example, where many social and educational services are or can be purchased privately, being poor can deny or limit access to educational and developmental resources and in so doing significantly impede the opportunity to learn. This starts even before children are born, with variations by income in the level of prenatal care provided (DeFranco, Lian, Muglia, & Schootman, 2008). It continues with early care and pre-kindergarten. Studies have found relationships between neighborhood poverty and the quality of Head Start programs (McCoy et al., 2015), school readiness skills (Morrissey & Vinopal, 2018), and the effectiveness of pre-K participation in improving later student achievement (Pearman, 2020). Building on findings that kindergarten students from higher poverty neighborhoods start school less ready to learn than peers from lower poverty neighborhoods, Wolf, Magnuson, and Kimbro (2017) suggested that the academic skills gap may be as large as a year's worth of development, and that this disparity between low- and high-poverty neighborhoods increased between 1998 and 2010. It extends to summer learning and after-school learning experiences, which in the United States typically must be purchased.

The constructed learning disadvantages of poverty extend into publicly provided services as well. Since local school funding in the United States is heavily affected by the amount of property tax a school district can raise, schools in wealthier neighborhoods have more resources. Jang and Reardon (2019) explored how between-district socioeconomic achievement gaps are associated with state-level policies and contexts. Finding that between-district socioeconomic achievement gaps and growth rates vary across states, Jang and Reardon (2019) also found between-district income segregation to be positively associated with socioeconomic achievement gaps.

Additionally, students at low-income schools are placed at a disadvantage as a result of their limited access to challenging courses and rigorous academic settings. Although high-income and low-income schools are equally likely to have gifted programs in the United States, approximately 12% of students in low-poverty schools participate in these programs as opposed to only 6% of students in high-poverty schools (Yaluma & Tyner, 2018). In the United States, one popular form of advanced education is the Advanced Placement (AP) program. Students enrolled in AP courses are able to take rigorous courses and earn college credit based on their performance in the course. Participation in AP courses correlates with success in higher education, and students from low-income backgrounds are less likely to enroll in these courses. In a study conducted in a school district in the Southeastern United States, researchers found that schools in which less than 25% of students are in poverty enroll 39.8% of students in at least one AP course, whereas schools in which 75% or more of students live in poverty only enroll 7.8% of students. Additionally, Black and Latinx students in both high- and low-poverty schools were less likely to be enrolled in AP courses than their White and Asian peers (Crabtree et al., 2019). This gap in enrollment in AP courses is particularly damaging in terms of the wealth achievement gap, given the high correlation of enrollment in AP courses and long-term higher education outcomes.

Additional barriers exist in course and teacher quality at schools with large populations of low-SES students. Among students with similar levels of preparation who enrolled in AP courses, low-SES students were less likely to pass the end of course exam for college credit (Bromberg & Theokas, 2014; College Board, 2014). The fact that the students had similar academic profiles prior to enrolling in AP courses suggests that students from lower-income backgrounds were provided with courses of lower quality than other students (Olszewski-Kubilius & Corwith, 2018). The reduced enrollment in AP courses coupled with low pass rates for low-income AP students suggests that in low-income schools, insufficient resources are being allocated to the promotion of advanced courses and other forms of instruction that would help to increase achievement among the student body.

Further challenges in the classroom are created by the inequitable distribution of high-quality teachers. Goldhaber, Lavery, and Theobald (2015), recognizing the complexities of measuring teacher quality, looked at three measures of teacher quality in the state of Washington: teacher value-added, teacher score on credentialing exam, and teacher years of experience. They found that by all three metrics, low-SES students were more likely to receive low-quality teachers than other students. Furthermore, Black students, Indigenous students, and students of color, as well as students with low test scores, were also more likely to receive the lowest quality teachers (Goldhaber et al., 2015). Each of the metrics analyzed by Goldhaber shows that students who demonstrate the highest level of need for high-quality teachers are also the least likely to be assigned to them. One reason that students are less likely to be assigned to veteran teachers is that when teachers transfer to different schools, they tend to leave for schools with lower proportions of low-income students.

Students from low-income communities may struggle with decisions about postsecondary enrollment as a result of the lack of social capital available to their higher-income peers. Cilesiz and Drotos (2016) interviewed high school juniors and seniors in low-SES schools in an urban Midwestern school district. The researchers found that students often struggled to navigate the process of college applications, which they attributed partially to a lack of familial experience in the application process. Overall, students stated that they would like to attend college and viewed it as a chance to increase earning potential, gain job security, and improve themselves. Nevertheless, students expressed apprehension about enrolling in college due to the financial, social, and academic risks of attendance. Some students hoped to mitigate these risks by starting at community colleges before transferring to a university or by choosing a university based on minimizing cost rather than maximizing institutional prestige (Cilesiz & Drotos, 2016). These findings suggest that students living in poverty do want to embrace the opportunities that accompany higher education; however, they are often not provided with the necessary information or resources to overcome challenging systemic barriers.

Impacts of Poverty on Learning through Intersections with Other Social Constructs

A third pathway through which poverty can affect learning is through institutional and individual interactions that associate poverty with cognitive and social deficits, limiting students' opportunity to learn and their agency as learners. This can be heightened when poverty intersects with social constructs that may also communicate through institutional and individual interactions negative views on student's capacity as learners. To that end, the interaction of poverty with key social constructs and structures—race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, immigration and documentation status, disability—as crucial determinants of learning are considered here.

Of note, this chapter neither provides an exhaustive analysis of all potential intersections, nor claims these social constructs or categories to be discrete. Although this discussion necessarily describes specific relationships between poverty and a single intersecting construct for the sake of tractability, many studies investigate the confluence of multiple constructs. For example, Bean, Leach, Brown, Bachmeier, and Hipp (2011) examined the role of poverty, ethnicity and country of origin, and parental documentation status in educational attainment, and Kohlhaas, Lin, and Chu (2010) explored the interaction between poverty, race, and gender. Additionally, the interactions between poverty and compounding constructs may change over the course of a student's lifetime; for instance, gender may emerge or recede as a salient category, relative to other categories, in complicating or supporting students' development and learning at any given point in time.

Finally, we underscore that social constructs are externally imposed on students. Like poverty, these factors structure students', families', and communities' access to specific educational opportunities and resources, have cascading effects on child development, and influence a way of knowing and understanding the world

across contexts. To consider the compounding nature of the relationship between poverty and these cross-cutting social constructs and decisions, we draw from extant cumulative risk literature (Evans, Li, & Whipple, 2013) to distinguish challenges to learning that stem from poverty alone from those associated with poverty and social constructs.

Intersection with Race and Ethnicity.

To understand the effects of the intersection of race, ethnicity, and poverty on learning, one must acknowledge that race is not an essential biological trait but rather a sociohistorical construct that uses categories to differentiate between groups of people to develop systems of power, privilege, and control (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2014; Omi & Winant, 2014). In this racial categorization, Black and Latinx children are around three times more likely to be born into poverty than White children (Thomas & Fry, 2020). The disproportionate representation of Black and Latinx (Hispanic) students from low-income households and living in poverty relative to their White peers has been well established (Cooper Crosnoe, & Pituch, 2010; Milner, 2013; Munin, 2013). Black students are more likely to confront the circumstances of economic hardship; some who reside in neighborhoods of intergenerational poverty are more likely to remain in poverty as adults. For example, researchers have pointed out that around three of the four African American families that experienced concentrated poverty during the civil rights movement are the same families that live in these poor and highly segregated neighborhoods today (Menendian, Gambhir, & Gailes, 2021; Sharkey, 2014). A study of African American boys found that they were more likely to endure many of the factors of poverty that may impede learning, including child maltreatment, homelessness, inadequate prenatal care, lead exposure, and lower parental education level (Fantuzzo, LeBoeuf, Rouse, & Chen, 2012). However, Munin (2013) and Milner (2013) underscore that race and poverty are not perfectly correlated and —importantly—that race does not cause poverty; similarly, Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Simmons, Renae Feggins-Azziz, and Chung (2005) pushed against the use of race as a proxy for poverty.

The preponderance of empirical modeling of the relationship between poverty and learning incorporates variables to control or adjust for student race. However, this approach often masks the disparate ways that race, racialization processes, structural and systemic racism, and discriminatory policies and practices structure low-income students' lived experiences. Highlighting previous contributions that elevate linkages across poverty, race, and education (e.g., Johnson, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 2008), Milner's (2013) review of literature produced between 2001 and 2011 applies a critical race theory (CRT) lens to examine the outside-of-school effects of poverty on within-school educational experiences and learning outcomes. Finding that the majority of empirical studies fail to critically examine the role of race and focus heavily on student achievement outcomes, Milner (2013) notes a prevalence of deficit-oriented language and perspectives that ignore the consequences of inequitable funding, structural barriers, and systemic challenges that limit student success. Researchers since the Coleman Report (1966) have focused on racial and socioeconomic disparities in achievement, and have shown persistent significant achievement gaps in reading and mathematics between African American and Latino children compared to their white peers (Hemphill & Vanneman, 2011).

Fantuzzo et al. (2012) discovered that in both math and reading, there is approximately half a standard deviation of difference between African American boys who were from low-income households than White boys. In addition, these researchers found that there was an achievement gap and a risk gap that was almost identical to the magnitude of the Black-White achievement gaps. While policymakers have often focused on attempting to reduce achievement gaps to increase learning for poor students of color, other researchers have argued that the focus on achievement gaps is misplaced, and that attention should instead be placed on opportunity gaps and educational debts that are rooted in history, economic, sociopolitics, and moral obligations (Carter & Welner, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2006). In this vein, a limitation of the achievement gap research is that it has often failed to address how poverty, concentrated poverty, and racial categories are all

social construct rooted in policies, ideas, and practices that have often impeded the learning experience of Black and Latinx students. Moving forward, we hope that research will address the measurement of the resource gap and acknowledge the cultural knowledge that students from different racial and ethnic groups bring to the learning table.

Researchers who examine the role of race and poverty in students' learning have also questioned how testing can cause anxiety and fears within racialized groups who are stereotyped (Steele & Aronson, 1995). According to Steele (1997), stereotype threat refers to "the threat that others' judgments or their own actions will negatively stereotype them" (p. 613). Current research consistently demonstrates the underperformance of racialized groups under threat relative to their performance when not threatened (Lamont, Swift, & Abrams, 2015; Liu, Liu, Wang, & Zhang, 2021). According to this theoretical focus, Black and Latinx students confronted with poverty, racialized identities, and gender identities have to engage with negative stereotypes, which lowers performance by increasing anxiety and reducing test-taking self-efficacy (Chung et al., 2010).

In addition to stereotype threat, poor Black and Latinx students are under identified in AP classes and gifted programs. At the same time, they are overrepresented in special education and lower track classes. Data consistently demonstrate that the majority of poor Black and Latinx students who attend racially and economically diverse schools are located in lower track classes, which often do not allow these students access to environments that foster the development of skills for college and career readiness (Gamoran, 2009; Lofton, 2021; Lucas & Berends, 2007; Oakes, 1985). Moreover, Black and Latinx students, particularly poor Black males, are overidentified in special education classes (Ford, 2012). Researchers have often suggested that cultural misunderstanding, culturally biased assessments, racism, and deficit views of students' race and class have led to this overrepresentation of Black and Latinx students in special education.

Researchers have also documented a school-to-prison pipeline by which Black and Latinx students confronting the circumstances of poverty are also in school environments where students are funneled out of public schools and into juvenile and criminal justice systems (Dancy, 2014). Using an extensive national sample that included the documented patterns of office discipline referrals of 364 elementary and middle schools, Skiba et al. (2011) argued that significant disparities exist for Black and Latinx students in school discipline. They discovered that African American students have twice the odds in elementary school and four times the odds in middle school of being referred to the office compared to White students. Latinx students were overrepresented at the middle school level but significantly underrepresented at the elementary school level. Disparities in suspensions and expulsions were found for disruption, moderate infractions, and tardiness/truancy among African American students, and for all infractions except use/possession among Latinx students. This research indicates that Black and Latinx students are overrepresented in exclusionary discipline practices and are treated more harshly for minor infractions.

Johnson (2014) applies a critical lens that grounds contemporary de facto racial segregation in historical and legal context, noting that school and neighborhood *re*segregation followed years of demographic changes, and the *Milliken v. Bradley* (418 U.S. 717 [1974]) Supreme Court decision that released school districts' obligation to integrate across district lines when intentional de jure segregation cannot be proven. Having established the systemic processes that produced current conditions, Johnson (2014) uses the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Cohort 1998-1999 (ECLS-K) to investigate the effect of school and neighborhood-level segregation on third-grade student achievement within and outside the U.S. South. The study finds greater outcome gaps in math and science test scores among non-southern schools, relative to southern schools, between students in low- and high-minority schools. Additionally, Black students and southern students in high-minority private schools were found to have lower math and science test performances. Johnson (2014) finds that economic segregation at the neighborhood level—that is, living in a high-poverty neighborhood—has a stronger association with student test scores relative to racial

segregation. However, the neighborhood-level racial composition may be a salient—albeit weaker—feature, given higher science test scores among children in low minority, predominantly White neighborhoods.

Gordon and Cui (2018) also draw from critical race theory, as well as the previous studies that find adverse effects of community poverty on academic achievement, to probe limited and inconsistent findings concerning the interaction between student-level race and community poverty. To that end, the study uses the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health) to examine the association between community-level poverty and academic achievement—defined here as GPA—among adolescents, as well as the effect of race as an interaction term. Gordon and Cui (2018) find that Black adolescents consistently reported lower GPAs relative to their White peers, across low-poverty and high-poverty neighborhoods. Moreover, GPAs were lower among high-poverty communities relative to low-poverty neighborhoods for both Black and White students. Finally, the study finds an interactive effect between race and community poverty on GPAs, as suggested by the larger achievement disparity between Black and White adolescents in low-poverty communities relative to high-poverty communities. Noting that these results align with other studies that find minoritized adolescents at a relative disadvantage in low-poverty contexts (e.g., Burchinal et al., 2011), Gordon and Cui (2018) suggested that racial discrimination and fewer opportunities to engage with other minoritized peers may contribute to a sense of marginalization that explains persistent racial disparities in adolescent academic achievement.

Like Gordon and Cui (2018), Paschall, Gershoff, and Kuhfeld (2018) underscored the importance of examining the intersection of poverty and race/ethnicity—rather than addressing them separately—in shaping learning and achievement gaps. Moreover, Paschall et al. (2018) attempted to clarify Reardon and Portilla (2016)'s findings that suggest slow movement toward closing racial/ethnic achievement gaps but relatively faster widening of a poverty status gap. Using time-varying effect modeling to examine poverty differences within racial/ethnic groups in three age groups (5–6, 9–10, and 13–14) from 1986–2005, the study finds that math and reading achievement gaps appear to be largest when comparing low-income Whites to low income Black and Hispanic students. Moreover, the achievement gap narrows in non-low-income White-Hispanic comparisons (Paschall et al., 2018).

The intersection of race, poverty, and exclusionary school security—and the potential adverse consequences on school climate, within-school conditions for learning, as well as student behavior, achievement, and safety from physical violence—have received increasing attention in empirical education research (Irwin, Davidson, & Hall-Sanchez, 2013; Kupchik & Ward, 2014). More fruitful research is needed to explore the intersection of poverty and marginalized groups' ways of transgressing the boundaries of oppression.

Intersection with Immigration Status.

The effect of poverty on learning and development is complicated further by immigration and documentation status. Informed by multidisciplinary perspectives, immigration researchers examine relationships across a "constellation of factors" that structure access to opportunities, outcomes, and attainment among low-income immigrant-origin students (Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, & Tseng, 2015). This constellation of factors includes family SES, premigration circumstances from which immigrants depart, postmigration conditions to which immigrants arrive, as well as the forms of capital (e.g., financial, educational, cultural, and social) that they bring with them and access following migration to the United States (Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, & Tseng, 2015; Zhou & Gonzales, 2019). Taken together, these factors shape the daily learning experiences, decision-making processes, educational challenges, and the long-term trajectories of immigrant-origin children (i.e., foreign-born immigrants and U.S.-born children of immigrant parents) (Suárez-Orozco Yoshikawa, & Tseng, 2015).

While the array of migration experiences and diversity of immigrant demographic subgroups are reflected in the range of poverty rates by national origin among children with two foreign-born parents (Borjas, 2011), immigrant-origin children are more likely to experience poverty compared to their nonimmigrant peers. Data from the 2017 March Supplement of the Current Population Study suggest that 25% of first-generation immigrant children live in households with incomes under the federal poverty line (FPL), while 22% of second-generation children of immigrants and 17% of their nonimmigrant peers live in poverty (Child Trends, 2018). Additionally, immigrant families were disproportionately affected by the Great Recession, as a greater proportion of immigrant-origin children fell below the FPL compared to U.S.-born children (Hernandez & Napierala, 2012; Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, & Tseng, 2015), suggesting relatively greater vulnerability to exogenous shocks.

A substantial body of literature also finds persistent patterns and trends in educational outcomes across some immigrant-origin subgroups. Moreover, immigration and education researchers have dedicated substantial effort to exploring the effect of family SES on learning and development among immigrant-origin students of the same national origin, ethnicity, or race.

Drawing from the nationally representative Early Childhood Longitudinal Study's kindergarten cohort (ECLS-K), Galindo and Fuller (2010) find that Latinx children from poor, but not middle-class, families present weaker social competencies—which the authors argue are predictive of stronger cognitive growth during kindergarten—and weaker understanding of mathematical concepts at baseline relative to their White peers. Moreover, Galindo and Fuller (2010) elevate differences among Latinx subgroups; students of Mexican and Puerto Rican origin were linked with social competency scores that were significantly lower relative to their White peers, while students of Cuban and South American origin were not statistically different from White students. Given these findings, Galindo and Fuller (2010) stress the importance of discerning differences across Latinx subgroups, accounting for interactions between family SES and other factors, and resisting categorizations that broadly consider all Latinx students "at risk."

Other strands of scholarship underscore the role of U.S. immigration policy in promoting hyposelectivity from certain countries of origin; that is, higher proportions of immigrants who are less likely to be college graduates relative to their nonimmigrant counterparts in their country of origin and the United States (Lee & Zhou, 2015, 2017; Tran et al., 2018; Zhou & Gonzales, 2019). Noting that immigrants from Mexico represent the largest hyposelected population in the United States, these studies examine the consequences of immigrant policy that place many Mexican-origin immigrants and their children in disadvantaged positions. Lee and Zhou (2017) argued that hyposelection effectually limited Mexican-origin immigrants' ability to build ethnic institutions and access critical human capital—such as the supplementary education courses, SAT preparation classes, and tutoring that are available in hyperselected Asian-origin and Armenian communities across the United States—to mitigate the effects of poverty and support the educational attainment of second-generation children.

Moreover, low-income first-generation immigrant students disproportionately attend underfunded, high-poverty, highly segregated schools with less experienced teachers and less rigorous curricula (Suárez-Orozco, Gaytán, et al., 2010; Orfield & Lee, 2006; Ortiz & Telles, 2017; Zhou & Gonzales, 2019). The racially and ethnically segregated composition of these schools often extends to linguistic isolation, as newcomer students with limited English proficiency have few opportunities to interact meaningfully with their U.S.-born peers or students from different countries of origin (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2010; Orfield & Lee, 2006). Constrained high-poverty schools have limited resources to ensure immigrant-origin students gain English language fluency, despite the importance of language proficiency in academic performance and student engagement (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Suárez-Orozco, Gaytán, et al., 2010; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2010). Importantly, Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, and Callahan (2003) argued that immigrant-origin students who also identify as language minority learners

have less access—relative to their English-proficient peers—to educational resources in the same high-poverty schools (Kieffer, 2008).

Taken together, immigrant-origin children and youth who experience poverty-related challenges as a part of a low-income household, a student in a high-poverty and highly segregated school, or a member of a hyposelected population with limited access to ethnic capital are more likely to encounter structural barriers that contribute to high dropout rates, low test performance, and limited information about postsecondary schooling (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Orfield & Lee, 2006; Suárez-Orozco, Gaytán, et al., 2010).

Examining the long-term outcomes of Mexican-origin immigrants in the United States, Ortiz and Telles (2017) found that college completion, occupational outcomes, and income earnings of third-generation Mexican Americans have not improved relative to their second-generation parents and are lower on average than that of their White peers. Positing that negative racialization of Mexican Americans in educational systems and labor markets partially explains the third-generation disadvantage, Ortiz and Telles (2017) also elevated the role of immigration policy in perpetuating legal precarity among undocumented and mixed-status immigrant-origin families.

Intersection with Documentation Status.

Low-income immigrant-origin children are likely to encounter additional challenges to learning and attaining positive educational outcomes when their cumulative risk intersects with undocumented legal status (Evans et al., 2013; Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, & Tseng, 2015; Yoshikawa, Kholoptseva, J., & Suárez-Orozco, 2013). To that end, education and immigration research has increasingly examined the role of documentation status as a compounding, intersecting—and possibly predominant—barrier to supportive learning conditions, high academic achievement, as well as postsecondary access and attainment. Undocumented immigration is not a new phenomenon; however, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 had the "paradoxical effect" of increasing the number of first-generation immigrants who arrive or remain in the United States without legal authorization (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Yoshikawa, 2011, p. 36). Although national-level population assessments vary by methodology, the Pew Research Center estimates that 10.5 million undocumented immigrants were residing in the United States in 2017, including 1.5 million immigrants with conditional or quasi-legal status (e.g., Temporary Protected Status [TPS] recipients, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals [DACA] recipients, and asylum applicants) who are vulnerable to deportation following policy changes or judicial decisions (Lopez, Passel, & Cohn, 2021). Using data from the 2008 March Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS), the Pew Hispanic Center (Passel, 2009, April 14) estimates that a third of children in families with undocumented parents lives in poverty—nearly double the 18% poverty rate of children with U.S.-born citizen parents.

As unauthorized parents raise their U.S.-born citizen and undocumented children without a pathway to citizenship or permanent residency status, many are blocked from higher paying jobs in the labor market and are vulnerable to employer wage violations that pay below the legal minimum (Bean, Brown, & Bachmeier, 2015; Bernhardt et al., 2009; Massey & Gentsch, 2014; Yoshikawa & Kalil, 2011). Additionally, undocumented immigrants are legally barred from accessing federal public benefits programs (e.g., Temporary Aid to Needy Families [TANF], SNAP, and Medicaid) that are intended to support low-income families (Gonzales, 2011; Yoshikawa, 2011; Yoshikawa & Kalil, 2011). Unauthorized immigrant parents are also categorically excluded from publicly funded child-care subsidies and enroll their children in early childhood center-based care at lower rates relative to other immigrant and citizen parents (Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011). Undocumented parents are similarly less likely to enroll their U.S.-born children in federal programs and preschool, due to fear of possible risk exposure that could lead to arrest, family separation, and deportation (American Psychological Association, 2012; Brabeck,

Sibley, Taubin, & Murcia, 2016; Vargas, Sanchez, & Juárez, 2017; Xu & Brabeck, 2012; Yoshikawa & Kalil, 2011).

Noting that undocumented immigrants experience "additional layers of stress" (p. 1176), Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco, and Dedios-Sanguineti (2013) underscored the social and emotional repercussions of legal exclusion. In addition to heighted anxiety and fear, undocumented immigrants are further subjected to traumatic experiences of racial profiling, discrimination, unannounced arrests inside homes and workplaces, forced separation from family members, placement in detention facilities, and deportation (American Psychological Association, 2012). Furthermore, second-generation citizen children must cope and adapt to the psychological strain and fear that accompany the uncertain and increasingly hostile conditions of the receiving context (Bean et al., 2015; Gonzales, 2011; Yoshikawa, 2011; Zhou & Gonzales, 2019). Consequently, the citizen children of undocumented parents do not encounter the same legal vulnerabilities as their undocumented parents and siblings, but nevertheless experience the detrimental effects of parental legal exclusion.

Taken together, economic hardship, poor work conditions, parental psychological distress, and limited access to supportive learning environments in the form of early childhood center-based care and preschool have detrimental effects on early cognitive development among the children of unauthorized immigrants (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011; Yoshikawa, 2011). In particular, Yoshikawa, Godfrey, and Rivera (2008) find that psychological distress was negatively related to visual reception, fine motor skills, receptive language, and expressive language among 24-month-old children.

In the absence of a pathway to citizenship or permanent legal residency, developmental and learning challenges tied to documentation status and poverty are likely to extend throughout childhood and adolescence with negative consequences on academic achievement during middle and high school. Moreover, children are increasingly likely to become aware of their legal status and precarity by middle childhood, leading to increased anxiety, negative self-esteem, and internalizing and externalizing behavior (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011).

Furthermore, many undocumented families are barred from accessing housing subsidies and public housing due to their legal status (Yoshikawa & Kalil, 2011). Consequently, undocumented families must often reside in crowded or multigenerational environments that are associated with increased stress, food insecurity, and lower academic achievement among children (Evans, Lepore, Shejwal, & Palsane, 1998; Yoshikawa, 2011; Yoshikawa & Kalil, 2011).

As noted earlier, newcomer immigrant students are more likely to attend highly segregated, linguistically isolated, and under resourced schools; unauthorized or mixed-status families face relatively greater financial constraints that further restrict them to neighborhoods of concentrated poverty and require them to change schools frequently (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). As a result, the children of undocumented or mixed-status families are disproportionately subject to school mobility and attendant negative school performance (Rumberger & Larson, 1998; Suárez-Orozco, Gaytán, et al., 2010; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011).

Given the primary role of legal status in structuring immigrant-origin children and families' postmigration neighborhood contexts and family processes, Yoshikawa and Kalil (2011) argue that undocumented status functions "above and beyond the influence of other indicators of disadvantage, such as poverty and socioeconomic status" (p. 292). Some studies similarly argue that documentation status is a "master status" that supersedes other attributes and drives students' educational access, experiences, achievement, and long-term outcomes, including postsecondary attainment, as they transition into adulthood (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Gleeson & Gonzales, 2012; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Terriquez, 2015). Other research alternatively frames documentation status as the "final straw" that pushes undocumented youth out of

school in combination with other factors—such as low SES, race, ethnicity, and gender—that disrupt pathways to educational attainment (Enriquez, 2017; Golash-Boza & Valdez, 2018).

Whether treated as master, auxiliary, or intersectional status, documentation status is widely accepted as a compounding barrier to learning, academic achievement, and educational outcomes. Examining the independent effect of immigrant parents' "membership" status and naturalization process—or lack thereof—on their children's educational attainment, Bean et al. (2011) found that children with one unauthorized immigrant parent averaged one and a half fewer years of schooling relative to their peers with authorized immigrant parents. Moreover, Brabeck et al. (2016) explored the relationship between parental documentation status and the academic achievement of children between the ages of 7 and 10 years. The study found that parental legal status significantly predicted children's scores in word reading, sentence comprehension, reading composite, math, and spelling; moreover, the children of unauthorized parents scored significantly lower on low-stakes assessment tests compared to the children of parents with legal status.

Intersection with Disability.

Individuals with disabilities who are living in poverty face additional difficulties that create challenges for learning. At the same time, the challenges of poverty create circumstances that result in a higher probability of individuals being born with or developing disabilities. People living in poverty are more likely to live in, and to lack the resources necessary to relocate away from, environments that increase their probability of disability. Examples of this phenomenon occur globally and include exposure to lead-contaminated water in the United States, proximity to land mines in Cambodia, and exposure to power lines in Kenya (Eide & Ingstad, 2011; Grut, Olenja, & Ingstad, 2011; Mitchell, 2020; Taksdal, 2011). In the case of the American city of Flint, Michigan, residents of the city were exposed to high levels of lead in their drinking water. In the prior year to the water crisis, 13.1% of students were eligible for special education services. Six years later, 20.5% of students in the city's school district were receiving special education services (Mitchell, 2019). Exposure to toxic chemicals in the water used for drinking and bathing resulted in higher rates of learning disabilities for the children of Flint, with drastic consequences for the long-term trajectory and resources necessary for the education of these students.

In the United States, the probability of being identified as a student requiring special education services is correlated with demographic attributes. The probability of being diagnosed with a disability requiring special education services is correlated with race, gender, socioeconomic status, and exposure to exclusionary discipline. (Sullivan & Bal, 2013). Nevertheless, students living in poverty are also at risk of being misdiagnosed with a disability. Students in poverty may demonstrate attributes of students with disabilities that are in fact consequences of poverty rather than true expressions of symptoms of learning disabilities (Howard, Dresser, & Dunklee, 2015). The issues of poverty are particularly challenging for those living with disabilities and frequently compound the challenges faced by these individuals.

Although most countries formally state that students with disabilities are guaranteed equal rights to education, this is not always the case (Hayes & Bulat, 2017). Gaining access to education by individuals with disabilities is particularly challenging for those living in poverty. In Malawi, students with disabilities who had higher family incomes and were in more urban environments were more likely to be able to be educated and receive the accommodations they needed than those with the same disabilities who were low income or in low-income areas. Many accommodations are only available in private schools, which are out of reach for many low-income families (Braathen & Loeb, 2011). When education rights for those with disabilities are not guaranteed by the government, those without financial means are the most likely to be pushed out of the educational market. In the case of Flint as mentioned earlier, although students are suffering from higher rates of disability, as per a lawsuit the government has agreed to provide the school district with

additional supports to support the higher rate of special education needs (Mitchell, 2020). Additional protection can offset the barriers that those in poverty face when attempting to receive accessible services. While the challenges for those living with disabilities can make schooling and learning more difficult, these challenges are particularly prevalent for those living in poverty.

Intersection with Gender and Sexuality.

The consequences of poverty on learning are experienced differently by those of different genders, gender identities, and sexual orientations. Individuals who identify as female and live in poverty are exposed to unique challenges at the convergence of these two identities. Kohlhaas et al. (2010) found evidence in a national data set to suggest that females living below the poverty line perform lower on science exams than male students living in poverty or female students not living below the poverty line. Females living below the poverty line performed on average 14 percentage points below females living above the poverty line, and 3 percentage points below males living below the poverty line. Among females living below the poverty line, African American girls performed lower than other racial and ethnic groups, scoring an average 15 percentage points lower than White females living below the poverty line and 3 percentage points below Hispanic females living below the poverty line (Kohlhaas et al., 2010). The effects of gender and poverty compound, resulting in students exhibiting lower levels of learning in science, a subject often portrayed as a male-dominated subject area.

Although girls' performance in science may be lower than boys' on average, a gap that is further exacerbated by poverty, boys living in poverty have been shown to have disadvantages in learning compared to their female peers. Using data from Germany, Legewie and Diprete (2012) found evidence to suggest that female students performed better in school than their male peers. The effect was larger in schools with large populations of low socioeconomic students. They argued that males living in low-income environments may feel pressure to not put forth their best effort in school in order to be more socially accepted and be viewed as "cool" by their peers. They further argued that female students are not labeled as uncool for academic achievements in the same way as their male peers, resulting in a gap of expectations and achievement (Epstein, 1998; Legewie & DiPrete, 2012; Maccoby, 1998; Morris, 2008). Peer pressure in order to gain social acceptance can be a powerful influence that can cause males to neglect their studies in favor of gaining social status. When coupled with poverty, this may cause males to prioritize peer acceptance over higher achievement, preventing them from maximizing learning time in the classroom and resulting in a limitation of long-term achievement. In contrast to their male peers, females living in poverty often feel like they need to perform well in school in order to improve their future life outcomes. Neal-Jackson (2018) argues that female students in poverty often believe that they need to perform well in school in order to be potential breadwinners, particularly students who grow up in homes with single mothers (Hubbard, 2005; Neal-Jackson, 2018).

However, Neal-Jackson also found that female students often felt deterred in their efforts by teachers who they perceived to be more concerned with discipline and punishment than promoting student learning (Cameron & Taggar, 2005; Neal-Jackson, 2018). Female students are further disadvantaged by high levels of exposure to sexual harassment. Female students at the K–12 and university levels have described feeling that schools are unwilling or unable to address concerns of sexual harassment or bullying, which prevents them from feeling safe enough to participate in the academic life of their institutions (Crenshaw, Ocen, & Nandi, 2015; Morley et al., 2010). Additionally, female students undertake additional child-care responsibilities that are not shared by their male peers. This added responsibility is not exclusively borne by young mothers; responsibilities of child care for younger siblings are disproportionately placed on female students relative to their male peers (Annamma, 2017; Crenshaw et al., 2015). Female students who become pregnant while in high school face additional challenges of stigmatization and logistical challenges that make continuing in school particularly challenging (Annamma, 2017; Bridgeland, DiIulio, & Morison,,

2006). These added challenges of stigmatization and life circumstances create challenges for learning both outside and inside schools for women living in poverty that their male counterparts do not face.

Additional challenges are faced by members of the LGBT+ community. LGBT+ individuals are more prone to homelessness, causing a reduction in access to educational opportunities and an increased likelihood of living in poverty (Page, 2017). Transgender students are at particular risk of low educational attainment. Transgender students have lower rates of high school graduation, postsecondary achievement, and graduate degree completion when compared to cisgender individuals (Badgett, Choi, & Wilson, 2020). This pattern of low educational attainment increases transgender individuals' probability of experiencing poverty as adults. These challenges place LGBT+ individuals experiencing poverty at higher risk of not receiving access to adequate learning opportunities as children as well as into adulthood.

Taken together, research finds that when poverty interacts with one or several social constructs, it further structures students' learning opportunities, experiences, and outcomes. Importantly, race and ethnicity, immigration and documentation status, disability, and gender and sexuality do not inherently serve as risk factors to learning—rather, it is the social values assigned to these categories, as well as decisions and policies, that disproportionately impair the learning and development of some subgroups.

Conclusion: Moving the Field Forward

Having explored limitations in how we measure and conceptualize poverty and three pathways through which poverty structures and poses challenges to learning, we conclude by arguing against the truisms with which we began: first, that poverty impedes learning in a deterministic fashion; and second, that little progress has been made to break the relationship between poverty and learning. To enable a better and deeper understanding of the complex, highly contextualized, and fluid relationships between poverty and learning, it is necessary to reconceptualize their interaction. Our reconceptualization starts with an acknowledgement that social science researchers have had to rely on imprecise measures of poverty in their analysis. Income-based and SES measures of poverty are often confounded, and proxies used to measure income-based poverty use inconsistent thresholds. Additionally, the impacts of concentrated poverty and the duration of experiencing poverty are often excluded from analysis. As a result, far too many studies are unable to distinguish the extent to which the population under examination comprises individuals who live in poverty, individuals who are low income, individuals who experience poverty for a short time, and individuals who have only known poverty throughout their lives. This imprecision generally reinforces the truism that people with less money typically face greater challenges compared to people with more money, given how our society is constructed, and this can result in differences in academic achievement and educational attainment. However, this approach rarely provides good insight into how and why poverty can impede learning. Thus, to move forward, we need commitment across social science research to deeply contextualize the variables used to measure poverty and detail the limitations of the measures used, including acknowledgment of when they can capture individuals with varying experiences concerning the level, concentration, and duration of poverty. Some examples are emerging to help show the way.

Describing recent policy changes that have led state and school district administrators to shift away from imprecise measures of student SES and poverty, Greenberg, Blagg, and Rainer (2019) described new measurement strategies that have emerged in place of FRPL status. Some states and school districts have adopted direct certification, a process that relies on household participation in federal programs such as SNAP and TANF, as an alternate measure of poverty status. Other states use students' homelessness status, foster care status, and migrant status as indicators of economic disadvantage. Importantly, measurement challenges persist; for example, undocumented and mixed-status immigrant families participate in federal

support programs at lower rates, leading to undercounts of low-income children in states and districts that rely solely on direct certification (Greenberg et al., 2019).

Suggestions for alternate measures of student poverty include community-level socioeconomic characteristics, student mobility, and early exposure to poverty, as well as ever-exposure or cumulative measures of poverty (Duncan & Magnuson 2013; Geverdt & Nixon 2018; Greenberg et al., 2019; Michelmore & Dynarski, 2017; Sandstrom & Huerta 2013). Moving away from a binary designation of FRPL eligibility, the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) in Texas adopted a heat-map approach—coupling census block data and categorizing students based on family income, homeownership, parents' educational attainment, and single-parent household status—to identify, nuance, and contextualize students' economic need (Donaldson, 2019). SAISD's new measurement approach has implications beyond an improved definition of poverty such as more precise information concerning socioeconomic disadvantage at the student-level and school-level have allowed district and state administrators to target allocations of resources to students and schools with the greatest economic need (Donaldson, 2019). Such efforts are especially important, given evidence that high-poverty school districts experienced disproportionate state funding cuts following the Great Recession (Knight, 2017).

Fundamental to reconceptualizing the intersection of poverty and learning is elevating the role of protective factors, as well as individual and community resiliencies, that mitigate the harmful effects of poverty and the compounding burdens of structural racism, misogyny, legal exclusion, and social stigma. To that end, we provide a brief overview of the research that explores protective factors, resilience, agency, and placemaking among students and families. This approach has opened new avenues for disrupting traditional views of poverty, and the students, families, and communities that experience poverty as static and inflexible.

Protective Factors and Community Agency

Interdisciplinary research—spanning psychology, biological sciences, medicine, and public health—has steadily built the evidence base on protective factors that mitigate the negative effects of poverty (Hostinar & Miller, 2019). Just as economic disparities at the family, school, and neighborhood levels can negatively affect learning and development, resilience to poverty-related challenges can also be fostered and strengthened to disrupt the trajectories of children from low-income backgrounds.

Early childhood development research acknowledges the role of timing, dose of exposure, and differential reactivity to poverty as moderators of protective factors (Walker et al., 2011). The cumulative effect of reducing exposure to risk factors, increasing exposure to protective factors, and participating in an intervention during the sensitive periods of child development can positively alter the trajectory of children's brain structure, function, and behavioral competencies (Walker et al., 2011). In particular, children's participation in early educational experiences may have long-lasting effects. Among students in the Chicago Longitudinal Study, participation in an intervention preschool was associated with a 39% greater likelihood of high school graduation or GED completion by age 22 (Smokowski, Mann, Reynolds, & Fraser, 2004). Similarly, an evaluation of the Early Head Start program found that, although children living in poverty exhibited lower cognitive skill between ages 1 and 3 years relative to national norms, children enrolled in Early Head Start demonstrated higher cognitive skill (Ayoub et al., 2009).

Aspects of the educational context may serve a protective function as well. Among preschoolers in Head Start classrooms, the availability of appropriate activities and teachers' use of classroom management strategies predicted children's growth in literacy and language skills (Maier, Vitiello, & Greenfield, 2012). In a phenomenological study of high-achieving middle-school students who live in poverty, many students

cited caring relationships with teachers and teachers' understanding of the circumstances of poverty as factors that supported their achievement (Williams, Bryan, Morrison, & Scott, 2017).

Studies concerning migration-affected students have examined interactions between family SES and access to the social and cultural resources of a co-ethnic immigrant community. High levels of educational attainment among some East and Southeast Asian children of immigrants, regardless of their family incomes and relative to their native-born peers, has given rise to the notion of a second-generation "Asian-American advantage" (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, & Holdaway, 2009; Lee & Zhou, 2017; Tran, Lee, Khachikian, & Lee, 2018). Kasinitz et al. (2009) found that low-income, second-generation Chinese-American students on average had higher educational attainment outcomes relative to their middle-class, native-born White peers in New York City. Furthermore, the children of Chinese immigrants and Vietnamese refugees completed postsecondary schooling at similar rates as their middle-class peers, despite the limited educational attainment of their parents (Lee & Zhou, 2017).

Pushing against claims that Asian culture and Confucian values explain the disproportionate academic achievement of Asian American students, Lee and Zhou (2017) underscore the role of U.S. immigration policy in driving hyperselectivity and overrepresentation of highly educated and skilled parents from certain countries. Moreover, these hyperselected immigrant subgroups' ability to build robust co-ethnic communities and share additional capital may have supported the conditions necessary for learning and bolstered the educational outcomes among low-income co-ethnic children (Lee & Zhou, 2017; Zhou & Gonzales, 2019). In other words, access to robust community capital may moderate the effects of family poverty—among some co-ethnic immigrant communities and within certain receiving contexts—in structuring students' educational access, experiences, learning, and outcomes.

There are additional protective factors that, when present in schools, can support student learning in school buildings. Hopson and Lee (2011) found that in both high- and low-poverty schools, students' perception of schools as safe and supportive spaces is associated with fewer instances of behavioral problems among students. Moreover, environments may shape students' effort to work toward favorable long-term outcomes. Some high-achieving middle school students living in poverty attributed their educational achievement in part to seeing education as a means to leave poverty (Williams et al., 2017). Although poverty is correlated with negative outcomes, protective individual-, community-, and school-level factors can promote student development and learning.

There are also several strategies that students and systems can adopt to mitigate the negative effects of poverty. Narayan, Lieberman, and Masten (2021) argued that although ACEs can have negative effects on life outcomes, positive childhood experiences can offset the probability of negative outcomes. In addition, Bethell et al. (2014) found that children with ACEs who learn and exhibit resilience—defined as "staying calm and in control when faced with a challenge"—were 1.55 times more likely to be engaged in school and nearly half as likely to have repeated a grade in school, relative to their peers who did not demonstrate resilience.

Furthermore, Cantor et al. (2019) found that positive and caring human relationships can mitigate the negative impacts of toxic stress that is heightened by poverty. Emerging work on school connectedness shows that regardless of their background and experiences, students who feel connected to school perform better academically, are healthier, and engage in fewer risky behaviors. Moreover, schools can take modest actions to increase school connectedness such as making sure that every student feels welcome in school as they are, has an adult in school whom they believe knows and cares about them, is part of a supportive peer group, and engages in prosocial activities (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009).

Reconceptualizing the relationship between poverty and learning also requires a much deeper understanding of the ecological, social, and economic conditions that enable and constrain schools' ability

to mitigate and disrupt the negative association between poverty and learning. Drawing from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecosystems theory, Johnson (2012) explicated neighborhood–school relationships within a broader ecological context. Schools and other institutions are nested within larger neighborhood contexts; moreover, "microecological" institutions possess distinct internal characteristics that shape their interactions with the meso-ecological neighborhood. Johnson (2012) also reviewed the effects of neighborhoods and schools across 23 studies and suggests that schools may mediate neighborhood influences to support educational outcomes, despite the larger effects of neighborhood-level measures (e.g., SES) relative to school characteristics. However, Johnson (2012) underscored that inferences regarding the relative effects of neighborhoods and schools remain tentative, given methodological concerns that may lead to biased estimates.

Concerning seasonality, Johnson (2012) highlighted variability in estimating neighborhood effects depending on when school is in session. That is, children are more likely to be directly exposed to neighborhood effects during the summer when the mediating or moderating effects of school are no longer present (Johnson, 2012). Moreover, Borman and Benson (2010) argued that neighborhood-level economic segregation most strongly predicts reading performance gaps at school entry and growth during the summer.

Research on the protective factors present within homes and communities also disrupts established truisms concerning poverty and learning. Students, parents, and community members who experience poverty are traditionally framed as risk factors rather than protective social actors. However, some researchers are moving away from this deficit-based perspective. For example, McGee and Spencer (2015) rejected the notion that African American parents are uninterested bystanders who lack effort for their children's learning in high-poverty schools; rather, the study's findings contend that these parents aim to protect their children from educational inequities and become advocates, motivators, and even early mathematics teachers for their children. Building on this work, Lofton (2021), through his ethnographic research on tracking and ability grouping in a racially diverse school middle school and a Black high-poverty community, pointed out that African American parents aim to protect their children from the toxic harms of racism in upper-track classes by self-selecting academic courses where their children feel safer and more comfortable. These two studies refute assumptions that parents experiencing poverty are bystanders in their children's educational experiences; instead, parents strive to protect their children from racial and social inequalities and survive in a social world where families are confronted with racism, poverty, and unequal educational outcomes. More research is needed to humanize the experiences of parents in poverty, elevate their resiliency and protection regarding their children's education, and move away from harmful assumptions.

High-poverty neighborhoods are often associated with risk factors rather than opportunities and community-level protective factors. Moving away from the two truisms, researchers can examine how parents and community members actively restore their communities and provide protective environments for students. For example, Green (2015) used geographic information systems to map institutional assets within two high-poverty communities in Detroit to uncover the learning that takes place within these communities but is not often mentioned. Moving away from the deficit framing of areas of concentrated poverty, Green (2015) identified 85 institutional learning assets and showed that parents and community members create spaces to help students learn and gain protective skills against inequalities. More research is needed to highlight the resiliency within these communities, and how structures can be further developed to organically support the efforts of the people who live these experiences every day.

Expanding the Scope of Learning and Poverty

The ecological nature of poverty shapes and engenders different ways of understanding and interacting with the world. That is, students, families, and communities that experience poverty continuously learn and apply knowledge, competencies, and skills *outside* formal educational settings and *beyond* traditional school-based measures of academic achievement. Just as conceptualizations of poverty are malleable and subject to improvement, the field's next efforts must reflect an expanded definition of learning that accounts for student opportunities, experiences, and outcomes beyond school-based learning environments.

Despite the problems presented by poverty, students demonstrate resiliency and learning by adapting to their circumstances and developing necessary skills. In Brazil, Saxe (1988) found that children selling candy were capable of successfully completing large calculations more successfully than students with more experience in school. Saxe attributed this phenomenon to the students' ability to develop culturally relevant and necessary practices to successfully participate in the multifaceted candy-selling process, including purchasing candy from wholesalers, pricing items, and making change from larger currency denominations. Although they lacked the formal mathematical training one would encounter in a traditional school setting, these children were able to develop methods to accurately and efficiently complete their day-to-day tasks (Saxe, 1988). Through resilience, students can learn the necessary skills to complete tasks important to their long-term future.

Importantly, we underscore that a focus on improved measures of economic need, protective factors, and resilience cannot be the extent to which researchers destabilize deeply embedded conceptualizations of poverty and learning. To that end, we caution against the promotion of individual-level skills and competencies as a monolithic solution for systemic social exclusion, structural barriers, and racial oppression that preclude access to healthy development, learning, and fulfillment of human potential. Efforts to mitigate the complex effects of poverty and to promote healthy child development and learning require substantial, and timely social and policy choices that address the drivers of poverty.

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