UPROOTED, REGROUNDED, AND GROWING:

AN ANTI-DEFICIT APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING THE DEVELOPMENTAL

CAPITAL OF YOUTH WITH FOSTER CARE EXPERIENCE

by

OCTAVIA FUGERSON

(Under the Direction of Louis Castenell)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to broaden the narrative of disconnected youth, beyond a deficit perspective, by recognizing their developmental capital. Youth in foster care have unique experiences within schools and other social spaces of society. These youth are typically distant from the social norms of society as a result of influences such as unique family dynamics. Using a social constructivist conceptual framework, insight related to the strengths, competencies, values, resources, and supports of youth in foster care are revealed. This study examined the stories of young adults with foster care experience and provided multiple examples of the various ways youth who have experienced foster care demonstrate core attributes of their developmental capital. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were utilized for data collection. By using an anti-deficit approach within the narrative inquiry, the nature of which disconnected youth are empowered is explored, and a positive orientation is added to the body of knowledge related to their way of being.

INDEX WORDS: social constructivism, narrative inquiry, anti-deficit approach, positive

outcomes, youth development, foster care, disconnected and

disadvantaged populations, developmental capital, strengths,

competencies, values, resources, supports

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the piece of me that needed proof that I am a student by mind, in heart and in spirit. It's dedicated to a passion of thought, as I examined my own subject of choice in a scholarly method. The dissertation is dedicated to writing being a fundamental part of my learning and studying, the development of my communication skills and exploration of the wider world of politics.

This piece of work is dedicated to those who forget, falter, or fail to hold on to that which is valuable to them, just to be reminded that truth, goodness, beauty, intuition, insight and more is based on the moral compass in which we have agreed to follow. This is dedicated to remind readers that when the storm of confusion hits, and one is lost in the sea of uncertainty and illusion, values will be in balance with one's thoughts, emotions, goals and energy.

This exploration is dedicated to those who may have had their value denied or rejected. May the writing serve to express my desire and honor to see you, your experiences, and that which you share as important.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

More than Dirt: The Problem at Hand

By pointing to assumed deficiencies within individuals and communities that are

disenfranchised, an explanation and justification of outcome inequalities emerges (Gorski,

2010). Deficit ideologies deteriorate expectations for students and weaken educators' abilities to

recognize giftedness in various forms (Ford & Grantham, 2003; Gorski, 2010). There is more to

be highlighted about youth in foster care, other than the concerns associated with populations

that are disadvantaged. Compared to conditions that demote the competencies needed to be

socially apt for these youth; intrinsic elements promoting the social, ethical, emotional, and

cognitive competencies are not highlighted as well in literature. Current literature is more

encapsulating of distressing findings about the status of youth in and transitioning from foster

care. Gorski (2010) posited that by drawing on stereotypes already well-established in the

mainstream psyche, the deficit ideology justifies training the mass consciousness to pathologize.

The Center for the Study of Social Policy (Browne, 2014) reports youth in foster care to

be included within the population of children who have special health care needs, with such

needs defined by a higher risk for long term physical, emotional, or developmental conditions

and who may also require increased access to health and related services, averaging higher than

the general population of youth. Browne (2014) also postulated how the special health care needs

translate into research findings demonstrating how disconnected youth who age out out of foster

care are more likely than their peers with no foster care history to experience challenges with: long term housing procurement; substance use and abuse; lack of access to effective physical and mental health practices; issues concerning pregnancy and parenting; educational and formal training deficits; underemployment, unemployment, or dependence on public assistance; involvement in illegal activities; and sexual and physical victimization.

These poor outcomes are associated with psychological and physical trauma experienced by the youth, prior to out of home placement, as well as trauma associated with the consequent separation from family. The report exemplifies the implications of the pathology associated with youth in foster care.

Browne (2014) highlights the support of a normalcy perspective, meaning, youth in and transitioning from foster care need and deserve the same opportunities, experiences, and high expectations as all other youth in the community (Langford & Badeau, 2013). Within the field of child welfare, there are some policies and practices that can inadvertently effect youth in foster care from optimal development, similar to their peers with parents. For example, Child Welfare Information Gateway (2016) reported background investigations are a requirement for prospective parents, adults residing in the household, and those who will serve as temporary caregivers for the placement of a child. Criminal records checks must be completed by owners, operators, and employees of child care facilities, any person residing with a youth in supervised Independent Living arrangements, persons serving as mentors to transitioning youth, and adults residing in the child's home, before the child can be reunited with the family. As a result of safety as a priority, policies and practices exist limiting youth in foster care from participating in social and extracurricular activities, such as attending prom, being able to obtain driver's license or being able to go on field trips. Policies and practices within the child welfare system can

contribute to a lack of normalcy underwriting the pathological lives and narratives associated with youth in care.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2015) further speaks to how requirements imposed by child welfare systems can limit opportunities for young people in foster care to have everyday experiences and relationships and that are more difficult to access than their peers. The Casey issue brief examined perspectives of young people with foster care experience to offer insights to help guide the actions of child welfare system in providing more typical experiences for these youth. Normalcy, as defined by Annie E. Casey (2015) is a collective of typical experiences encompassing age and developmentally appropriate activities, experiences, and opportunities that should make up the daily lives of young people, within the context of a caring and supportive family. The youth engaged in the creation of the issue brief spoke to not having access to things that adolescents who are not in the system have such as sleepovers, dates, and chances to earn allowances. Normalcy is widely accepted as a critical component in healthy, social, emotional, and cognitive development. Although normalcy is more closely related to opportunities to participate in school and community activities where youth take on distinctive development tasks, there is a normalcy that can also exist as it relates to the story conveyed about the abilities of youth in foster care.

As is present in the literature related to youth in foster care, so is the tone of services offered to the youth which appear to uphold a deficit perspective. The gap in literature, related to the positive side of the youth's abilities, is indicative of the missing services for youth in foster care, related to focusing on their strengths, values, competencies, resources, and supports (National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment, 2015; Stahmer et al, 2005). To address the gap in services in supporting positive youth development versus remediation of deficits, the

federal law, Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014, was designed

to promote well-being and normalcy for youth in foster care and set a precedent for the

facilitation of age appropriate experiences supporting a more socially sound foundation (Annie

E. Casey, 2015; Browne, 2014). The act specifically requires states to ensure youth who are most

likely to remain in foster care until 18 years of age engage in age or developmentally-appropriate

activities. Another requirement of the Strengthening Families Act entails focused on a reasonable

and prudent parent standard for youth participation in activities. Another part of the act also

mandates inclusion of youth age 14 and older in transition planning for a successful adulthood.

The Act creates an opening for youth in foster care to be seen in a different light through

their pursuit of activities of interest to them and which build their strengths. That same opening

can also help foster parents and those responsible for the development of young people in foster

care to support the development and identification strengths, resources, values, and supports

through the facilitation of developmentally appropriate activities. The act provides the

opportunity for the young people to have an active role in their development, through

participation in activities such as class planning and opportunity for youth to share their strengths

and interests.

With a shifting trend in developmentally appropriate services for youth in foster care,

there is space for recognizing the value of identifying and developing strengths of these young

people. Methodologically, the inclusion of youth voices in identifying the strengths, values,

resources, and supports of youth in foster care, is also fairly unique to the literature on the

abilities of youth who are disconnected. Although there has been some inclusion of youth voices

related to need assessments or deficits related to abilities, less prevalent is the compilation of

narratives from the vantage point of those whom come from the margins of societal norms.

Statement of the Problem

Programs and services oriented to addressing problems, using a deficit perspective, miss the opportunity to optimally develop the potential of many youth. Outcomes associated with the residuals of evaluating disconnected youth primarily by their deficits can be found in faculties such as employment, education, and housing (Annie E. Casey, 2015). Understanding the status of these faculties, as they relate to disadvantaged youth, often start with a focus on the pathology versus advantage (Gorski, 2010). Decisions and actions following the understanding, influence the social, psychological, physical, and spiritual health of children. Repeated patterns of engaging disconnected youth through a deficit lens, have created a culture of negatively narrativizing youth's ability, values, and insights.

An anti-deficit orientation in examining foster youth's strengths, interests, and supports, through interviewing youth with foster care experience, can effectively obtain insight from their personal experience, voice, and perspective (Harper, 2010; Sacredo, 2014; Stokes, 2013). Given attention to the issues of youth who are disconnected and making decisions solely on solving identified problems can result in overlooking factors that bring youth comfort, developmental opportunities, and peace of mind. Narratives of disconnected youth have been engaged narrowly. Engagement for the sake of investigation reports of abuse and neglect, development of scientific policy, and attempts to improve knowledge and skills of a community can miss relevant factors that are more easily highlighted by engagement to explore strengths and supports. A critique exists for youth who are disconnected narratives from a deficit perspective, and which follow the sequence of events related to primarily negative attributes, then end at a point of a negative place. This current study through the use of narrative inquiry attempts to empower youth who are disconnected and adds to the narrative of their way of being with a positive orientation.

While research exists related to the harm caused to youth who are disconnected as a result of their experience, this study adds to the scant no research on advantages drawn from their experiences. This study seeks to understand, beyond child welfare systems, who provides help or advantages to disconnected youth. The study also pushes past government entities alone in providing support to examine other key stakeholders who shape the experiences of youth who are disconnected. Not recognizing the benefits of those who may also be marginalized or associated with things not valued by the child welfare system (like people associated with neglect or lawbreaking), often leaves out advantages associated with biological family members, friends, and community members.

Deficit perspectives takes attention away from the value associated with marginalized populations, such as youth who are disconnected. According to Torrance (1964), the development of youth who are disconnected is affected by social and emotional behavior problems that might stem from characteristics of giftedness. It is reported that socially inappropriate behavior and lack of support prevent these youth from receiving such services. Youth in foster care, and other youth who are disconnected, are more likely to have their talents overlooked and examined through stereotypical beliefs. As such, their potential for trouble is amplified. As a result of attention often given to the need for improvement and stigmas/negative stereotypes associated with youth who are disconnected, remediation and other corrective services are provided in surplus. Not often enough are the strengths of students who are disconnected acknowledged and sufficiently developed. Ford (2004) shared that such youth are underrepresented in both gifted education and talent development programs. There literature does not yield many studies examining understanding or expression of the belief that behavioral problems often are manifestations of strengths among youth who are disconnected.

According to Ludwig (1992), the social cultural environment not only influences what is expressed, by whom it is expressed, and how it is expressed, but it also determines what function the expression serves and its consequences for an individual and society. The intent of this study is to reveal facets of the social-cultural environment of youth who are disconnected to better highlight their strengths and in the process gain a better understanding of the context of their experience as youth in foster care. Open exploration of the capital of youth who are disconnected moves beyond a deficit perspective of their assets, to promote their wellbeing and optimize their social outcomes and personal status. Although the field is more familiar with the struggles and downfalls of youth who are disconnected, it is time to move beyond a deficit perspective to bring attention to the youth's strengths. Youth who are disconnected have unique experiences within schools and other spaces of society. These youth are typically disconnected from the social norms of society associated with family, development, employment, and health. The social cultural environment has a significant impact on creative expression (Ludwig, 1992) and other manifestations of strengths. The title, More than Dirt, speaks to the need to see more than the apparent issues at hand and examine the hidden nutrients that exist within the metaphorical plants of the lives of the youth.

Purpose and Significance of Study

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the body of knowledge which exists about the strengths of youth in foster care. A primary purpose is to a gain a broad understanding from the youth's perspective and through the collection of the voices of youth who are disconnected to examine their strengths, resources, values, competencies, and supports. The study aims to recognize and respect youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as youth in foster care who

are storytelling organisms, individually and socially, and who lead storied lives. The use of narrative for the study highlights the ways youth with foster care experience move through the world with construction and reconstruction of their personal and social stories.

Using a social constructivist's lens, the study will explore the developmental capital: supports, resources, strengths, values, and competencies, among youth in foster care. With Patton's (2015) understanding, the constructivist studies multiple realities constructed by different groups of people and the implication of those constructions for their lives and interactions with others. The essence of the developmental capital, associated with youth with foster care experience, emerges through the exploration of the interpersonal and intersubjective definitions that come through people's interaction in a network of relationships. This study is unique to others as it begins to postulate developmental capital of a marginalize population, not from the perspective of those in power such as, child welfare professionals, educators or researcher, but from the perspective of the marginalized group: youth with foster care experience.

The inquiry uses an anti-deficit perspective to pivot on the presentation toward a positive note, within a context, oriented to positive personal experiences, to expand beyond the limited understanding associated with the cultural container of foster care. The sequence of events promoting positive experiences will be emphasized in connection with the participants' current status, set of values, and definition of success to yield more positive results than previous studies. The combination of life history and socio-historical context arising from the narrative inquiry prompt the personal stories of youth who are disconnected and are expressive of a larger societal and historical context. The engagement of youth who are disconnected is unique as it induces "the good side of the story" from characters of the story.

Taking an anti-deficit approach to the stories of youth who are disconnected allows elements to emerge regarding the social context, interpersonal relationships, and emotional wellbeing. Basic principles of educational psychology will emerge through the study, as the manner which students of disconnected populations think and learn are revealed through their stories. This study proposes a different way to assess students' progress and status, through the exploration of their counter-narrative of their abilities. Effective teaching methods, orientation towards educational settings, aptitude assessments and elements of cognitive development might emerge to add to the body of knowledge. This study might not add much to knowledge related to psychopathology, but perhaps more so elements of positive psychology.

The significance of the findings of the study is rooted in defining strengths, values and supports of disconnected, as defined by youth with foster care experience. The findings may also produce data that can inform the field of gifted education on strategies most appropriate to meet high potential youth who are disconnected where they are socially and educationally.

Further application of the results of the study may be applied to:

- Improve disconnected youth educational outcomes

- Increase number of disconnected and disadvantaged youth being identified as gifted.

- Promote cultural competence,

- Increase self-awareness, and

- Increase self-efficacy, which can lead to economic empowerment and increase civic engagement

Research Question

The central research question for this study was: What capital do youth with foster care experience possess? More specifically, the following question will also be considered: What is the developmental capital of young adults with foster care experience?

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

The Literature Review: Lay of the Land

The current study explored the strengths, resources, values, and supports of former foster youth. The study has the potential to add to the literature in understanding the nature of youth of high potential who are disconnected by examining the outcomes associated with the identification and development of the developmental capital of youth in foster care. Although there is a great deal of scholarship on the issues that plight this marginalized community, the current study adds to this empirical research base by examining characteristics of positive youth development embedded among the individuals within the foster youth population. This chapter summarizes the research on which the current study is based. Specifically, various literatures consulted in preparation for this review have been organized in categories that are aligned with the title.

Literature was examined summarizing the uprooting of youth. This section provides scholarly descriptions of youth who are disconnected, and more specifically youth in foster care. The descriptions illuminate details related to the social status of these youth. Elements related to outcomes associated with economic status, educational outcomes, and mental health are highlighted. This section also reviews the degree to which disadvantaged youth, such as youth in foster care, are included in gifted education and talent development programs. A second body of literature examines the construct of regrounding. In this section, literature is summarized exploring the research from an anti-deficit perspective. The purpose of this component of the

review is to discover work that has been done through viewing populations of interest in empowering ways, highlighting strengths as opposed to deficits. A third body of literature that was consulted focuses on the construct of growing. Within this section, literature from the field of gifted education is reviewed to provide an analysis of the gifts, strengths, and talents associated with populations who are disadvantaged. Finally, the chapter includes information on literature on developmental capital. This synthesis provides an assessment of the foundational factors relevant to the developmental capital of youth who are disconnected. Forms of capital and the concept of cultural capital is explored with the intent to bring attention to the array of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed by population who are marginalized.

Search Description Overview

A number of resources were employed and formed the foundation of the review of literature which undergirds this study. The identification of what has already been written about the topic began by exploring issues faced by youth who are disconnected, and more specifically, youth with foster care experience. Youth in foster care are uniquely positioned socially, in relation to the field of child welfare, and served as the primary source for the description of the population in this study. Through the exploration of the literature within the field of child welfare, a trend of deficit perspective was found. To expand the narrative associated with the developmental capital of youth with foster care experience, from solely a deficit perspective, literature related to previous studies using an anti-deficit approach was examined. Thereafter, ideologies related to the strengths of disconnected or disadvantaged youth are observed within the field of gifted education. Elements of developmental capital are explored through theories

associated with the different forms of capital and in more detail with cultural capital. Last, literature related to the research methodology is briefly discussed.

Conceptual or Theoretical Framework

The theoretical orientation for the current study is aligned with the interpretive qualitative theory and social constructivism because this study is not bound to only the study of behavior and other observable phenomena, but extends the inquiry to examine the meanings individuals create and the internal phenomenon of developmental capital. Social constructivism was chosen as a component of the theoretical framework to explore the human intentions associated with causal relationships among social phenomena. In this study, there is an assumption that social reality is constructed by participants, opposed to the belief of quantitative researchers who, assume an objective social reality (Creswell, 2007). Constructivism and constructionism is often used interchangeably (Patton, 2015). Crotty (1998) reserves the term constructivism for the epistemological considerations focusing exclusively on the meaning-making activity of the individual mind: Constructionism focus includes the collective generation and transmission of meaning (Crotty 1998; Patton, 2015).

Social constructivism originated as an attempt to come to terms with the nature of reality (Andrews, 2012). In his 1994 work, Denzin discussed the looking beyond post-positivist perspectives, as the emphasis on objective research became apparently untenable. It is posited that collection and interpretation of qualitative data on humans could be considered inherently subjective (Willis, 2007). According to Denzin (1994), the values we use to judge whether a study warrants our attention are based on ideological, political, moral, and personal values – all subjective entities. These values arise through the assumption of constructivism that truth is a matter of consensus among informed and sophisticated constructors, not of correspondence with

objective reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1991; Magana, 2002). Denzin (1994) believed the humanistic commitment of the qualitative research is to study the world away from the perspective of the interacting individual. Specifically, Denzin (1994) summarized that one can not have a holistic view of politics of liberation, without deeply examining the perspective of socially, economically and politically marginalized groups, as it pertains to their individualistic narrative and ideology. These ideas reinforce the concept of various natures of truth and weaken the argument of the relationship between research, human experiences, and objectivity.

Constructivists study the multiple realities constructed by different groups of people and the implications of those constructions for their lives and interactions with others (Patton, 2015). According to Patton (2015), social constructivism asserts things do not and cannot have essence because they are defined interpersonally and intersubjectively by people interacting in a network of relationships. As a researcher using a constructivist approach, this research allows for deeper examination into the multiple realities about supports, resources, high potentiality, values, competencies, and the strengths of disconnected youth. Future studies, as well as past studies, will and have captured the perspectives of teachers, talent development programs, and child welfare professionals. This study is unique from prior research as it seeks to capture the perspectives of youth in foster care as they relate their strengths and the history of their developmental capital.

Social constructivism and interpretivism are sometimes used interchangeably. Merriam and Simpson (2000) assert all qualitative research is based on the philosophical assumption that perspective is determined by individualized social interaction. Interpretivists believe reality is not objectively determined, but it is socially constructed (Merriam, 1998). Interpretivism is a way to gain insights through discovering meanings resulting in the production of thick and rich

description (Merriam, 1998). Use of naturalistic inquiry, such as observation, unstructured interviews, and transcriptions are implemented in the current study to make sense of the participants' experiences.

The history of knowledge construction and interpretivism is closely tied to the history of gifted education. Patton (2015) discussed the work of Thomas Kuhn who suggested that most people thought of science progress through heroic individual discoveries that contributed to an accumulating body of knowledge that got closer and closer to the way the world really works. However, that thought was not necessarily accurate. Ideas that seemingly were derived from brilliant individual scientific minds were actually shaped by and dependent on paradigms of knowledge that were socially constructed and enforced through group consensus. Kuhn (1970) argued tightly organized communities of specialists were the central forces in scientific development. Therefore, it might be expected new explanations and ideas would compete until old ideas were discarded or revised. However, competition was not just one of intellect, but of power. Kuhn posited leaders of the scientific communities wield power in support of their positions, just as political leaders do. The central forces within tightly knit communities might make it difficult for perspectives on the periphery of the group to be valued.

Andrews (2012) noted the experience of society, as subjective reality, is achieved through primary, and to a lesser extent, secondary socialization involving being given an identity and a place in society. Citing Berger & Luckmann (1991), Andrews (2012) suggested socialization takes place through significant others who mediate the objective reality of society and render it meaningful and internalizable by individuals. Andrew (2012) further suggested language predates concepts and provides a means of structuring the way the world is experienced. As a result, conversation is one of the most important means of maintaining, modifying and

reconstructing subjective reality. Using social constructivism, as the lens of analysis through narrative inquiry of individuals with foster care experience, this research sets the stage to recreate knowledge representing peoples' experience of the identification and development of their developmental capital.

In the current study, Hiebert's (2014) presentation of the three phases of social construction is used as the framework to discuss the identification and development of strengths, as a caveat of the developmental capital, of youth in foster care. The three phases of social constructivism answer the questions of how things become accepted as real and lead to the establishment of culture. To present Hiebert's postulations first, more concisely, society is a human product (externalization), society is an object reality (objectivation), and humans are a social product (internalization).

Through externalization, objectivation, and internationalization, the theory of social constructivism might reveal the historical development and current establishment of the practices of the identification and development of strengths of youth in foster care. An example of the manifestation of externalization lies in the nature of how a teacher sets his or her classroom. A teacher who prefers neat and nice space might create spaces unconducive to students who benefit from openness and who think divergently and have less commonplace response. A teacher preference to have students who are obedient might cause a riff in recognizing the strengths of a student who might annoy the teacher by confronting the teacher's ideas with independent thinking instead of accepting the teacher's ideas. Objectivation might manifest as a teacher proclaims to a child the expression of his or her ideas are unacceptable, if it is not an answer a typical student would provide. When utilizing assessment creation, the limitation of language a student is allowed to use can create fewer opportunities for students. An example of the

manifestation of internalization might be demonstrated through a student's acceptance of a low test score where the student concludes he or she is not gifted when simply the result could be a measure not aligned with the culture of the student.

While social constructivism is the primary theoretical framework used in this study, elements of Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Delgado, 1995) also emerge through the counter-narrative provided in the participants' storytelling. Critical Race Theory is an outgrowth from the legal movement of critical legal studies, described by Crenshaw (1988) as an attempt to analyze legal ideology and discourse as a social artifact which operates to recreate and legitimate American society. Critical Race Theory pivots from Critical Legal Studies as CRT begins with the notion that racism is normal, not aberrant in American society (Delgado, 1995). While ethnicity is not heavily focused on in this study, CRT recognizes how race has become broader than biological race (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Race is also recognized as metaphorical, a way of referring to a broader social construct that cross events, classes, and expressions of social decay and economic division. Application of the theory fits, as Ladson-Billings (1998) describes CRT as value tool for deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power.

Social constructivism explains reality through the thoughts of humans (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). As we think of how social constructivism influences the identification and development of foster youths' strengths, it is essential to first acknowledge the social world is not given, but made up and transmitted through people. What is not learned from our own senses, is learned through input from other people. Social construction has been recognized as the process whereby people continuously create, through their action and interactions, a shared

reality that is experienced as objectively factual and subjectively meaningful (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Population of Interest: Foster Youth, and more broadly, Disconnected Youth

A part of this qualitative inquiry seeks to find meaningful patterns and themes as it relates to how young adults with foster care experience understand their developmental capital. More broadly, the inquiry also seeks to understand how people and groups construct meaning. Patton (2015) shared that social groups are typically defined by their shared meanings. Youth in foster care is the population of interest of this current study, and are considered a subgroup of the broader population of disconnected youth. Exploration into characteristics of the broader population of disconnected youth facilitates further illumination of meaning associated with the participants' experiences. In addition to disconnected, youth in foster care are often recognized as disadvantaged. The interpretation of this study is the difference between disconnected and disadvantaged youth is minute and grounded, primarily, in the disconnection from school and work (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2015). The current study recognizes disconnected youth with an emphasis on the disconnection between institutions of family and other means to developing understanding of social norms. The review of the literature revealed additional definition/characteristics of disconnected youth.

Fernandes-Alcantara (2015), in a U.S. Congressional report, operationalized youth who are disconnected and disadvantaged as non-institutionalized youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who are detached from school, work, and housing. The hearing report further focused special attention on youth who had exited the foster care system, often at the risk of being homeless of jobless. The report also noted youth who are disconnected to be children with a specific set of

connections between school and family. Other groups have also attempted to operationalize youth who are disadvantaged. For example, The Public Health and Welfare; Chapter 129, National and Community Service; National and Community Service Grant Program; General Provisions defines the term "disadvantaged youth" as "not only having economic disadvantages, but additional factors that speak to an overall limited access to resources that contribute to the life success expectancy. These factors include employment status, English proficiency, permanent housing access, familial support, educational attainment, criminal delinquency, citizenship and foster care status. Five overlapping groups that are particularly at high risk of serious disconnection include older immigrant youth, youth with learning disabilities or mental health problems, those involved in the justice system, young mothers, and youth aging out of foster care (Bloom, 2010). Bloom (2010) also shared details of a study completed by the Urban Institute noting, 40% of young people who are not consistently connected to school and/or work between the ages of 18 and 24 also fell under this definition.

Through their studies and developed programs, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (2013) attempted to help young people who face major barriers in finding a path to stable adult life. This agency wrote about target groups of youth who included: youth at risk of disconnection, youth exiting foster care, and youth exiting juvenile justice facilities. A number of key terms were included in this report to describe the population which included students who had dropped out of high school, students who were struggling, youth in foster care, and youth with disabilities. Services offered through the Gates Foundation (2010), spoke to strategies to reengage disconnected young people and improve their long-term outcomes. The foundation defined disconnected youth as high school dropouts who were neither in school or working.

The review of literature pertaining to characteristics that influence the definition of disconnected youth revealed a general phrase across the various definitions encompasses the ideology of disconnected youth being those not engaged in education, employment, or training. Normative labels used in various fields from federal policy to academic discourse range from 'the disaffected', 'the disengaged', 'disconnected', 'hard to reach', hard to help', 'socially excluded', and the youth underclass' (MacDonald, 2008). Other researchers discuss how youth are typically described as something they are not, something that they do not have, or as youth who have a presumed social and economic distance and dislocation from others (MacDonald, 2008).

Educational Psychology of Youth with Foster Care Experience and Outcomes of Disconnected Youth

Educational psychology is concerned with teaching and learning processes, including understanding what students feel, do and think in learning environments. Relevant outcomes that arose throughout the literature and that will be highlighted in this section include, permanency, housing, physical & mental health, education, social capital, employment, financial capability and normalcy. The review of literature illuminates factors that influence the educational psychology related to disconnected youth, and more specifically youth in foster care. Examination of the outcomes reveal how the developmental capital of the disconnected youth might be influenced through situations and people who serve as a support by identifying strengths, contributing to their resources, developing their competencies, and upholding their values.

Permanency. According to the Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative (JYCOI; 2016), researchers found young people in foster care made distinctions among three different types of permanency, with most choosing relational permanence as the most important over physical and legal permanence (Sanchez, 2004). Legal permanency is a permanent legal connection to a family, such as reuniting with birth parents, adoption, kinship care, or legal guardianship. Physical permanency is having a home or a place to live, like an apartment or a transitional living home. Relational permanency consists of having a relationship or connection with a caring adult, such as maternal and paternal family members, teachers, neighbors, or former foster parents. (Chapin Hall Center, 2010; Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013).

Youth in foster care are often marked by their struggle with permanency. The lack of stable parental/adult support for many youth who are disconnected impacts their talent identification and development. In federal fiscal year 2013, there were 23,346 young people who emancipated or aged out of foster care without a permanent legal connection to a parent, family member, or adoptive parent (JCYOI, 2016). The Children's Bureau Child Welfare Information Gateway (2013) reported when disconnected youth have relational permanence, there are adults who provide lifelong support that can help young people transition to adulthood.

Adult support impacts the talent identification and development for disconnected youth. While the lack of permanency can be traumatic, and cause difficulty for disconnected youth to have adult supporters, those who can identify the strengths and consistently advocate for resources on their behalf make a positive difference. Tsoi-A-Fatt (2008) found young people with supportive adults in their lives are more likely to report being able to cover expenses and have savings and less likely to have debt.

Housing. Young people who age out of foster care without a permanent, legal relationship often face challenges of not having family or other permanent connections to return to if their current housing is uprooted. Housing instability is a significant issue for young people who have experienced foster care (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2015). Without safe or stable housing, young people may face challenges staying in school, gaining employment, accessing physical and mental health services, and reaching self-sufficiency (Fryar, Jordan, & Devooght, 2017). Between the ages of 17 and 26, 36 percent of young people are likely to report at least one episode of homelessness (Courtney et. Al, 2011; Dworsky, Napolitano, & Courtney, 2013). To meet the housing needs of youth in foster care, housing options that meet the federal criteria for being reimbursable include: guardianship or kinship care, family foster homes, congregate care settings/group homes, and supervised independent living setting (Gaughen, 2014). Supervised Independent Living Setting include: supervised and semi-supervised apartments, scattered site housing, host homes, and college dormitories.

The variance in experience, entering and living into various environments has an impact on the identification and development of the developmental capital of youth in foster care. Developmentally appropriate housing is essential for the psychological wellbeing of youth in foster care. Sufficient housing options can support the development of permanent relationships with caring adults and provide opportunities for acquiring life skills, advanced education, and employment opportunities (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010).

Physical and Mental Health. Youth who are disconnected are perceived as having more health care needs than their peers who do not lack parental support. According to Fernandes-Alcantara (2015), for youth who enter into foster care, between 35 and 60 percent have at least one chronic or acute health condition that needs treatment. Perceptions of the health needs of

youth in foster care and stigmas associated with underprivileged population such as youth who are disconnected abusing health services and programs of assistance can make it difficult to support actual needs (Peters, 2005). Stigmatization of mental and physical health issues can lead to active discrimination, such as excluding people with particular conditions (e.g., behavioral problems) from social or educational opportunities. For example, the impact of the stigmatization of being in foster care is noted in reports highlighting the over-prescription of youth in foster care (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2014). This particular stigma provides access to more of a high risk, low efficient solution. However, it has been noted that young people with foster care experience need access to comprehensive, coordinated, reliable, and high-quality mental and physical health services to meet their needs. Though youth with foster care experience are also more likely to receive services for remediation, such as special education, the youth can benefit more from having access to talent development programs that provide social and educational opportunities that empower.

Education. Educational attainment helps to ameliorate significant risk to disconnected youth's positive development and growth (Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2008). Young people who are in, or have experienced foster care are less likely to receive a high school or general education diploma and less likely to attend or complete post-secondary education (JCYOI, 2016). However, 58% of young people who have experienced foster care graduate high school by the age 19 (Courtney et al, 2011). Courtney et al (2011) also reported, 40% of young people with foster care experience complete at least one year of college. Educational attainment, employment, and less exposure to poverty can have a cumulative effect that can help youth transition successfully into adulthood from foster care (Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2008). Education is a resource that helps leverage social mobility. It also provides opportunities for identifying strengths, within a space intended to develop

competencies. The academic achievement can positively influence youth with foster care experience to find and obtain resources.

      Social Capital. Having a variety of housing experiences and addressing the multiple areas of development through academics also impacts one's social capital. Housing stability lends to one's ability to develop healthy relationships. Brown (2011) speculated that during adolescence, young people's individual productive capabilities and chances for success are enhanced through building relationships. The ability, among youth in foster care, to establish healthy interpersonal skills can be facilitated through forming intimate relationship. The quantity of an individual's social relationships, the quality of those relationships, and the value of the resources that partners in social relationships are three components that are essential to developing social capital (Astone et al, 1999). According to the Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative (JCYOI; 2013), disconnected youth build social capital in the context of four communities: the family, school, neighborhood, and peers. In 2016, JCYOI reported participants of their survey most commonly cite receiving help from peers (82%), family members (70%), child welfare professionals (26%) and school personnel (18%) as people who will help them achieve.

      Social capital has a significant role in the nature of the developmental capital of youth with foster care experience. Regardless of how competence, health, or happiness were measured, Blum and Rineart's (2000) comprehensive study of 90,000 teenagers revealed that young people who believe they have an adult who cares for them are more competent, healthier, and happier. Through emotional support and companionship, the well-being of disconnected youth can be influenced as their happiness and self-esteem is positively influenced by their social capital (Rowe & Kahnn, 1998). Shaffer (2000) proclaimed relationships provide security and social

support and help children develop social problems solving skills. Strong, positive connections with families and communities help to develop caring, confident, and competent young people associated with contributing meaningfully to the broader social order (Wray-Lake, Flanagan, & Osgood, 2001;Youngblade et al., 2007).

      Employment. Often it is said, "It's not what you know, it is who you know" and it is that phrase that ties social capital and employment in this conversation of foster youth outcomes and their developmental capital. Economic opportunities improve child outcomes through employment and earning opportunities (Giloth, 2004). Kingslow (2000) shared that economic opportunities help to secure adequate income and accumulate savings and assure one the basic necessities of food, clothing, shelter, and health care. The healthy development of youth with foster care experience is enhanced through job development within their communities, employment training, wage supplements, and asset-building strategies (Kingslow, 2000).

      JCYOI (2016) detailed employment outcomes for young people who have experienced foster care. Their survey findings suggest that locating and keeping a job is a challenge for many of the young people who have experienced foster care. Many of the youth in care reported not being consistently connected to the workforce (JCYOI, 2016). From their data of 7,837 participants, Annie E. Casey Foundation's (2015) survey revealed 53-54% of youth formerly in foster care were not employed and 30% of those youth were looking for work.

      Meaningful employment is critical piece of wellbeing for all young people. Opportunities to practice develop strengths, especially through employment because employment provides valuable experience for young people-teaching responsibility, organization, and time management skills. Meaningful employment provides necessary income, social connections,

personal pride, and satisfaction. Employment can also help young people form good work habits, gain valuable work experience, and become financially independent (JCYOI, 2016).

Financial Capability. While employment and/or career advancement is essential to providing the faculties for one's wellbeing, job retention also is important. Jobs that are sustainable help to provide or lead to wages that support families and have career potential. Giloth & Gerwitz (1999) report when comprehensive job retention strategies are in place, financial capability is positively impacted. For youth in foster care, that might include basic knowledge and skill development, career management services (such as career planning and guidance), family-friendly workplace options, financial support for education and training, and services oriented specifically toward job retention, such as on-the-job conflict resolution, on-the-job mentoring, and coaching programs (Kingslow, 2000).

The match savings offered through the Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative, known as Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), served to help youth learn financial management, obtain experience with the mainstream banking system, and save money for assets (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015). For youth between the age of 14 and 25 with foster care experience, the IDA comes with a set of approved assets, including education expenses, vehicle, housing, investments, microenterprise, health care and credit building, and participant specific assets. Through the Opportunity Passport survey, the JCYOI (2016) revealed even when holding steady youth disconnected that these youth tend to earn less than their peers. Children without parents typically have the experiences of the lower-poor working class (Okpych & Courtney, 2014). The JCYOI (2016) reported that 71% of their participants: young people previously in care who are employed, report an income of less than $25,000 a year. They also shared, an estimated two

percent of employed young people have experienced foster care and lack the earning power to rise out of poverty which influences their financial capability.

A supportive adult can be an essential to increase financial capability and developmental capital of youth in foster care. For an example, the JCYOI (2016) suggests, 5-10% of youth in foster care have negative credit files because of creditor errors (for example, a hospital wrongly billing the youth), mixed identity, incorrect or fraudulent use of a youth's name or Social Security Number on delinquent accounts, or even more severe instances of identity theft and fraud. A supportive adult can help a youth navigate issues related to the youth's credit. Exposure to financial experiences, like regular banking habits, opportunities to earn income or having someone who can teach one how to develop and stick to a budget influences financial capability. Through increased financial capability, youth who are disconnected can receive the same opportunities as their counterparts with parents to practice and to refine what they have learned in real world situations relevant to their lives.

Normalcy. Partly, the promotion of social and emotional well-being of youth in foster care can rest on stress reducing and nurturing environments that provide security and promote positive outcomes (U.S. Department of Health and Human Service, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, 2012). Decision-making skills, taking risks, and developing healthy peers and adult relationship come as youth take advantage of developmentally appropriate experiences. Variety in social experience helps youth in foster care to experience concerted cultivation and understand social norms. Relational and environmental support to heal and to recover can arise through targeted supports helping youth build coping skills and social skills.

The Strengthening Families Act of 2014 speaks to the importance of States allowing a caregiver, such as a foster parent to promote normalcy by encouraging youth to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities (Children Defense Fund et al, 2015).

Conclusion

The review of literature illustrates how outcomes might be influenced by and influence developmental capital. By having someone to serve as support, to help identify strengths, to contribute to resources, to confirm competencies, and to uphold shared values, youth who are disconnected can thrive.

The Anti-Deficit Approach

Gorski (2010) reminds that in most repressive dispositions, the deficit perspective refers to socio-political ideologies directly influenced by intricate socialization processes. While critical discourse has emerged, challenging the deficit perspective, too often it is outside the socio-political context of schooling. Gorski (2010) posited the discourse involving deficit perspective has been limited to focusing on individual attributes and biases. The criticism centers on a need to also address the ideologies and considerations that underlie and perpetuate the deficit perspective. When assuming a deficit perspective, students are approached based on assumptions of their weaknesses rather than their strengths. By pointing to supposed deficiencies within disenfranchised individuals and communities, an explanation and justification of outcome inequalities emerges (Gorski, 2010). Deficit ideologies deteriorate expectations for students and weaken educators' abilities to recognize giftedness in various forms (Ford & Grantham, 2003; Gorski, 2010). Gorski (2010) believed the most devastating brand of deficit thinking occurs when differences are perceived as deficits. Gorski (2010) posited by drawing on

stereotypes already well-established in the mainstream psyche, the deficit ideology justifies training the mass consciousness to pathologize. One example is the use of labelling with binaries, such as they to we, law abiding, hardworking, decent and virtuous to lazy, immoral, and permissive.

However, historically, the day to day utilization of deficit ideology was not intended to create outcome inequalities. Deficit ideology can be tied to need assessments, such as the ones meeting the demand of examining variation in developmental and behavioral needs and services of children entering the child welfare system. Need assessments, used within the field of child welfare and educational settings, help to determine relationships between service use or level of child welfare involvement and cognition, behavior, communication, social, and adaptive functioning (Stahmer et al, 2005). Stahmer et al (2005) also note need assessments reveal disparities in access to intervention. The classification of needs, according to Grant (2002), includes felt, expressed, normative, and comparative needs. The purpose of learning needs assessment range in helping curriculum planning, diagnosing individual problems, assessing student learning, demonstrating accountabilities, improving practice and safety, offering individual feedback, or educational intervention (Grant, 2002).

Grant (2002) reported seven main types of classification of methods of needs assessments, all with the intent to generate information about group needs. While some of the quantitative methods cover wide population ranges, they are often unable to probe into personal agendas and opinions of individuals. Gaps and discrepancy analysis is a formal method of need assessments that involve comparing performances with stated intend consequences and planning education, by self-assessments, peer assessments, or objective testing. Critical incident review and significant event auditing is a need assessment method that involves individuals identifying

and recording incidents, per time period, in which they feel they should have performed better. The incident is analyzed by setting, what exactly occurred, the outcome and why it was ineffective. Observation is a method used by a peer, senior/expert, or an impartial individual to rate performances of specific tasks. Results are discussed and learning needs are identified sometimes through ratings that are objective or overlap with the observer's area of expertise. Those three methods are used more frequently within the field of child welfare for the benefit of disconnected youth. The other methods include practice review, peer review, self-assessment by diaries, journals, logbooks or week reviews, reflection on action, and reflection in action.

National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment (2015) also speaks to how need assessments help improve the scope and delivery of services by identifying risk factors related to challenges based on need and determining what the family can handle and needs of the members of the outside custody of the state. In addition to medical and mental health evaluation and reports, National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment (2015) shared that useful information can be found from the child social history (such as significant events and circumstances for the child's past), and discussions with the child, individuals important to the child professionals who have serve the child, and community members. Exploration of capacity to meet children's need might occur through questions such as, "Are you able to accept a great deal of acting out and controlling behaviors in children and probable scenarios from the beginning of placement?" and "For what type of child do you think you would not be able to meet their needs?" Related to those involved in the child welfare system, the identification of stressors and examination of issues through need assessments inform decision making that aide in improving placement, stability, permanency, and wellbeing for children and families (National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment, 2015).

On the contrary, Gorski (2010) addresses a warning of a resurgence of deficit ideology in the U.S, particularly visible in discourses related to individuals from low-income environments' access to public services, such as high quality education, welfare, and healthcare. Deficit theory, deficit thinking, and deficit ideology have all been used to describe deficit perspective. Despite the various terminologies that described the deficit ideology, Gorski shares that ideology is by definition used to shape behavioral mandates that encourage compliance with a pre-determined and often oppressive social order. Gorski (2010) claimed he used the term deficit ideology to emphasize the fact that the perspective is based upon a set of assumed truths about the world and the socio-political relationships that occur in it. In his description of the nature of class-based deficit ideology, he shares the hypothesis of how people in the U.S. are socialized to comply with deficit ideology and shares ways to spot and to interrupt the presence of the ideology in educational context. Gorski (2010) notes the deficit ideology is utilized as a tool to distract one's consciousness from exacerbated inequalities found in problem systemic conditions. Examples of inequalities include racism and socio-economic injustice, which are consistently recycled and justify the noted imbalanced.

According to Gorski (2010), in a cyclical nature, the propagation of U.S. class mythology feeds popularization of the image of those from the low class and others separate from the hegemony mainstream society which feeds into the normalization of deficit ideology. Demonizing the most powerless people among us was also included in Gorski's (2010) examples of how we comply with deficit ideology. For example, many educators and other professionals comply with a deficit perspective through low expectations from students who are identified as low-income. Locating the problem of socioeconomic achievement gap within families and

communities with limited economic resources is one way Gorski (2010) sees compliance to the deficit thinking model.

Gorski 2010) also noted the first step toward uprooting any ideology is in learning to spot it. Gorski (2010) located three common discursive hallmarks of socioeconomic-based deficit ideology. They consisted of: (a) an unnamed assumption of share stereotype thinking (between creator of the knowledge and the receiver); (b) identification of the problem of inequality, as existing within families identified as working class and low income and their culture; and (c) failure or refusal to acknowledge sociopolitical context. Gorski's second strategy to defeat deficit ideology was rooted in critical self-reflection of one's own class socialization. He recommends that one reflects on how and by whom our gaze has been trained. He posed the question, "What assumptions or biases might keep [one] from demonstrating the highest possible expectations of all students" (p.22)? The third strategy to defeat deficit thinking was considered a disenfranchising practice and consists of refusing, despite the dominant discourses, to locate any problem in the "cultures" of disenfranchised communities. By locating the problem in families with limited economic resources, a presumptive and supremacist notion is solidified and that the only way for one to be involved is to do so in ways that reflect the dominant norms. The third strategy is to misdirect strategies for redressing inequities. Gorski's final strategy to defeat deficit ideology lies within teaching about economic injustice and poverty. The teaching of such frames poverty, not as culture, but as an oppressed condition.

By drawing on stereotypes already well-established in the mainstream consciousness, Gorski (2010) argued deficit ideology adds to the negative narrative of disenfranchised communities being deficient or deviant. At the core of deficit ideology is the belief that inequalities result, not from unjust social conditions such as systemic racism or economic

injustice, but from intellectual, moral, cultural and behavioral deficiencies assumed to be inherent in disenfranchised individuals and communities (Brandon,2003; Gorski, 2008a, 2008b; Gorski, 2010; Valencia, 1997a; Yosso, 2005).

Purpose and Examples of using an Anti-Deficit Perspective in this Study

To produce more informed solutions for youth who are disconnected, the anti-deficit approach is chosen to provide voice to the underrepresented group of youth with foster care experience. There is limited research on the use of an anti-deficit approach applied to youth who are disconnected. This study is designed to add to the literature related to youth in foster care and an anti-deficit inquiry of their capital. Anti-deficit thinking emerged to contradict deficit thinking and explores attributions of success rather than failure (Valencia, 2010).

According to Harper (2010), Stokes (2013), and Sacredo (2014), the traditional anti-deficit framework draws from other theories including cultural and social capital theories (Bandura, 1986, 1987), self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997), critical race theory (Yosso, 2005; Yosso & Solorzano, 2006). The studies vary in populations of interest. Harper (2010) applied the anti-deficit approach to students on a collegiate path of science, technology, engineering, and math. Stokes (2013) explored the shortcomings of deficit thinking in an effort to decrease attrition among African American nurses. Sacredo (2014) focused on success and positive attributes of Latino males in higher education via an anti-deficit approach.

Harper (2010) was one of the first researchers to coin the term anti-deficit framework. He applied his anti-deficit achievement framework for research on students of color. It focused on understanding how achievers from disadvantaged backgrounds manage to overcome the barriers they faced. Students were described to be disadvantaged through the literature that used a deficit perspective and recorded lack of prior exposure to high level science instruction, cutting

edge technologies, sophisticated lab equipment, and insider knowledge shared among family members who have taken college-level STEM courses. The anti-deficit inquiry attempted to elucidate how minority students, particularly those from lower-income and working class backgrounds, cultivate meaningful and value-added relationships with STEM faculty and professionally well connected others in their field.

Harper's anti-deficit approach includes components that address stereotype threat theory, attribution theory, self- efficacy theory, and critical race theory. Harper (2010) pursued insight into strategies the students employed to resist the internalization of discouraging misconceptions about members of their racial groups and how they managed to respond productively to stereotypes they encounter on campus. Harper's (2010) anti-deficit's inquiry invites participants to name the people, resources, experiences, and opportunities to which they attribute their achievements, instead of consistently identifying barriers to persistence and success. In his study, the STEM achievers shared how they managed to thrive and negotiate environments that were culturally foreign, unresponsive, politically complex, and overwhelmingly white to illustrate the self-efficacy theory. Anti-deficit inquiry seeks to understand how achievers develop identities, how their confidence in specific tasks is developed, and how recognition of competence in certain tasks lead to various forms of competency in other areas. Recognition of students as experts in their experiential realities, aligns with critical race theory as it empowers them to offer counter narrative concerning their success.

Stokes' (2013) study gave attention to the need of increasing the diversity of nursing professionals, to assist in the generation of a national workforce prepared to provide culturally competent care representatives of ethnically diverse society. Stokes (2013) intended to gain a better understanding of the characteristics and attributes allowing African-American nurses to

overcome attrition. The focus of the study intentionally moved away from perceived weaknesses and barriers to strengths and attributes.

Within Stokes literature review, three primary perspectives were identified as historically used to explain the gap in academic outcomes and achievement. The three rationales: victim blaming, achievement gap, and poverty, were considered by Stokes to ignore systematic factors in school failure beyond a deficit approach. Stokes first addressed the perspective of victim blaming. African American students were perceived not as successful as white students because they were perceived to inherently be deficient in their intellectual capacity and/or lacking internal or external capacity to succeed. The deficit thinking in this approach purported that linguistic shortcomings, lack of motivation to learn and immoral behavior were the issues associated with the lack of success of the minority students. The second perspective, acknowledgement of the achievement gap, is deficit in nature, despite acknowledging the contribution of institutional and educational practice and policies in achievement because it illuminated more barriers and weakness associated with the education system. Poverty was the third perspective Stokes listed to also have a deficit perspective as it was used to explain barriers, such as institutional experiences of discrimination, lack of financial resources, and increased family responsibilities (in a way more aligned with blaming).

In Sacredo's (2014) study, an anti-deficit approach was used to examine multiple factors that contributed to the success of Latino males who navigated the educational pipeline to the point of attainment of a degree or enrolment in graduate, doctoral, or professional degree programs. Sacredo's anti-deficit framework structured research questions to focus on successes and positive attributes of participants. His focus was placed on three points along the educational pipeline: pre-college socialization and readiness, college achievement, and post college

success. Sacredo recognized multiple leaks along the educational pipeline for racial minority groups that can extend to the social minority groups of youth who are disconnected. The leaks associated with educational attainment were said to stem from a variety of issues and barriers that did not function in the same way for all groups. Sacredo examined the presence of Latino men in higher education at various successive points along the educational pipeline. During his investigation, he noticed the frequent utilization of a cultural deficit or deficiency model to explain the underrepresentation of minority students. The deficiency model attributed failure to the values and culture of underrepresented groups to adequately socialize their children to be academically successful, essentially blaming a marginalized group for its lack of achievement rather than considering the groups achievement relative to the larger system (Sacredo, 2014).

The anti-deficit framework combines components that align with attribution theory, self-efficacy theory, stereotype threat and critical race theory. It has been used to elucidate attributes associated with success rather than failure. The framework is often used when seeking understanding of how individuals thrive and develop identities, confidence and competence. Building from the critiques of the deficit ideology, an anti-deficit framework is employed within this study to gain an understanding of the developmental impact of living in an alternative environment like foster care from an anti-deficit perspective. Moving from the social pathology model of deficit ideology, the primary research question of the study, "What capital do youth with foster care experience possess?", is anti-deficit in nature, as it inquiries of resources and strengths youth in foster care have. An anti-deficit approach is critical to revealing how the circumstances experienced by youth in foster care positively influence the individuals and their capital.

Defining Strengths of Disadvantaged/Disconnected Youth

Exploration of the literature for the strengths of disconnected youth extends the conversation, related to the literature on the anti-deficit approach, further down the spectrum to asset-based research. The field of gifted education is one of the most apt at providing details on assets associated with educational psychology through the identification of strengths, talents, and gifts of students. By focusing on the asset-based literature from the field of gifted education, the narrative of youth who are disconnected is reoriented and attention is shifted from what the youth struggle to accomplish to what they do well.

There can be some difficulty with defining strengths, separate from talents, separate from gifts. As it relates to the definition strengths, the conceptualization of giftedness was the primary base for the term. The understanding within this study is that to be gifted is considered to be with strengths. The British Columbia Ministry of Education, Special Education Services Definition (2010) highlights elements of interest, related to giftedness that are connected in the understanding of strengths within this study. The qualities of a gifted student, by definition, include demonstrated or potential to demonstrate high intelligence, creativity or possession of an exceptional discipline based skill set.

Reis and Sullivan (2010) posited there is no list compiled by researchers and educators that provides a definitive definition or shared characteristics that could be used to guide identification, teaching strategies, or curriculum selection of gifted learners in general. The population of gifted and talented learners led the field of gifted education, and more specifically Reis and Sullivan (2008) to focus more on the heterogeneity associated with high ability students and gifted and talented learners, instead of providing a checklist by which students may be identified as "gifted" or "not gifted." While for many years, gifted was equated with

psychometric intelligence, such as having a high intelligence quotient (IQ), as led by Terman (1925), the understanding of giftedness in present day is related to the construct being multidimensional, "incorporating a variety of traits, skills and abilities, and manifesting in manifold ways" (Karnes & Bean, 2014, p.20). Sternberg and Davidson (2005) reviewed aspects of conceptions of giftedness to include, "rapid learning as compared to others in the population (Cross && Coleman, 2005); attention control, memory efficiency, and characteristics of perception (Heller, Perleth, & Lim, 2005); desire to develop one's gifts (Reis, 2005); and task commitment (Renzulli, 2005)" (Reis & Sullivan, 2008, p.8). Renzulli & Reis (1997) promoted the idea that gifted behaviors results from distinct interpersonal characteristics that fall into three basic clusters of human traits – above average ability, high levels of commitment and high levels of task, and high levels of creativity. The current federal definition of giftedness also takes a multidimensional approach and is stated as follows:

Children and youth with outstanding talent perform or show the potential

for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when

compared with others of their age, experience, or environment. These

children and youth exhibit high performance capability in intellectual,

creative, and/or artistic areas, possess an unusual leadership capacity, or

excel in specific academic fields. They require services or activities not

ordinarily provided by schools. Outstanding talents are present in children

and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all

areas of human endeavor (U.S. Department of Education, 1993, p. 26).

As posited by Subotnik et al (2011), the idea of aspiring to fulfill one's talents and abilities leading to high levels of personal satisfaction, as well as the production of practical

benefits to society, reconnects the construct of giftedness to strengths and the anti-deficit perspective. Defining giftedness aligns with focusing on the attributions of success as giftedness reflects the values of society and manifest in outcomes (Subotnik et al, 2011).

Inequities in identifying and serving gifted disadvantaged youth.

Historically, youth who are disconnected, through recognition as being a part of disadvantaged, low socio-economic status, or minority youth populations, are underserved in formal gifted education programs. Because of limitations that exist among the subjective nature of teacher identification process of determining the potential of certain student, issues in retrieval of talent potential exist among low-socioeconomic and minority group students (Renzulli, 1973; Wright & Ford, 2017). Wright & Ford recognized differences based in large part on access, opportunity, and type of educational experiences which influenced the respect marginalized students' level of development received. Ford (2013) spoke to how implicit biases – nearly unconscious, split-second judgments that human make- are impactful and linked to some teachers underestimating a student's academic ability and intellect based on arbitrary factors such as race, income, or a student's name.

Early charges of elitism and restrictiveness of admissions program for gifted students, created a dynamic of underrepresentation of minority groups in gifted programs and over-representation in special education program (Richert, 1987). The history of controversy about defining giftedness, characteristics of the gifted and identifying and developing giftedness through educational programs have played a significant role in the inequity in identifying and serving disadvantaged gifted children. Richert (1987) provided four primary problems associated with difficulties in identifying the strengths of youth who are disconnected, within the context of

gifted education. The vague, indefensible, diverse, and conflicting definitions and identification

procedures used around the country are one problem. Systematically, several minority groups are

excluded from gifted programs through the use of tests that have not been normed for the

population. Another contributing factor is identification instruments are used inappropriately.

One example Richert (1987) provided is the interchangeable use of achievement, aptitudes, and

IQ tests, which confuses specific aptitudes and general intelligence abilities. Another problem

cited is the use of instruments and procedures at inappropriate states of the identification process.

Competition for the allocation of resources was also identified as a practical and political

problem associated with expanding the population of students needing programs to develop their

gifted potential.

To reduce the problems that lead to the difficulties with identifying and serving gifted

disadvantaged students, Richert (1987) speaks to the need to circumnavigate: (a) conceptually

limiting definitions of giftedness to a single test score, (b) confusion between the research and

programmatic purposes of identification, (c) oversimplification of giftedness placing much

emphasis on test and other academic achievements measures biased against the disadvantaged,

and (d) programs designs that serve too few students with exceptional potential.

Recognition of Strengths and Identification of Giftedness among Disadvantaged Youth

Within the last few decades, special populations of gifted learners, such as children from

ethnic, racial, linguistic, and cultural minorities, as well as those from economically

disadvantaged homes, have received a greater level of interest in their gifted abilities (Karnes &

Beans, 2014). Wright & Ford (2017) noted to prevent disengagement and negative attitudes

towards school, early recognition and identification to help children learn during their primary

years is essential for children from low-income, racially, linguistically, and culturally diverse

backgrounds. Issues of low placement rates in programs and ineffective and inappropriate

selection procedures for identification of giftedness are often rooted in culturally, linguistically,

and economically diverse students demonstrating characteristics of giftedness different from

those of typical gifted students (Karnes & Beans, 2014). Ford and Moore (2006) described a

variety of ways students might differ in behavior and expression style based on ethnicity and

culture. For example, it was noted that Native American, Asians, and Hispanics might be less

direct in their communication style than African American and White students, who may be

quite direct. White students place value on tasks over relationships, Asian and Native American

students might use less personal space and speak more quietly. With respect to these differences,

policy makers, educators, and researchers have been seeking ways to ensure that underserved

gifted students receive the same opportunities as other gifted students.

Dr. Mary Frasier was an advocate for underserved populations of gifted students, whose

work with assessment issues helped to transform ways in which the problem of

underrepresentation among ethnically diverse students is addressed (Grantham, 2002). In a 2002

interview, Frasier shared her perspective on the definition of giftedness:

"Giftedness is not just about excelling in the ways that we have already

discovered. Giftedness is about developing new pathways that we have not

taken because we didn't know that they existed (p.51)."

Attention given to pre-existing pathways influenced how the strengths of minority youth

are recognized (Frasier, 1995; Grantham, 2002). As it relates to attitudes that created barriers for

underrepresentation of students of low SES, Frasier shared that whenever certain factors are

missing, it makes it difficult to enroll in gifted programs. The list of prerequisites were associated with advantages:

"You must have two parents; they must be college educated. You must be White. You must be in the suburbs. I know this sounds a little bit facetious, but if you look at the enrollment in gifted programs, it's not facetious." (Grantham, 2002, p. 50).

To circumvent such issues, Frasier (1995) developed a tool to ensure that all potentially gifted children are recognized through an observation instrument called Traits, Aptitudes, and Behaviors (TABs) Referral Form.

It is also known as the Panning for Gold Observation Form and represent 10 attributes from the literature on gifted and case studies of high-ability students from a variety of cultural and economic groups. The TABs represent core attributes associated with giftedness construct. Frasier distinguished core attributes from manifestation of giftedness, by bringing attention to the need to be sensitive to variety of ways children might express the same abilities. Using the metaphor of a tree, Frasier proclaimed giftedness cannot be directly observed. One may observe the child's TABs - the above the ground behaviors and draw inferences about the roots - the core attributes of giftedness. Failure to recognize the connection between core attributes and the various ways children might manifest the abilities, is likely to cause some children to be overlooked.

The TABs are made of the following core attributes of giftedness:

1. Motivation: evidence of a desire to learn

2. Interest: a feeling of intentness, passion, concern or curiosity about something

3. Communication Skills: highly expressive and effective use of
words, numbers, symbols, etc.

4. Problem-Solving ability: effective, often inventive strategies for
recognizing and solving problems.

5. Memory: large storehouse of information on school or non-school
topics

6. Inquiry: questioning, experimenting, exploring

7. Insight: the ability to quickly grasp new concepts and to make
connections; to sense deeper meanings

8. Reasoning: use logical approaches to figuring things out

9. Imagination/Creativity: producing many ideas; high originality

10. Humor: bringing two unrelated ideas or panes of thought together
in a recognized relationship

Research has revealed cultural values of the disadvantaged versus the advantaged serve
as one reason why children who are disadvantaged perform comparatively better on tests of
creative thinking than on test of intelligence (Torrance, 1973). Torrance (1973) discovered that
instead of being permitted to respond in terms of his or her own experience, which is likely to be
common in his or her culture, students who are disadvantaged are required to respond in terms of
the experience common in the dominant culture on intelligence tests. Torrance noted education
of children who are culturally deprived should be built upon their own special strengths
(Torrance, 1973). Allowing children to respond in terms of their own experiences facilitates
evaluation of creative development with a relevant realm of their day-to-day lives. Reis et al
(1995) found a number of common characteristics of culturally, linguistically, and economically

diverse gifted students including facing challenges such as prejudice that occurred in school, from teachers, as well as from students. The shared characteristics associated with giftedness included, motivation and inner will, positive use of problem solving, independence, realistic aspirations, heightened sensitivity to each other and the world around them, and appreciation of cultural diversity (Karnes & Beans, 2014).

E. Paul Torrance's (1976) monograph, Discovering and Using the Strengths of the Disadvantaged and Culturally Different in Career Education, further informs about the strengths of the culturally different. Torrance (1976) discusses a study conducted by Nathan Caplan who suggested the street skills of many hard to employ youth hindered success in the training of the Youth Development Programs. Contrary to general belief, the participants were highly motivated and highly skilled. Like most people, the students were motivated to do things they did well. The skills that were mastered were skills developed to survive within the communities in which they lived. The 'streets' equipped them with mastery skills of hustling, rapping, signifying, gang leadership, psyching out people, fighting, athletics, and the sort (Torrance, 1976). Caplan argued important traits among inner city youth, such as being tough and looking cool, were counterproductive in normal working environments. Those traits could be perceived as unacceptable signs of hostility and uncooperativeness. Torrance (1975) posited, to enter the kind of program offered by the Youth Development Program meant to many youth they must pay a painful psychological price-- the abandonment of a healthy, positive self-image gained through their giftedness with street skills. To be successful in job such as a dishwasher, mechanic, or maintenance man, Torrance (1976) found many gifted inner-city youth had to sacrifice too much of their personal dignity and worth.

Torrance (1976) believed any adequate program for the education of disadvantaged children and youth must be built upon their creative positives. Creative positives are sensibilities of youth who are disadvantaged that emerge within their day to day living. Torrance (1967) believed if a teacher succeeds in developing potentialities, misbehavior and deficiencies will be reduced and possibly likely disappear. Making use of the natural learning styles of youth who are disadvantaged can potentially yield productivity. This approach increases a sense of hope among youth who are disadvantages and their opportunities to experience success. For a teacher to assist a student who is disadvantaged with reaching maximum potential, it is necessary to be concerned with developing potentialities than about punishing behaviors or compensating for deficiencies (Torrance, 1973).

Torrance (1967) used the Creative Positive Strategy, as a result of recognizing the strength of the culturally different and realizing their creative characteristics. The set of characteristics to help facilitate identification of strengths is not a deficit approach and recognizes differences in culturally different groups as strengths that can be used in facilitating learning and occupational success (Torrance, 1976). Torrance's (1976) Creative Positives of disadvantaged and culturally different list included:

1. Ability to express feelings and emotions

2. Ability to improvise with commonplace materials and objects

3. Articulateness in role-playing, socio-drama, and storytelling

4. Enjoyment of and ability in visual art --drawing, painting, sculpture,

etc.

5. Enjoyment of and ability in creative movement, dance,

dramatics, etc.

6. Enjoyment of ability in music, rhythm, etc.

7. Expressive speech

8. Fluency and flexibility in figural media

9. Enjoyment of and skills in group activities, problem-solving, etc.

10. Responsiveness to the concrete

11. Responsiveness to the kinesthetic

12. Expressiveness of gestures, "body language," etc. and ability to

interpret "body language"

13. Humor

14. Richness in imagery in informal language

15. Originality in ideas in problem-solving

16. Problem centeredness or persistence in problem-solving

17. Emotional responsiveness

18. Quickness of warm-up

Using the Creative Positives can improve the educational outcomes of youth who are disadvantaged and decrease the number of youth who are disconnected. Intersecting the creative positives with content-based instruction could increase success within the classroom for students who are disadvantaged. Not all members of youth who are disadvantaged or culturally different are gifted in all of the positives (Torrance, 1976). These abilities can be observed with a high degree of frequency among youth who are culturally different or disadvantaged by individuals who are willing to be sensitive, open minded, and have established an environment of trust and freedom for the students. Through the development of the creative positives, Torrance developed a more effective approach to getting students involved and motivated to perform in activities

engaging their abilities. Torrance (1964) believed that creative ways of learning allow youth who are disconnected to demonstrate their strengths naturally. He further noted creative strategies are better suited for youth who are from disadvantaged backgrounds than more authoritarian approaches to learning.

Youth who are culturally different manifest strengths in diverse ways, some which are different than the dominant population. Comparing youth who are culturally different to standards of youth from the larger population and who meet social norms of the U.S. more naturally, might cause strengths to be overlooked more often than not. Researchers, such as Frasier and Torrance, have established tools that aid in the identification of strengths shown frequently among underrepresented populations in gifted education, such as youth who are disadvantaged or disconnected. These strengths emerge as a conduit of the experiences the youth have and manifest in ways influenced by their culture. Some characteristics the field of gifted education has identified to be associated with high ability students of disadvantaged backgrounds include, but are not limited to problem solving, imagination/creativity, humor, and communication skills. The combination of personal, interpersonal and occupational strengths, in relation to how it behooves individuals within their social status, serves as the basis of the concept of developmental capital.

Elements of Developmental Capital

Developmental capital, within the field of educational psychology, is not a frequently used term. The term can be found in Deno's (1994) excerpt in research in special education, attempting to expand the effectiveness of policy and practice, similar to what was done in the field of health care. Developmental capital involves changing practices to meet changing

population needs. Deno (1994) described developmental capital as being used as a catalyst to correct tactics when attempting to develop the learning capabilities of differently abled children. It was a research mechanism that aligned with allowing people to do what they know how to do and key to a child's ability to prosper. Deno (1994) spoke to the importance of giving attention to local subcultural needs by moving beyond a one size fits all course in broad national goals.

The concept of developmental capital, used within this study, grows from a combination of elements pulled from psychology, specifically human development and cultural capital. Broadly speaking, development of developmental capital is a reference to the long term personal changes that have multiple sources and multiple effects, including physical, cognitive, social, intellectual perceptual, personality, and emotional growth (American Psychological Association, 2018). Second, capital is a reference to elements that bring forth personal satisfaction. Elements of capital as understood by Bourdieu and Sullivan's Forms of Capital, and Yosso's Cultural Capital contributes to the basis of the understanding of developmental capital.

Bourdieu's (1986) understanding of capital grew from his interest in the ways in which society is reproduced and how the dominant classes retain their positions. Bourdieu (1986) gave attention to the role of capital in the reproduction of inequalities. Bourdieu (1986) defined capital as accumulated labor that enables agents to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor. He understood capital as power broken into 3 main forms: economic, cultural, and social.

Economic capital was considered to be immediately and directly convertible into money and maybe institutionalized in the form of property rights. Bourdieu (1986) considered social capital as a personal asset that provides tangible advantages to individuals, families, and groups that are better connected. Social capital consists of all actual or potential resources linked to

possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintances and connection to certain individuals and groups. Cultural capital, according to Bourdieu (1986), can be divided into 3 states: disposition of mind and body, cultural goods, and institutionalized goods (such as academic credentials and diplomas). Mercantile exchange, according to Bourdieu, occurred through self-interested maximization of profit that propels the universe of exchanges. Bourdieu (1986) believed that the forms of exchange, cultural and social capital, are convertible to economic capital and vice versa.

Themes that emerge from the narratives of the participants in this study might be aligned with Bourdieu's understanding of capital and fall into one of the categories of economic, cultural, or social. The relationship between cultural capital, values, and inequalities streamed from Bourdieu's work and is further explored through the work of Sullivan (2003). The relationship speaks to the placement of youth who are disconnected as a marginalized population, with capital considered. This study will extend the work of Bourdieu as elements related to the capital of youth with foster care experience are highlighted.

Yosso's (2005) work adds to the body of literature by sharing various forms of cultural capital. Yosso (2005) created a Community Cultural Wealth Model that utilizes a strength based perspective of socially marginalized groups by bringing attention to an array of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities they possess. Yosso (2005) used the critical race theory approach to framework, theorize, examine, and challenge the ways social stratification implicitly and explicitly impact social structures, practices, and discourses. In his study, critical race theory research was applied with the understanding that much can be learned from communities of color cultural assets and wealth.

According to Yosso (2005), facing structured inequality nurtured various forms of capital that develop cultural wealth. The various forms of capital Yosso acknowledged consist of: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social capital, navigational, and resistance. Aspiration as a form of capital addresses the hopes and dreams students have. It is defined as the ability to hold onto hope in the face of structured inequality and often without means to make dreams a reality. Linguistic as a form of capital refers to the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one style or language. Yosso discussed storytelling as a skill of socially marginalized populations and recognized memorization, attention to detail, dramatic pauses, comedic timing, facial affect, vocal tone, volume, rhythm and rhyme, as skills that can be used as a foundation for academic success. Familial capital is the cultural knowledge nurtured among kin that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition. Familial capital is informed by communal bonds, funds of knowledge, and pedagogies of the home. Social capital emphasis is on social contacts and the usage of those contacts to gain access and navigate other social institutions. This form of capital refers to the social and personal human resources students have and draw from within their community networks. Navigational capital refers to students' skills and abilities to navigate social institution, including educational spaces and social welfare agencies. Resistance capital refers to those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenge inequality. It is rooted in securing equal rights and collective freedom. A historical legacy of engaging in social justice, community members and parents are often sources of resistance capital.

The common thread between youth in foster care and people of color lie within the structured inequality they face and the shared search for the necessary tools to effectively analyze and challenge the impact of prejudice, associated with the application of a deficit

perspective of groups separate from the power structured profile in the US society. Yosso's (2005) forms of capital may be matched with questions that can be answered and further reveal information about the capital of youth in foster care. For example, as it relates to aspirational capital, one may inquire, what kind of assumptions do we make regarding our students aspirations? Another questions could be, how are we supporting the maintenance and growth of students' aspirations? As it relates to familial capital, a relevant question is, how do we recognize and help students draw on wisdom, values and stories from their home communities? Navigational capital provokes the question of how willing are we able to acknowledge the invisible and visible structures and cultures present on our campus, which may pose barriers to our students and their communities? The answer to these questions, in relation to youth in foster care aligns with Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model and reveals a structure that might organize the cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities of populations that are marginalized with a strength-based perspective.

Sullivan (2003) connects cultural capital to education, as he referenced Bourdieu's explanation that success in the educational system should not solely be seen as a result of individual gifts. Success in the education system is facilitated by the possession of cultural capital and of higher class habitus. This higher class habitus results in educational privilege. Sullivan noted educational privilege is passed down through mechanisms such as parental encouragement and material resources. He argued class inequities in educational attainment can also be explained via parental cultural capital which is inherited by children. The intent of Sullivan's thesis included evaluating the usefulness of cultural reproduction theory and rational choice theory in explaining educational inequalities. Sullivan believed, individuals act rationally to fulfill their desires in the light of their beliefs about the situation. While sociological

attention is often given to the educational advantages suffered by the children of the working class families, value can be obtain by extending that attention to the wastage of working class talent (Sullivan, 2003). The difference that exists in the manifestation of certain characteristics among the population of youth who are disconnected might be associated with the space in which their strengths are developed through practice, to the preference or benefit of the individual expressing the strength, as opposed to that of the entity assessing capital.

Sullivan (2003) posited cultural capital helps to determine the educational levels reached by individuals. To explain how inequalities in education are a more a result of cultural differences than economic differences, Sullivan connects the idea of the reproduction of culture to cultural capital. One inequality, for example is tracked to teachers having prejudice in favor of students who display "cultured" traits, and therefore provide them with higher grades. Sullivan suggested the culture of school reflects the dominant culture often even down to the dominant culture being ingrained in the curriculum. Participation in the dominant culture activities provides access to cultural capital, such material resources, book reading, or concert and museum attendance (Sullivan 2003). Such participation in childhood often takes place through concerted cultivation. Concerted cultivation is a term coined by Lareau (2003) to describe the intentional practices of child rearing marked by organization of daily life to foster talent and used more often by middle class parent to promote growth. Youth who are disconnected are less likely to participate in the same caliber of concerted cultivation as their peers with more parental support. Applying Sullivan's (2003) theory, the capital of youth in foster care is partly developed as a result of the pedagogic transmissions that occur not only between them and their parents, but also other parental/authority figures such as child care providers, social workers, educators and other professionals associated with child welfare. The tone of those pedagogic transmissions,

rather deficit or anti-deficit oriented, influences the beliefs about the capital youth in foster care possess.

Sullivan (2003) illuminates how values associated with the dominant culture can manifest in practices that result in educational inequalities when those who do not closely match the dominant culture reflect a different cultural capital. Despite the difficulty educators or child welfare professionals might have in recognizing the value of how disconnected youth demonstrate their strengths or represent their capital outside of the context of the dominant culture, the traits, aptitudes, and behavior aside of the dominant culture do have value. Sullivan (2003), Yosso (2005) and Bourdieu (1986) operationalize the value as capital. Elements of educational psychology help to conceptualize developmental capital include but are not limited to identifying and addressing special needs of students, creating an appropriate learning environment, evaluating of students' work and development, recognizing the diversity of students and knowing how to accommodate differences among students (Woolfolk, 2013). The literature helped to establish the operational definition of developmental capital, which is described as elements that contribute to the sustainability of one's personal satisfaction and/or social status over the course of changes, within one's life.

Narrative Inquiry

Following the ideology of Dewey and studies related to experience, narrative inquiry has been selected as the methodology to facilitate a better understanding of the developmental capital of individual from disconnected backgrounds. Dewey (1938) noted experience arises from the interaction of two principles, continuity and experience tied to the principles of social constructivism. Continuity refers to how experiences, both past and present, influence the future

for better or for worse. Quality of an experience is optimal when the continuity of the experience fosters growth, arouses curiosity, and carries a person to a new and stronger place in the future. The second component from which experience arises is interaction. Interaction refers to how one's current situation influences one's experience. It describes the aspect of experience as it relates to the environment (rather conditions of society or biology), as an active component that changes the context in which the experience arises. The research methodology used in this study, narrative inquiry, rests on Dewey's (1938) philosophy that one's present experience is a function of the interaction between the one's past experiences and the present situation. The current study explores how the personal lived experiences of youth in foster care has contributed to their present perspective of their developmental capital.

The study of narrative, or narrative inquiry, is defined by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) as the study of the way humans experience the world. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), narrative means the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study. Connelly and Clandinin share a theory of educational research which holds that humans inherently possess a desire to tell stories whether individual or socially constructed. Narrative is both phenomenon and method. Narrative-related studies in social science extend as far back as individual psychology. Case history, biography, life history, life span development, Freudian psychoanalysis, and organizational consultation are categories of inquiry that set the stage for narrative inquiry. Narrative has an important place interdisciplinary because it focuses on human experience' as a result of being a fundamental structure of human experiences and it has a holistic quality. It is concerned with the individual and might also be sociologically concerned with groups and the formation of community. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) make the case that given the focus on experience and the qualities of life and education,

narrative is situated in a matrix of qualitative research. A review of the educational study of experience implicitly aligns with narrative with qualitatively oriented educational researchers working with experiential philosophy, psychology, critical theory, curriculum studies, and anthropology (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The educational importance of this narrative inquiry is that it brings theoretical ideas about the nature of human life to bear on education experiences as lived. The inquiry of the narratives analyzed in this study speaks to such a concept, as the experiences of youth in foster care and how those experiences influence their developmental capital are revealed with anti-deficit approach.

Assumptions and Limitation of Study: Ontological, epistemological, and axiological philosophical assumptions of a qualitative study.

Ontologically, or existentially, or as it relates to the nature of reality, Creswell (2007) posits that qualitative research begins with assumptions and the study of research problems inquiring into meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study such a problem, the current study collects data in a natural setting that are sensitive to people and the places understudy, and where data analysis is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final presentation or report of the research is inclusive of the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and an extension of the literature perhaps signaling a call for action.

Epistemologically, the researcher is a key instrument by collecting data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing participants. The researcher builds categories, patterns and themes from the bottom-up, and organizes data into abstracts units of information. This process is known as inductive data analysis. It consists of the researcher

working back and forth between the themes and the database until an established a comprehensive set of themes are set. The focus lies on learning the meaning the participants hold. The research is also described as an interpretive inquiry in which interpretations are made about what is seen, heard, and understood by the researcher.

Axiologically, the researcher's values are made known in the study and the value laden nature of information gathered from the field is actively reported. Interpretations are not separate from the researcher's background, history, context, or prior understandings (Creswell, 2007). A complex picture of the issue is under study and development of a holistic account involves reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the main factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges. The identification of complex interactions of factors in any situations bound qualitative research as opposed to the tight cause and effect relationships among factors by which quantitative researchers are bound.

Methodological assumptions

It is assumed that narrations preserve particular perspectives in a more genuine form. Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000) noted there is no human experience that cannot be expressed in the form of a narrative. Through words and meanings that are specific to their experience and way of life communities, social groups and subcultures tell stories. Narration has been described as reconstructing action and context in the most adequate way; revealing place, time, motivation, and the actor's symbolic system of orientation (Jovchelovitach & Bauer, 2000).

The fundamental belief of narrative being the study of the ways human experience the world is refined, as described by Connelly and Clandinin (1990), into a view that education and educational research is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) recognized learners, teachers, and researchers as storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories. Narrative inquiry is both phenomenon and method. The term narrative in reference to a study, refers to the quality of experience that in turn influences the pattern in which inquiries are created. Narrative inquiry is a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and re-storying as the research proceeds. The researcher listens first to the participants' story, so participants have the time and space to tell their story so that the authority and validity of the story can emerge. With interviews, transcripts are made, meetings are made available for further discussion, and then they become part of the ongoing narrative record. The stories told by the participants describe their work and explain their actions.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) posited stories stand between the general and the particular, mediating the generic demands of science with the personal, practical, and concrete demands of living. Like other qualitative methods, narrative relies on criteria other than validity, reliability and generalizability as goals of their research. The narrative approach is a way of addressing personal and human dimensions of experience in ways quantitative data cannot. As it relates to what makes a good narrative, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) shared, reliability and validity are overrated criteria whereas transparency and verisimilitude (or authenticity) are underrated. Transferability is also lifted as a value.

Theoretical assumptions

Social constructivism is the theoretical interpretative framework used in this study. Creswell (2007) suggests the interpretive framework is an approach to research aiming to understand the ways in which we live and work. In practice, researchers ask broad, general,

open-ended questions and focus on the historical and cultural settings of participants. There is a development of multiple meanings and the researcher looks for complexity of viewpoints. The social constructivist theory assumes cognitive functioning originates in and is explained as products of social interactions. Learning is not only the assimilation of new knowledge by learners, but the process by which learners are integrated into a knowledge community.

Limitations of assumptions

According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), the language and criteria for the conduct of narrative are under development in the research community. Common criticisms of narrative inquiry include a lack of generalizability, reliability and validity. Another criticism speaks is how the tendency to explain through stories can easily be misinterpreted as establishing causal links. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) conclude that narratives are most appropriately recorded utilizing references from the overall chronicle oppose to compositions based off of first glance cause and effect.

Riley and Hawe (2005) speak to the need for researchers to interrogate the dynamic that is created between the research and the researched and devise accountability mechanisms. An in-depth engagement with and understanding of the participants' experience is required in narrative inquiry. As a result, there can be a blurring of interpretive boundaries between the analyst and the research participants. Defining and defending the interpretive framework being applied to the data is essential for the analyst to navigate playing too strong of an interpretative role without sufficient links back to empirical data (Riley & Hawe, 2005).

A former foster child and a youth advocate collected information obtained in this study Participants in the study represent a unique subpopulation by the way of their advocacy

experience. Demographic information, such as sexual orientation, class, and disability, were not collected.

Conclusion

The literature reviewed within this chapter revealed an array of information related to the population of interest, including definitions and characteristics of disconnected youth, descriptions of conditions youth in foster care face and illustrations of the impact of the conditions on the social wellbeing of youth. The literature has framed the population of interests in this study to be as broad as youth who are disconnected or disadvantaged and more specifically youth with foster care experience. A common characteristic shared within the spectrum of characteristics of the population of interest is the dissociative nature the population to the hegemonic or dominant population. These youth are socialized different than their counterparts who are not of the marginalized populations by way of having different social norms within their culture. The literature helped to share details who the populations that can be engaged to explore the research questions at hand.

The literature review also revealed the cultural difference of disconnected youth yields a difference in professionals' perceptions of their actions and abilities. A focus is more commonly placed on what these youth lack or do not do well, causing a trend of using a deficit perspective. Addressing the ideologies associated with the deficit perspective begins to reveal explanation of social inequalities among youth who are disconnected. The anti-deficit literature speaks to the harmful effects of difference being perceived as deficits. Though challenging deficit ideology is outside the socio-political context of schooling, the benefits include expanding the focus on individual attributes and biases. Drawing from cultural and social theories, self-efficacy theory

and critical race theory, the anti-deficit framework provides a basis to understanding how marginalized populations overcome barriers. The framework provides insight aligned with understanding how individuals thrive and develop identities, confidence, and competence. Instead of focusing on identifying barriers to success, the anti-deficit approach used in this study will be similar to previous studies and highlights people, resources, and experiences that are attributed to achievements.

The exploration of the strengths of disadvantaged youth was oriented within the field of gifted education. Though gifted education is a field historically reserved for the elite (Richert, 1987), Torrance a trailblazing creativity researcher and educator, conducted research specific to identifying strengths of disadvantaged populations. The literature revealed that the strengths of youth who are disadvantaged were rooted in experiences within their day to day lives. Strengths that can be used in the facilitation of learning and occupational success of youth who are disadvantaged, including youth with foster care experience, included, but were not limited to: independent actions, ability to improvise with common place materials, ability to express feelings and emotions, expressive speech, ability to interpret body language, originality in ideas in problem-solving, problem-centeredness and enjoyment of skills in group activities. Torrance's work provided a basis for strengths expected to arise in the current study.

Literature relevant to the forms of capital described capital to be closely tied to power and fell into three primary forms: economic, cultural, and social. Within this study, emphasis placed less on economic and more so on social and cultural capital operationalizes the term developmental capital. This term is used to focus more on the capital that places a role in the growth of the participants. Social capital, within the literature, is considered a personal asset that provides tangible advantages through individuals, families, or groups better connected to actual

or potential resources. The elements that develop cultural wealth include: aspirational, linguistic, familial, navigational, and resistance. The literature prompted inquiry within the study related to who influences cultural capital as described by Yosso (2005).

Lastly, the literature recognized students as experts in their experiential experiences, and led to the selection of narrative inquiry as the method of study. The methodological traditions used in the previous research shared elements prevalent in narrative inquiry. One assumption from the literature utilized in the study is narrative sharing is a cognitive process that organizes human experiences into temporally meaning episodes. This concept from the literature will be connected in the study as a framework for understanding the past events and future planning of the participants.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Gardening: The Methodology

This study examined the stories of individuals with foster care experience to understand their developmental capital to broaden the narrative of youth who are disconnected beyond a deficit perspective. Utilizing social constructionism coined by Berger and Thomas (1966), this study used the epistemology that explains how we know what we know through the belief that knowledge is based upon people's interaction within their societies and culture. Given the nature of this study, examining the meanings participants have made from their interactions with people and policies that make up their world was perceived to be a more meaningful approach than simply quantifying their perspectives. As Crotty (2006) suggested, a qualitative approach is more conducive to capturing the individual nuances and richness of descriptions for each participant's meaning-making.

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), inquiry cycles between theory, practice, research questions, and personal experiences. Marshall and Rossman stated curiosity that inspires qualitative research often comes initially from observations of the real world, emerging from the interplay of direct experience with emerging theory as well as growing scholarly interest and political commitment with practice. The scholars reintroduced Shiva's Circle of Constructivist Theory to illustrate the connection between qualitative inquiry and interpreting the symbolic communication and meaning that maintains cultural life. The theory starts with an interpretation bound in the sensitivity of context where researchers take a critical look at an experience and the larger social forces that shapes such experience. Typically, after identification of expression of domination, oppression, and power in daily life, the aim is to empower and

reduce false consciousness within the illusions shared related to participant experiences. Research questions significant for practice are developed through consideration for the site and the issues and people connected. The cycle of inquiry entails questions posing, design, data collection, discovery, analysis, and interpretation, which are shared qualities of all qualitative genres.

The actuality of the life of the researcher of this study, as a high potential youth with foster care experience, promoted the awareness of the problematic everyday world issues of limited knowledge of the strengths of disconnected youth and formed the research question of the study. The focus of the investigation of current and former foster youth's possession of capital, come from the researcher's participants and positionality with institutional practices such as child welfare agencies, community organizations, and political grassroots. Her autobiography has served as a source of inspiration and an initial way to frame research questions. From the personal significance focus, practical and policy questions about youth with foster care experience and their developmental strengths energized the search into literature and identification of manageable data collection strategies. The methodological literature provided insight on epistemological debates about what constitutes knowledge and knowledge claims. As recommended by Marshall and Rossman (2011) to build a theoretical rational and conceptual framework to guide the study, personal observations were transformed into systematic inquiry by reviewing the work of other scholars and practitioners of the study.

Road Map for Readers

The intent of this study was to expand the analysis of youth with foster care experience, beyond a deficit perspective, by engaging the youth in storytelling to seek insight of their experience of being a part of a population that is disconnected. This narrative inquiry study was

conducted to facilitate an in-depth exploration of the developmental capital of youth with foster care experience. The primary research question of the qualitative study is, "What is the developmental capital of young adults with foster care experience?"

Using a Constructivist Approach

In examination of the social construction of reality, via exploration of language in knowledge in everyday life, Berger and Luckmann (1971) posited,

> "The man in the street does not ordinarily trouble himself about what is 'real' to him and about what he knows, unless he is stopped short by some sort of problem. … [He] inhabits a world that is 'real' to him, albeit in different degrees, and he knows, with different degrees of confidence, that this world possess such and such characteristics" (p. 13-14).

A key element of social constructionism is the idea that human development is socially situated and knowledge is structured through interactions with others. Using the constructivist approach, the multiple realities related to understanding the strengths of youth who are disconnected are explored from the perspective of young adults with foster care experience. Participants were invited to discuss particular elements of their reality; specifically people, resources, values, and strengths that speak more to their success than failures. The relative nature of truth as understood by social constructionist links the paradigm of social constructivism and qualitative inquiry via the assumption that the term "facts" have no value until provided in a determined framework. Thus there is no such thing as an objective assessment of any proposition.

Within this study, attention is shifted from the narrative of those professionally obligated to understand and express the characteristics of a reality and shifted to the narratives of everyday life intricacies as lived by the lay people. Specifications of who provides the narrative of the study is important, as Berger and Luckmaan (1971) explained that sociological interest in questions of 'reality' and 'knowledge' are initially justified by the fact of their social relativity. What is real to one person, might not be real to another. This study inquires about what is real about the nature of those with foster care experience through the use of social constructivism. To move beyond a deficit perspective, the anti-deficit perspective is used to highlight attributes of strengths. The distinction in perspectives ties into the social constructionist theory and provides a counter-narrative to the youth's abilities, as this study explores the experiences of former foster youth to gain an understanding of their developmental capital.

A Study Guided by Patton's (2015) Strategic Principles of Qualitative Inquiry

Patton's (2015) strategic principles of qualitative inquiry were used to provide overall direction to the decision making and action of this study. Following the review of Patton's recommended strategic principles of qualitative inquiry is the detailed description of the methodology of Uprooted, Regrounded, and Growing. The Twelve Core Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry are summarized in three modules: strategic design principles for qualitative inquiry, strategic principles guiding data collection and fieldwork, and strategic principles for qualitative analysis and reporting findings. Each module will be discussed in detail in its respective section of this text. Patton's (2015) strategic design principles for qualitative inquiry include three design strategies: naturalistic inquiry, emergent design flexibility, and purposeful sampling.

According to Patton (2015), qualitative designs are naturalistic to the extent that the research takes place in real-world settings and the researcher does not attempt to affect, control, or manipulate what is unfolding naturally. Naturalistic inquiry was defined by Guba (1978) as a research approach that attempts to ignore inherent bias, in regards to investigative outcomes, through minimization of setting manipulation. One main key to naturalistic inquiry is to conduct research in participants' natural environment. Open-ended conversation-like interview is a form of naturalistic inquiry I used to document and understand the manifestations of the strengths of youth who are disconnected.

Emergent design flexibility, according to Patton (2015), speaks to the researcher being open to adapting inquiry as understanding deepens and situations change. In addition to design flexibility stemming from the open-ended nature of naturalistic inquiry, flexibility also stems from pragmatic considerations. Rigid designs that eliminate responsiveness are not recommended as a qualitative researcher should have room to pursue new paths of discovery as they emerge. While the literature provides a basis for the discovery of strengths of youth who are disconnected, as a qualitative researcher one should also be open to any new strengths the youth might mention or other elements interviewees might share related to how the strength of youth who are disconnected are developed.

Purposeful sampling offers useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest, for within qualitative inquiry, sampling is aimed at insight about the phenomenon and not the empirical generalization from a sample to a population. Qualitative inquiry typically focuses on relatively small samples. The logic and power of qualitative purposeful sampling, according to Patton (2015), derives from the emphasis on in-depth understanding of specific cases: information-rich cases. Participants are selected purposefully to permit inquiry into and

understanding of a phenomenon in depth. Purposeful sampling, emergent design flexibility, and naturalistic inquiry are all strategies within the design strategies module.

The next four strategies discussed are related to data collection and fieldwork strategies. The interviews captured from the purposeful sample of the study included direct quotations about youth's personal perspective and experiences. Similar to most qualitative data, the in depth inquiry and careful document review will yield thick descriptions. Case studies produced much qualitative data.

Personal experience and engagement is another core strategy of qualitative inquiry. Qualitative data were collected as the inquirer had direct contact with and was close to the people and situations within the study. My personal experience as a youth in foster care, conscious of the existence and development of my strengths, according to Patton (2015) is an important part of the inquiry and critical to understanding the phenomenon study. The flip side of that coin is the core strategy was empathic neutrality and mindfulness. Patton (2015) defines empathic neutrality as understanding a person's situation and perspective without judging the person – and communicating that understanding with authenticity to build rapport, trust and openness. According to Patton (2015), to achieve empathic neutrality in qualitative inquiry requires mindfulness. Mindfulness involves being focused in the moment, being attentive to what's going on, without distraction, and maintaining attentiveness on a moment to moment basis.

The last strategy of the data collection and fieldwork module was a dynamic systems perspective. The key idea of this strategy is the assumption that change is ongoing whether focus is on an individual, an organization, a community, or an entire culture. Attention is given to the process as the inquiry is mindful of and attentive to systems and situation dynamics. Patton's

(2005) recommended strategy of dynamic system perspectives was uplifted in the study through the data collection method of focusing on the intrinsic and extrinsic capital of the participants.

The analysis and reporting strategies module of qualitative inquiry recommended by Patton (2015) include five components. The thematic analysis strategy related to the unique case orientation of qualitative data assumes each case is special and unique. Inductive and creative synthesis strategies speak to how analysis from the particular to the general is guided by analytical principles rather than by rules. The process ends with a creative synthesis. The holistic perspective strategy is the idea of the whole phenomenon under study is understood as a complex system that is more than the sum of its parts. Within this strategy, inquiry focuses on capturing complex interdependence and system dynamics that cannot meaningfully be reduced to a few discrete variables and linear, cause-effect relationships. Context sensitivity is a strategy emphasizing inquiry being placed in a social, historical, and temporal context. The last strategy, reflexivity: perspective and voice, addresses the need for the qualitative analyst to own and be reflective about voice and perspective. Balance is obtained by understanding and depicting the world authentically in all its complexity while being self-analytical, politically aware, and reflexive in consciousness.

The 12 cores strategies of qualitative inquiry are interrelated, interdependent, and interacting rather than isolated, disconnected dimensions (Patton, 2015).The 12 qualitative principles provide a direction and framework for developing specific designs and concrete data collection tactics. The primary theoretical approaches to the qualitative inquiry of this study were social constructionism, infused with a strength base through narrative inquiry.

Research Design

Following the ideology of Dewey in studying experience, narrative inquiry is the chosen methodology to understand the manifestation of the strengths and resources of individuals from disconnected backgrounds. Narrative is both phenomenon and method. It has an important place across disciplines because it focuses on human experience' as a result of being a fundamental structure of human experiences with a holistic quality. It is concerned with the individual and might also be sociologically concerned with groups and the formation of community. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) shared narrative-related studies in social science extending as far back to individual psychology. Case history, biography, life history, life span development, Freudian psychoanalysis, and organizational consultation are categories of inquiry that sets the stage for narrative inquiry.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) make the case that given the focus on experience and the qualities of life and education, narrative is situated in a matrix of qualitative research. A review of the educational study of experience implicitly aligns with narrative with qualitatively oriented educational researchers working with experiential philosophy, psychology, critical theory, curriculum studies, and anthropology. The educational importance of narrative inquiry centers on the theoretical ideas about the nature of human life as educational experiences as lived, are brought forth. The inquiry of the narratives analyzed in this study speaks to such a concept, the experiences of youth in foster care influence their educational experiences, and relates to the identification and advancement of their developmental capital: strengths, values, competencies, supports, and resources.

The Narrative Inquiry: Uprooted, Regrounded and Growing

It is the belief of narrative inquirers that narratives represent different realities, not simply different perspectives. Ethertington (2004) believed one's ability to share personal reflections and recollections stems from the innate desire to create a more defined sense of self. This is so on the basis of the ontology that we live our storied lives and our world is a storied world. Narrative inquirers think narratively about experience through inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Uprooted, Regrounded and Growing is an exploration of the narratives of youth in foster care, reconstructed to reveal results of an anti-deficit approach to understanding their developmental capital. To serve the purpose of the study, narrative inquiry was chosen as a method to shift the focus from a general understanding of the development of youth who are disconnected toward a more local and specific understanding provided through the stories of the participants. Shifting from the pattern of focusing on the pathologies and deficits, to focusing on the strengths and resources when examining the development of youth involved in the child welfare system, a narrative that competes against the mainstream perspective is revealed.

Research Question

The central research question for this study was: What capital do youth with foster care experience possess? More specifically following question will also be considered: What is the developmental capital of young adults with foster care experience?

Data Collection

Narrative inquiry examines human lives through the lens of a narrative, honoring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding (Clandinin, 2013; Patton, 2005). Patton (2015) posited personal narratives, family stories, graffiti, literary nonfiction, and life histories reveal cultural and social patterns through the lens of individual experiences. In this study, stories were collected about the manifestations of the strengths of youth who are disconnected. The stories were collected through one interview per participant transcribed and analyzed for the patterns and themes they revealed related to both specific individual and society and culture more generally. Bochner (2001) concept of the "narrative turn" in qualitative inquiry speaks of honoring people's stories as data that can stand alone as a sufficient description of individual experience that can analyzed for a greater understanding of the psychological, sociological, cultural, and political dimensions of the greater human expression. (Patton, 2015). Narratives are analyzed to generate knowledge.

To elicit participants' perspective of their strengths and resources, participants were asked to bring an item to help facilitation the conversation. One unique strength of qualitative research rest in the exploratory or descriptive nature of the investigation that searches for a deeper understanding of participants' lived experiences. Rossman and Marshall (2011) posited that in the study of human experience, it is essential to know how people define their situation. Supplementing interviews with other data, such as an artifact owned by the participant, aided in capturing the deep meaning of experience within the participants' words as well as their values and beliefs. Within this study, the Item of Conversation section served to initiate the conversation related to capital by discussing an item of value. This value given to the item by the participant and the analysis of the value of item will be discussed within each individual

participant's profile. Following discussion of the item of value the participant provides, participants completed an open-ended interview to share narratives about their personal assets. The interview questions explored intrinsic factors – skills, abilities and talents, extrinsic factors – resources and assets, and tangibles/cultural goods.

Framework of the Narrative Inquiry. Within this study, the narratives were elicited and constructed using a metaphor of a living tree to match the theme of the dissertation: Uprooted, Regrounded and Growing. The developmental capital was matched analogously to parts of a tree to organize and form the comprehensive narrative of the storytellers of the study.

Trees have been used in research and with engaging youth previously. For example, there are tree diagrams used to help organize and represent a sequence of events. Gregory (2008) reviews evolutionary tree as a central metaphor in biology. Darwin (1837) sketched the first evolution tree, used in *On the Origin of Species,* to depict historical relationships among living groups as a pattern of branching. He considered the Tree of Life as an important organizing principle in understanding the concept of evolution (Gregory, 2008). Tree diagrams have been used to record all possible outcomes in a clear and uncomplicated manner. Snowdon, Schultz and Swinburn (2008) used a problem and solution tree approach as a participatory process of working through layers of determinants to identify potential interventions to improve nutrition. Through a previous professional role as a developmental evaluator, the researcher was also influenced by exposure to the Evaluation Theory Tree. Alkin and Christie (2004) constructed a taxonomy of evaluation theory. The evaluation tree helps to distinguish between evaluation theory and practice. The deep roots cover the epistemology and the trunks underpin modern evaluation practice.

The living tree metaphor used during the interview section elicited and organized the lived stories of the participants by focusing on the following elements:

Seed

- This section served as the core of the conversation. Participants were asked to describe a significant moment within their lives that created a seed of triumph, glory, fulfillment, or health. From their response, a focus was chosen to serve as the core of the conversation.

Ground

- This section served to further explore the nurturing environment of the participants. To better understand participants' access to resources they were asked to talk about how an environment nurtured the seed mentioned in the previous conversation.

Stem

- This section served to discuss the participant's ability to rise above through the support they received. They were asked to talk about an entity (rather individual or organization) that helped them to rise above a sticky situation.

Roots

- This section served to discuss the original network and fundamental support of the participants. Participants were asked to discuss how their family positively supported their progress to gain insight on a socio-cultural influence.

Trunk

- This section served to discuss the aspirations and future interest of the participants. Within this section, they were asked to discuss their dreams.

Branches

- This section served to discuss the personal strengths of the participants. To get to

  their strengths, participants were asked to describe some personal traits that

  helped them to get to where they were in fulfilling their dreams.

Leaves

- This section offered an opportunity for participants to highlight messages that

  they would like to share related to what they would like for people to know about

  the strengths and resources of individuals with experience with foster care.

Fruits

- This section was crafted to better understand how others have benefited from the

  resources and strengths of the participants. They were asked to share how

  someone else has benefited from the valued seed that started the conversation.

Participant Selection

Given the specificity of the inquiry question being investigated, purposeful sampling was

used to illuminate the information rich cases of this study. Patton (2015) posited the logic and

power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study.

Selecting young people of the age 18 years or older with experience in foster care was essential

to applying the anti-deficit perspective of the strengths to youth in foster care. Patton (2015)

further described the sampling method as group characteristic sampling because of the selection

of cases to create a specific information-rich group that could reveal and illuminate important

group patterns. I selected participants with the inclusion criteria of being 18 or older, with

experience in foster care, and experience in advocating, better facilitated understanding the

nature and influence of the traits, aptitudes, and behaviors of high ability youth with experience in foster care.

Twelve participants were invited with the intent to have at least 8 study profiles. At least two of the participants were proposed to be men. Initially, the pool of participants was to be affiliated with youth programs such as, EmpowerMEnt, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, or the Georgia's Department of Family and Children Services. The organizations listed support current or former foster youth who advocate to improve social conditions of youth in custody of the state of Georgia. Access to the population that met the criteria was facilitated through my personal network as a youth in foster care (additional details can be found in the subjectivity statement at the end of the chapter). Youth selected to participate in the study could have been a peer of researcher, as I am an affiliate of the organizations. Participants received an electronic notification about the study. After expressing interest in participating, they were contacted by the researcher via email or phone call. Pseudonyms were created by the participants. Participants' profile names were co-constructed between the participant and the researchers. Following conversation related to a significant moment in the life of the participant, their item of value, and their strengths, the researcher generated a name as extracted from the main themes prevalent in the answers. For some participants like Gee, the profile name was discussed more intensely and selected at the end of the interview. Vee was one participant who expressed some pushback with her profile. She provided clarity so that her profile properly reflected how her strengths grew from her, instead of being represented in a way that put the onus on her supporters. For example, she expressed that while she did not have to pay rent in cash, she did pay in goods and service. She also expressed that such was called bartering.

Participant Table

Below the participant demographic information is illustrated.

Participant Table					
Name	*Age*	*Gender*	*Hometown*	*Ethnicity*	*Profile Name (created by researcher, based on reported Developmental Capital)*
Karima	25	Woman	New York	Jamaican	The One About the Business
Key	24	Woman	Georgia	African American	Opened and Connected
Sarah	23	Woman	Rhode Island	Caucasian American	Excellence, Beyond Experience and Genetics
Adrian	24	Man	Georgia	African American	The Zealot: An Uncompromised Spirit – The Strongest Believer
Marrisa	23	Woman	Mexico	Mexican American	The Valued Self
Sam	26	Woman	Iowa	Caucasian American	The Moxie Leader
Vee	23	Woman	Michigan	African American	The Ambitious One
Gee	24	Man	Hawaii	Pacific Islander	The Caring Socialite

Data Analysis

Uprooted, Regrounded and Growing consisted of a thematic analysis, where each narrative inquiry/interview was recognized as a unique case. Patterned meaning was identified to answer the research question, "What is the developmental capital possessed by youth with foster care experience?" through a process of data familiarization, data coding, and theme development. Inductively, coding and theme development were directed by the content of the data. The questions asked in the interview provided meaning across the data set. Deductively,

coding and theme development were directed by existing concepts which informed the interview questions. The concept of developmental capital was built from the literature pertaining to anti-deficit perspective, gifted education, and community cultural wealth. The creative synthesis that followed the analytical principles was guided by the metaphor of a tree. The metaphorical tree helped to facilitate the holistic perspective of strengths, values, competencies, resources, and supports coming together conceptually to form the sum of the parts of developmental capital as understood in this study. The analysis also held a context sensitivity of having an anti-deficit approach and using such an approach on a special population such as youth with foster care experience.

The literature of narrative inquiry makes a distinction between story and narrative. The story is treated as data and the narrative as analysis. Analyzing the story involves interpreting the story, placing it in context, and comparing it with other stories (Patton, 2015). Analyzing the narrative reality is essential. Narrative reality is a concept of Gubrium and Holstein (2009), which suggests the contexts in which stories are told are as much a part of their reality as the text themselves. This concept speaks to the importance of bringing attention to the socially situated practice of storytelling, which included accounts provided both within and outside of formal interviews. Analyzing narrative reality is considering the circumstances, conditions, and goals of account and understanding that what the speakers do with their stories shape their meaning for listeners.

The methodological focus in narrative studies is typically on the nature of interpretation (Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) referenced W. Tierney's (2000) idea of narrative analysis. Tierney's analysis focused on the interpretation of the intent of text, evaluation f the persona of the author of the text and finally understanding the intersectionality of it all. The story is at the

center of analysis. Patton also referenced Riessman's (2008) sentiment. She cautions high quality data consists of detailed and lengthy accounts with many different crosscutting themes rather than short, succinct, and fragmented segments.

According to Patton (2015) and O'Reilly (2013), the interpretivist sees humans as actors in the social world rather than as re-acting like objects in the natural world. To embrace the sociological theory of Karen O'Reilly, referenced by Patton (2015), attention will be paid to people's feelings and emotions, their experiences and their free choices, as well as to the wider constraints and opportunities within which they act. The goal is to seek ways to understand the ongoing interaction of structure and agency. The agency/structure dualism speaks to the tendency to perceive the agency of individual human actors as distinct and separate from social structures (Patton, 2015). Not only must we consider "social facts" such as laws, religion, education and other more relational aspects such as norms, but we must also consider the creative, reflexive, and dynamics of social life (Patton, 2015).

Positionality/Subjectivity Statement

Tacit theory, one's personal understanding, initiated the lens for viewing the topics of interest in this study. Tacit theory is expanded through exploration of formal theory from the literature. The formal theory emerged from the previous literature raised the interest of a marginalized population and problematic issue into focus and concepts and models from the literature informed specific, researchable question. The following section details the complex process of conceptualizing, framing, and focusing the study from a personally identified problem. The personal understanding that initiated the topic of discussion is further illustrated in the following real life example.

Real Life Example

Ms. Valerie was heading to talk to the administration of the high school about her foster daughter. Tay was getting suspended for disrupting the classroom and disrespecting the teacher. Over the phone, it was reported to Ms. Valerie, Tay used profanity when speaking to the teacher and the other students in the class. Ms. Valerie did not understand her foster daughter.

Tay was a smart girl. She had an expansive vocabulary for someone her age and she was very mature in thought and behavior. Highly verbal to say the least, but she was often too aggressive. If she wasn't using inappropriate words, her demeanor was brash. Her teachers often expressed frustration because Tay had so much potential, but wouldn't use it for her optimal educational advancement. Tay was an underachiever. Her test grades weren't the best, but based off class discussions and projects, you could tell that she knew the material. She was a great communicator. The sarcastic young woman was loved amongst her peers and disliked equally so. A natural leader and lover, she could often be found trying to "advance someone's life" or helping someone solve a problem. Tay was skilled in identifying problems and solving them unconventionally. However, sometimes those unconventional ways were inappropriate like this time.

Tay yelled to her classmates," shut the fuck up." She couldn't hear the teacher and was really into the lesson in the physical science class. The Title I high school was full of students who were not the most motivated to behave in a way that did not distract other students. She was used to the noise but she was not grasping the lesson well and she wanted to get the right answer. After the outburst, the class became silent and the teacher, relieved, continued to teach. The act that caused the suspension followed shortly afterward.

The teacher stopped teaching to discipline some students sitting in the back of the classroom. The boys were playing a game of paper basketball, and began to argue about a point system. The first ten minutes weren't a problem as Tay caught up on her notes. There was not a problem 25 minutes later, as Tay talked to her friends, waiting for the teacher to return. After 40 minutes, Tay exhaled and asked the teacher with much sass, "Can you teach please?" The teacher responded, "Don't you see me doing something." Tay retorted, "Do you not see I'm trying to learn. Send him out and let that be that. I shouldn't have to miss out on my education due to poor classroom management."

Ms. Valerie listened to the recount of the story in the principal's office and was torn. Tay's behavior was completely inappropriate, but she understood the problem to be a result of Tay being smart. In this example, though not easily recognized, Tay's behavioral problem displayed potential aligned with traits, aptitudes, and behaviors fundamental of a gifted student such as interest, motivation, reasoning, and problem solving ability. Similar to many other high potential disadvantaged students, it is her style, not the content that often leads to the problems associated with the lack of productivity in classroom settings. The way Tay demonstrates her high potential often caused disturbances in the social context of the classroom. Whenever Tay demonstrated insight or high aptitude in a style that was not preferred within the classrooms settings, her strength was not recognized but her lack of conformity was punished.

I am Tay. From my personal experience, I came to understand a number of issues that limited opportunities for my development which were outside of my influence. Not being able to recognize the strengths in the behavioral problems have led to reasons teachers cannot develop the strengths of students who operate differently than those of the mainstream culture. Teacher's

inability to recognize the strengths elicits the inability to redirect the strengths in more positive or appropriate manner where productive outcomes led many to believe strengths do not exist.

My childhood experience of being the oldest of six children in a single parent home of a family with limited economic resources, living in Atlanta, Georgia led to my experience in foster care. During the time I spent in foster care, I was deemed a child with behavioral problems. Being in foster care exposed me to new networks, resources, and problems common for youth in foster care. It was through my engagement with community organizations that my strengths were redirected and developed for me to be successful in mainstream culture. The development in my leadership skills and advocacy, plus the interplay of my past actuated my ability to take advantage of opportunities that led to me being an advocate for self and a youth advocate; youth in foster care, homeless youth, and juvenile delinquents. My experience as an advocate further substantiated my exposure to people with similar backgrounds of having little, who shared stories of poor practice of professionals attempting to position disconnected youth for success.

My vision to improve the social conditions for youth in foster care expanded. It was at Spelman College, I began to seek knowledge and experience to make informed judgments, engage many others, seek the common good, and take informed action to increase the quality of living of youth who are disconnected. The importance and purpose of the organizations I was apart were clear, but advocacy was not enough. That became evident; as I would stare legislators in their eyes, exude standards of excellence through presentations of proposed suggestions for policy and laws and then have those recommendations not truly accepted. Too often, I would be met with compliments regarding my articulation and of how my story was powerful. There was a need for the development of my credentials and reputation beyond my personal experience that led me to the pursuit of more higher education.

I needed to do more than talk and educate through strategic sharing of my story. I was done with sharing my discontent; I wanted to do something. Before becoming a scholar, I was a practitioner. I began to craft the details of my alternative education energy transference center. The idea of the center grew from my desire to take an active approach to social justice. The idea grew from my experience as a regional coordinator serving youth who were disconnected in the largest counties in Georgia. The pleasure I experienced when success fully dealing with my own stress in productive, fun ways enhanced my work as a practitioner. My idea of the center was created on the fundamental principles of using activities that are pleasurable and beneficial for the youth in attendance. Through personal experience and a heightened exposure to individuals of the population, my understanding of what worked for youth expanded; various social factors that influence the educational outcomes of youth who are disadvantaged and the various meanings and beliefs surrounding various cultural phenomenon. I wanted to develop that understanding and was led to do so through the University of Georgia's Department of Educational Psychology.

The Gifted and Creative Education program has a philosophy that is grounded in tenets that giftedness and creativity are expressed in diverse ways among diverse people; that creativity is a universal potential to be nurtured and enhanced; and that the best education is tailored to student's specific needs for talent development. The first class of my graduate school career, I sat in the class "Characteristics of Gifted Children" wide-eye and amazed. I listen to my professor speak of traits I've heard in the realm of foster care in a whole new light. Within one moment, I listened to the characteristics of gifted children and I thought about children with ADHD. I thought of the kids I knew in foster care who did not have these traits looked at in such a positive light. It is my goal for my scholarship to explore, highlight, and develop the various

attributes of the problem of youth who are disadvantaged, not operating at their optimal

potential. Through my academic career, I have explored factors such as teachers' and other

professionals' attitudes pertaining to the strengths of disadvantaged students and the difficulty of

identifying strengths, limited parental involvement in the educational attainment of

disadvantaged students; assessments used to measure traits of disadvantaged students; and the

influence of social context on the outcomes of high potential disadvantaged youth. Within this

study, I engaged individuals from a social background similar to mine to receive their insights of

the strengths, gifts, resources, and values associated with youth who are disconnected such as

youth with foster care experience.

     In reflexive practice, I recognized the struggle of creating this document. This process

revealed to me the personal desire to present myself as a scientist, rooted in objectivity.

However, that desire contradicted to the artistic nature of self that pushed me to scientific,

qualitative research, which allows space for subjectivity. I hoped to be aware of the separation of

my voice from the participants of the study. However, qualitative research creates a space where

the distinction in the stories between researcher and participant can be more closely interwoven,

than separated. Separation between the voices is a difficult task.

     The intent of the description of the positionality is to address personal aspects of self that

led to the research interest and focus of the study. Though direct experience stimulated the initial

curiosity, there is a link to the general research questions that can be further illustrated by

Marshall and Rossman (2011) conceptual funnel. The mouth of the funnel represents the general

conceptual focus of social activism and its role in ameliorating oppressive circumstances. The

focus is narrowed from the broader concept of provoking social change of shifting poor

outcomes related to deficit perspectives of youth who are disconnected, as group phenomena of

inquiry of the strengths of youth with foster care experience became of interest. The set of research questions further funnel down to a more manageable and narrow focus on how life experiences helped to define the strengths.

Trustworthiness

This study was conducted following review and approval by the Institutional Review Board. Procedures related to the protocol followed the investigator of the University of Georgia Human Research Protection Program. Callary (2013) discussed three ethical issues in narrative research and noted that as researchers we have ethical duties, such as to assure free consent of participants and protect them from harm. The ethical issues discussed by Callary were grounded in the turn away from positivism towards narrative inquiry. Citing the work of Chase (2011) and Pinnegar and Daynes (2007), Callary made the case that the focus on specific relationships, interpretation of words, and acceptance of alternative ways of knowing all enforce the importance of ethics. Callary obtained the results of her study through processing the following three ethical questions:

- Did I create results?
- Are the narratives a genuine representation of the participants' life experience?
- Who is the author of the narratives?

The first question speaks to the importance of understanding that I am writing someone else's story and a need for transparency with my own assumptions should be clear. The second question addresses the importance of making sure that the proper interpretations of the participants' learning experiences are accurate. There is a benefit to letting the participants elaborate on their experiences as well as share their feedback on the interpretation of their story.

The third question also addresses the assumptions of the researcher and making sure one checks them with the participants.

When divulging the stories, participants are vulnerable. As the researcher, efforts will be enforced to develop a sense of trust and participants will be respected and treated fairly in presentation of their stories. Understanding the need to respect ethical treatment of the data, I created room to negotiate with participants to facilitate respect and openness.

To address the issues of ethics within the study, within the methodological process I was conscious of the questions being posed; I was transparent. As suggested by Clandinin & Connely (1989), I was careful to clearly convey the participants' intentions and need to be sensitive about alternative interpretations that might be perceived through writing. To the degree possible, member-checking was used to properly capture data and analysis.

The member checking process was initiated after the transcripts were codified. Coded themes were then sent to participants in the form of individual profiles that included the name of the profile and the raw list of strength, resources, supports, competencies and values. Participants were asked to respond to the list, expressing if they agreed or disagreed with the interpretations of their interview.

Memos were included to address subjectivities, and capture surprises and things that were unexpectedly learnt. For example. I did not take into the consideration the struggle the participants may have identifying strengths associated with their biological parents. I learned that the difficulty to respond without hesitation was due to more than the novelty of the question of how one biological family has supported the individual. Some of the participants were separated from their biological parents early and could not remember their experiences with the family. One participant who had some memory of their experience struggled to be able to identify

strengths of their family. I rephrased and asked if there was a way their family positively contributed to her life. The participant shared that her biological family exposed her to things to stay away from. I was surprised at the familiar tone I heard that I associated with youth who talk to professionals more than the average person. I found myself emphasizing the anti-deficit perspective so that the common narrative told about the experience of youth in foster care was distinctive from the narrative shared with case managers, advocates, judges and other professionals the youth are accustomed.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to review the choice of method within this study and ground it in a conceptual framework that builds on previous theoretical and methodological knowledge. One fundamental assumption of the study, from the theory of social constructionism, is storytelling is integral to understanding lives and all people construct narratives as a process in constructing and reconstructing identities. The review of literature reveals there can be multiple challenges to the choice of method of this study. Interviewing depends on cooperation of key individuals and has been criticized for being too dependent on participants' openness and honesty. The data could be perceived as affected by researcher presence, including the data of quality depending on the researcher's interpersonal skills. Uprooted, Regrounded, and Growing uses narrative inquiry to facilitate the discovery of nuances related to the developmental capital emerging from the culture associated with youth with foster care experience. Interviewing nurtured a face to face interaction with participants that was useful for uncovering the participants' perspective. It was a data collected method useful for describing complex interaction as well as facilitating immediate follow up for clarification. The sampling strategy in this qualitative inquiry was criterion type where all the cases assured the usefulness of quality by

having foster care experience and being over the age of 18. The analysis procedure included

open coding and generating categories through prolonged engagement with the data and

modified through concepts derived from the literature review and conceptual framework. For

credibility, prolonged engagement with the data occurred, in addition to sharing the researcher's

reflexivity. Shared data and interpretations with participants allowed for member-checking and

the triangulation of data on multiple sources helped to ensure the rigor and usefulness of the

study.

Limitations and Future Directions

As an individual with foster care experience, I acknowledge the bias that can exist having

a shared experience as the participants. The insight from my experience as a youth in foster care

provided a distinguishing eye that other researchers without the experience may not possess. I

also have sensibilities that my experience have lend itself to, such as my practice as a trauma

informed professional, my ability to relate to youth, and my access to the population through the

peer relationship. The sensibilities allowed me to create comfortable communication and

provoke elements I may be more aware of given the shared experience of the youth. Other

researchers may have difficulty in having authentic conversation that provokes authenticity from

youth because of the difference in social status.

The researcher's positionality influenced the focus on variables with a tint that considered

behavior problems to be a maladaptive strength. The researcher believed that when one resist

then one's power emerges. Resistance is one example of a characteristic that could be perceived

in an anti-deficit manner, but instead is more often tagged as a behavior problem. While other

researchers may have difficulty tagging a behavior problem as a strength through the anti-deficit

perspective, I was guided and able through my experience and ability to tap into my perspective of the apparent context and the context as perceived by a youth. Wondering, "in what context would the behavior be appropriate,?" and having a shared experience of possible contexts, helped to be able to see misbehaviors as more than behavioral problems, and more so like maladaptive strengths.

Though the value of the literature related to resiliency and protective factors is understood, the terminology was intentionally not used to generate a fresher narrative. As a former foster child, the researcher was also familiar with the trendy nature of the concept or terminology of resiliency being used to describe disadvantaged and disconnected youth. The use of the term anti-deficit oppose to strength based was also intentional so that the researcher could place her foot in her preferred stance, then pivot into the language of related fields respectively. The research understand to be anti-deficit versus strength based, is to push beyond the apparent context into a more broader context, understood through a perspective different than those of authority, so that appropriateness could be imagined.

It is understood that all youth in foster care do not have the same experience, however the distinction between the youth in this study could have been highlighted more. For example, whether or not a youth were adopted, reunified with biological family, experience kinship care, or aged out of foster care was not specifically noted in this study. Other demographic information, such as the ethnicity of the group, was also not collected through direct inquiry posed to the participant. Instead of asking the young participants of the ethnicity in which they identify with, the researcher identified the ethnicity as observed and noted in a memo.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Reaping What You Sow – The Findings

This study orients around the research question of "What is the developmental capital of young adults with foster care experience?" The exploration of the stories of the young adults involved in the foster care system revealed advantages drawn from their experiences. Examination of the narratives of youth who are disconnected was expanded to an anti-deficit perspective to reveal their strengths, values, supports, and resources. The content of this chapter includes a review of the developmental capital, the participant profiles, the cross case theme analysis, and the raw data of the emergent themes.

Developmental Capital

The concept of developmental capital is explored to provide a more expansive narrative of youth with foster care experience. Within the current study, developmental capital is operationalized as elements that contribute to the sustainability of one's personal satisfaction and/or social status over the course of changes, within one's life. The narrative inquiry illustrated how developmental capital can fall into several categories. The categories that make up developmental capital include: strengths, resources, supports, values, and competencies. Those categories can be further divided into two types: intrinsic and extrinsic capital and are operationalized by the researcher. Strengths include elements used for the benefit of an individual and essentials that contribute to one's ability to deal with issues. Values are the

judgement of what is important to the individual. Competencies are the knowledge in a particular area that emerged within the interviews. Resources are considered to be accessible and/or utilized assets. Supports are human efforts that invoke maintenance of the status of an individual. The counter-narratives or narratives from a marginalized group's shared traits, aptitudes, and behaviors as well as extrinsic assets that are anti-deficit are regarded as developmental capital. The raw data revealed the full range of developmental capital denoted from the response of former foster youth who shared their stories for this study.

Participant's Profile Descriptions

Eight former foster youth, between the ages of 18 and 26 were selected to be storytellers via interviews in this study. Six of the participants were women and two were men. Participants represented states across the country including New York, Georgia, Rhode Island, Iowa, Hawaii and Michigan. One participant was from Mexico. In addition to being former foster youth, participants also had experience advocating for improving practice or policies of the child welfare system for the benefit of other youth who are disconnected. Participants were selected to share their personal stories, highlighting elements of their lived experiences related to the development of their strengths and resources. The developmental capital is illustrated through the profile elements, which include strengths, values, competencies, resources, and supports of the young adults with foster care experience. The profiles also include demographic information and the storyteller's position of their item of value. The item of value served as props used to initiate the anti-deficit tone of the study. The following are the researcher selected profile names, which emerged from the data analysis:

1. The One About the Business
2. Opened and Connected

3. Excellence, Beyond Experience and Genetics

4. The Zealot: An Uncompromised Spirit – The Strongest Believer

5. The Valued Self

6. The Moxie Leader

7. The Ambitious One

8. The Caring Socialite

1. Karima: The One About the Business

Digging deeper into Karima's story revealed several personal, interpersonal, and occupational strengths including, but not limited to, appreciation for business, determination to benefit others, goal setting proficiency, and social navigational skills. Karima understood the conditions that influenced others and valued wealth accumulation. Supports such as her mother, an ambitious friend, and community members ranging from the local drug dealers to small business owners held her to appropriate standards based on her potential and contributed to her access to resources such as encouragement to reach her potential, examples of success and exposure to entrepreneurship.

Karima is 25 years old, reigning from New York City. She works in marketing for one of the world's largest financial services companies. She recently transitioned from event marketing to more of a product and technical marketing style of work. For fun, Karima enjoys "handling business." For her that means solving problems and making money. She finds the most enjoyment in growing and developing herself. "Being better is fun to me," she shared in the interview. She also enjoys writing.

Seed of Triumph, Strengths, Values, Resources and Supports. Karima was very expressive and direct in sharing elements of her story related to her strengths. The seed of triumph that provoked a significant moment of growth in Karima's life was planted when she was in the sixth grade. One day, she came home to find her and her mother had been evicted. She made it home before her mother; their belongings were on the side of the street, and many people were around. Someone came up and asked, "How much for the TV?" In reflection, Karima shared, "I felt ashamed. We all in the hood, but we're the only ones getting evicted right now. I remember that was the moment I decided that as an adult I'll never be poor." The experience started Karima's pursuit of the understanding of money and power with the intent to navigate being in positions where she felt hopeless.

Item of Value and Value Given To Item by Participant. Karima's item of value was a white teddy bear named Polar. It was a gift she asked her father for but later learned her mom purchased it for her. It was one of the only items she kept through the multiple moves in and out of foster care. "He's a reminder that no matter what, no matter what life journeys I have and everything I've seen through and I'm going through there is consistency. There's purpose. There's something I can hold on to."

Aspiration. Karima shared her aspiration of bridging the gap between talent and profit for people who have innovation, inquisitiveness, and talent that is a byproduct of excessive poverty. *"I don't know the specific title, but I love helping other people make their shit possible. I like helping people find the right resources. I like figuring shit out. I like pushing. I like selling. I like honestly convincing people to do things. So my dreams having this big consulting organization and having it on an international level."*

In addition to having an interest in real estate, she values using her understanding of the power between film and media in her consultation organization. The bulk of her services would be where she received much fulfillment in directly impacting someone's life among small minority businesses.

2. Key: Opened and Connected

Key's story revealed several personal, interpersonal, and occupational strengths, including, but not limited to a collaborative approach, openness to culturally diverse experiences, ability to manage trust given to people, and self-confidence. Key has traveled a good deal and met many different people. She has a firm understanding of the greater good outside of self and understands being open as an essential factor for receiving that which is desired. She values training with low investment (meaning she can learn something new without investing too much money or time) and satisfying supports and spaces where she can be herself. Supports, such as her grandparents and friendships, more than a decade old, have contributed to her access to resources like places to rest, people who are around during difficult times, and spiritual support.

Key is 24 years old and was born in Atlanta, Georgia. During the time of interview, she was in between jobs, seeking a company that offered opportunities to grow and certifications (documentation of specialized skill, used to garner more resources). For fun, Key enjoys being with her circle of friends, traveling, having great conversation, and eating good food.

Seed of Triumph, Strengths, Values, Resources and Supports. The seed of triumph that provoked a significant moment of growth in Key's life was planted when she gave birth to her first daughter. She didn't feel like it was her time to be a mother and was amazed to see how people could come from different places and still care for one another. She appreciated finding someone who cared for her child, despite the differences in bloodline. Key shared,

"It's the one thing that does give me pleasure knowing that regardless of what's going on in my life, my daughter is fine. Because when I think about what I've been going thru since her birth and where I am now, I know I made the better decision, instead of trying to bring her into my world and drag her along through my mud, you know."

Item of Value and Value Given To Item by Participant. Key's item of value was her cellphone, as it was her way to connect with the world and get away from her world. The device holds many of her memoires and allows her to search for different places to go and different things to do. The specific phone bought to the interview was cracked and served as one thing that reminded Key of herself. "Not ugly and cracked up, but it's been through something, it's been through stuff, but yet it has memories and information, it is still who it has always have been."

Aspiration. For Key, to be happy is to be able to do what she chooses "without judgement, interrogation or having to report to anyone, and being an independent individual." She has had unpleasant experiences of her natural way of being restricted by those who wanted an order not aligned with her preferences. She aspires to be happy and do what she sees as best for herself. She also dreams of giving back to people who put her in the positions to be able to connect with others because these same people kept her from being homeless and completely without resources. Traveling to Colorado is also an interest of hers.

3. Sarah: Excellence, Beyond Experience and Genetics

Sarah's story revealed personal, interpersonal, and occupational strengths, including, but not limited to the ability to coach others through their frustrations, community problem solving experience, and optimism. Sarah has an understanding of the limits of being bound to experience and genetics and understands how narratives can change. She is willing to accept those changes. Support such as people to hold her accountable for her "personal shittiness," and someone to

explain the nature of the reality of the world and education advocates contributed to her access to resources, such as social services supports and journals.

Sarah is 23 years old. She is from Rhode Island and serves as a state wide youth coordinator. The treatment grant she serves under targets people who are at risk of or currently have personality disorders and psychotic episodes. As the coordinator, it's her mission to "collect the voices" or hear and share the stories of youth and young adults who received mental health treatment to understand how decisions made impacted their lives. For fun, Sarah enjoys spending time with her dog that was rescued and doing lots of outdoor activities. Beaches, hikes and anywhere a dog can go along is also appreciated by Sarah.

Seed of Triumph, Strengths, Values, Resources and Supports. The seed of triumph that provoked a significant moment of growth in Sarah's life was planted when she was in high school and met her student assistant counselor (an individual assigned to helping at risk youth). As a kid of an alcoholic, she found herself in the counselor's office answering questions about why she wasn't paying attention in class. "What's the point? I've seen statistics that kids of alcoholics have that gene within them and are predisposed to be an alcoholic," she thought that meant her future would be that way. "Yeah, I'm not going to pay attention like what's the fucking point? At that point, her counselor explained what the genetics piece really meant and shared Sarah life didn't have to be that way if she didn't choose. Taken back, Sarah said wow and the counselor responded with her finger pointing out, "so cut the bullshit out because I know you can do this. Don't use this as an excuse."

Item of Value and Value Given To Item by Participant. Sarah's item of value is a stuff animal named Tarak. She received it as a gift from her older brothers when she and her twin sister were prematurely born and in NICU. She's kept the stuff animal through all the moves.

"I'm not one of those girls who have like a million beanie babies everywhere. But it gives me a sense of history, so I keep it."

Aspiration. Sarah dreamed of getting her social work degree and change child welfare. Her dream grew from her experience and the experiences of others with a similar background. However, once she got into state government, she found out it was bigger than she was. The challenges that she desired to improve seemed to need a solution much more complex than she imagined. Now she's trying to figure out her next dream.

4. Adrian: The Zealot: An Uncompromised Spirit – The Strongest Believer

Digging deeper within his story revealed personal, interpersonal, and occupational strengths, such as the ability to recognize the gap between one's potential and current or past performance, reading body language well, having a high level of gratitude, and determination to be upstanding and honor the most high. Adrian understands the value of having basic necessities met and understands a productive citizen to be someone who is adding to the production of whatever space where one is. He values positive environments, righteous intentions, and teaching people the way of righteousness. The way of righteousness through Adrian's eyes is aligned with the image of God as the Holy Bible details. Supporters, such as people who could recognize the shift in his spiritual state, his brothers, affectionate male role models, and adult supporters with strong beliefs based on personal experience oppose to theoretical regulations added to his set of values and desires. One person who served as a primary example of such was his foster father. He desires to develop the spiritual health of youth, leading people towards righteousness and teaching about his ancestors. Adrian would say his desires came from his relationship with God.

Adrian is 24 years old, born in Atlanta, Georgia. After spending time in care, he found himself serving youth from a similar background through for the Division of Family and Children Services. For fun, he plays with his son. He enjoys nature and learning new things related to politics and world events. He is passionate about the most high. Adrian shares, "I say the most high because anything can be a god. I say most high just to clarify there's nothing above the one I'm talking about."

Seed of Triumph, Strengths, Values, Resources and Supports. The seed of triumph that provoked a significant moment of growth in Adrian's life was planted when he was in middle school and his father passed. There was a teacher who recognized the shift in his energy and inquired about what was going on outside of school. After school, the teacher took him to a local floral shop, bought extravagant flowers, and then took Adrian to his father's burial site to pay his respect.

"She was very compassionate. That moment was like a light in the middle of darkness. It showed me how important we are to each other really. Because even if there isn't family that's biological, it showed me the impact I can have on someone when they are feeling down because I felt the impact that she made on me."

Item of Value and Value Given To Item by Participant. Adrian's item of value was the King James Holy Bible, important because of its presence in his life from an early age and its application as a guideline to living a righteous life. For Adrian, the book brings peace and comfort. "I can show you everything in there. You just got to get the understanding to be guided."

Aspiration. Adrian aspires to open a group home and take in kids that nobody else will take. One thing that led to this interest was seeing the experience of teenagers in the foster care

system struggle to find efficient adult supports. In his group home, he wants to provide the children with the right tools to be successful in high school and college. He wants to surround the youth with people who have had similar experiences, whom can feed into a spirit in a way that uplifts.

5. Marrisa: The Valued Self

Digging deeper into her story, Marrisa revealed strengths, such as, the ability to make the most of a little, commitment to "behind the scenes" work, compassion, and open-mindedness. Marrisa understands one has control over how memories are stored and chooses to store memories with a tint of forgiveness to aid personal healing. She values self-image, women's empowerment, and having the space to not be okay sometimes. With supports, like adoptive parents, an advocacy community, righteous, inspiring role models and positive male influences such as her uncles and grandfather, Marrisa has accessed resources like enough space for healthy risk taking, environments that encourage one to work hard, and space to practice and develop her advocacy skills.

Marrisa is 23 years old, from Albuquerque, New Mexico. In addition to passionately serving as an advocate for youth in foster care, she also works as a server at a restaurant. For fun, she likes art such as painting and more generally "making something out of whatever." One thing that keeps her going is her son. Marrisa enjoys proving a point. For those who say she cannot make it, she enjoys showing them otherwise. For example, where people thought that she would be unsuccessful, as a result of being a teenage mother, she proved otherwise through her achievements. Another passion of Marrisa's is building an identity for youth in foster care. It's a passion of hers to use make-up and hair to build confidence of young women. Her interest grew

from her personal experience of growing into loving herself after feeling violated and disempowered.

Seed of Triumph, Strengths, Values, Resources and Supports. The seed of triumph that provokes a significant moment of growth in Marrisa's life was planted when she was taken into foster care. She reflected on how many young people tend to lose their belongings with multiple moves once in care, but she was able to keep most of her belongings. In the beginning of her foster care experience, she lived in a shelter that had a large closet of donated clothes. She would spend hours in the closet, finding clothes that boosted her image. It was important to her to not look thrown away. Marrisa also mentioned a seed of triumph being tied to an experience with molestation. To heal, she learned to view multiple sides of a story and to stand up for herself. By looking beyond her own experience and trying to understand his, Marrisa saw the act as an illness the violator had. The experience brewed skills that later transferred into her advocacy work.

Item of Value and Value Given To Item by Participant. Marrisa's item of value was not a single entity, like the other participants. She opted for clothes in general. The clothes she was able to bring into care, clothes from the shelter, and clothes brought for her in her other homes are valued because they helped with her image.

"I would spend hours in there, just trying to find the best clothes. Not trying to look like I just walked out the garbage. I don't know. I always wanted to look like I'm not sleeping on the streets, or I'm not living in the shelter, sharing clothes with ten other girls."

Aspiration. Marrisa aspires to open her own non-profit to help young women with the things mothers are supposed to teach. She wants to help young girls develop into women who are

not easily intimidated. When asked about her dreams, separate from occupation, she mentioned the quality of life she aspires to have. She wants a simple life with rich experiences.

6. Sam: The Moxie Leader

Digging deeper into her story revealed strengths, including but not limited to ambition, high awareness of flaws associated with the child welfare system, the skill of subtle leading, and spirituality. Sam understands the importance of gathering resources and developing support systems for disconnected youth. She is aware of the narrative of youth in foster care and works to positively influence them. She values the power of prayer, leading from behind, and authentic youth-adult partnerships. With supports, like long-term placement with nurturing families, and people who are supportive of her aspirations and friendships, Sam had access to resources, such as extended contact with former case workers and financial, mental health and housing support, even after care.

Sam is from Des Moines, Iowa and is 26 years old. She works at a Catholic Salvation Army. In her department, emergency food, clothing, hygiene products and household items are provided to people in Des Moines. She is very involved in her local church where she helps out in the children ministry. Her passion of improving the lives of youth in foster care led her to help establish a foster care ministry.

Seed of Triumph, Strengths, Values, Resources and Supports. The seed of triumph that provoked a significant seed of growth in Sam's life was planted her senior year in high school. She was working on a group project related to sovereignty when her teacher told her she had a lot of moxie. That moment, where her leadership was highlighted provided inspiration that pushed her to obtain her bachelor's and master's degree.   Being introduced to moxie, she

became to value more the idea that she didn't have to lead from the front. The idea of moxie led Sam to further accept that she can lead by more than words but by decisions and actions as well.

Sam understood moxie to be subtle leadership. To further understand what Sam meant about Moxie, John Baldoni's Moxie: The Secret to Bold and Gutsy Leadership (2014) was referenced. Baldoni (2014) defined moxie as the essence of what makes a leader tough on the inside and soft on the outside. Key characteristics highlighted included gumption (get up and go), guts (courage), and determination (perseverance). Baldoni also went on to say that leaders with moxie are those who have competence, credibility and confidence. The moxie leader, such as Sam, is said to be one that is a straight shooter, knows herself and knows what it takes to get ahead.

Item of Value and Value Given To Item by Participant. Sam's item of value was a house key, given to her by her adoptive parents. "It is valuable to me because it is the only one I never had to give back. And its super worn down because I go home a lot." Her parents didn't know her very well, at the time so, but her sister picked out the key pattern of a starry night. "I think they did it especially for me. So there's like a lot of value in that."

Aspiration. Sam has achieved most of her goals, which were related to education attainment. She still aspires to write her memoir and start a family.

7. Vee: The Ambitious One

Digging deeper into her story revealed Vee's strengths such as the ability to protect herself, awareness of her environment, her entrepreneurial aspirations, and her multiple creative abilities. Vee understands the need to balance making split decisions, the power of planning to counter negative effects, and she knows how to maximize limited support. She values being able to support her family and community, financially, mentally, and emotionally. She also values

failed experiences because of the understanding that comes when it is revealed that things should have been done differently. Vee has accessed resources like a stable environment to stay, technical equipment relevant to her interests, and a school environment that provided hands-on experience, with supports like mentors, emotional support from her sister, brother, and her biological father who helps her understands the world and provides lesson that develop practical skills.

Vee is 22 years, from Detroit, Michigan. She is entrepreneur who owns a magazine that empowers women and encourages them to be successful adults of the world and leaders within their community. For fun, she likes outdoor activities like canoeing, take strolls in nature, and camp fires. Vee is passionate about life. She cares about human beings, spiders, plants, and all life in general. Vee shares her power to keep going comes from knowing she can "accomplish anything I put my mind to."

Seed of Triumph, Strengths, Values, Resources and Supports. The seed of triumph that provoked a significant moment of growth in Vee's life was planted when she graduated from her media arts high school. That year, she faced many obstacles, but she overcame them by setting her mind and making the things she wanted to happen, like having good attendance in school, completing projects of interest, and participating in social events of her interest. Her graduation was a symbol of the success she could obtain and her skills learned in school would help her succeed.

Item of Value and Value Given To Item by Participant. Vee's item of value was a planner. It's important because it keeps her organized and helped her to plan her life out. "I used to make a lot of split decisions. I'm still working on that, just being more calculative with my planning. And I think my planner is very valuable for that reason."

Aspiration. Vee dreams to be successful. She measured success based upon generational wealth. She wants to create wealth for her family and their children. And above all, she wants to buy some land, so that her people can have a stable place to live. College access is very important to her because she believes a train mind can help one to further accumulate wealth for themselves.

8. Gee: The Caring Socialite

Digging deeper into Gee's story revealed strengths such as the ability to adapt and navigate multiple spaces, the capacity to love big, confidence, resourcefulness, and a strong awareness of social capital support. Gee values helping people through service and giving back and he values the skills of clinical social workers. With supports, like friends, a supportive maternal figure and community organizations, he accessed resources such as opportunities to develop professional skills, a space for personal development, and a stable place to reside.

Gee is 24 years old, from Honolulu, Hawaii. He works in the Department of Children, Youth and Families and collects data for a national transition database. He also oversees a youth leadership training program of a youth advocacy board. For fun, he likes to go out and socialize. Spending time with friends, listening to music, doing outdoor activities and playing video games are things he enjoys as a good time. One thing that keeps him going is helping people. He is passionate about giving back through service. His passion stems from the value he recognized within his own personal experience of having someone to help him.

Seed of Triumph, Strengths, Values, Resources and Supports. The seed of triumph that provoked a significant moment of growth within Gee's life was planted the first day he started on his foster care advocacy board, HI HOPES Youth Leadership Board. He claimed it as the most significant part of his life because of his growth as a professional and person. He became more confident as a speaker, was allotted opportunities for travel, and trained to be an

improved advocate. He also met a number of people he considered special in that space, associated with the Jim Case Youth Opportunities Initiative.

Item of Value and Value Given To Item by Participant. Gee's item of value was a Greenbay Packers Lantern that his cousin gifted him, upon graduation from his community college with his associates degree.

> *"I'm a big fans of the Packers and this also have significant meaning for me. This was the year the Packers won the Super Bowl against the Steelers and I was excited. She got this for me as a gift. And I've had this for six years ever since. To remind me of the Super Bowl victory as well as to remind me of the bond that I have with my cousin."*

Aspiration. Gee is interested in going back to school to become a licensed clinical social worker to be a therapist and help other teenagers and some adults. He wants to be financially stable and live comfortable, which looks like working one job and being able to spend money to travel.

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Cross Case Theme Analysis of Data

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Cross case theme analysis is used to facilitate the comparison of commonalities and differences in the story's that reveal the strengths, values, resources, and supports of former foster youth. Engaging in cross case theme analysis extends the concepts constructed from the single cases to reveal new dimensions and enhance the understanding of how relationships may exist among the cases. To illustrate the relationship between the elements of developmental capital (strength, values, resources and supports) of the participants, this section focuses on three themes: Uprooted, Regrounded, and Growing. The themes aligns with the metaphor of a tree and

was chosen because of it is analogous representation of the study's narrative inquiry of the developmental capital of youth who are disconnected.

Uprooted reveals the socio-cultural influences of the participants' natural home, among their biological family. The theme also highlights the systematic barriers and challenges faced by the participants because of their socioeconomic status. Regrounding as a theme captures how the young adults were able to rebalance after the major shift of placement into a new environment, separate from their natural homes. The theme encapsulates a significant moment, within the storytellers' lives that creates an experience of triumph or fulfillment, nurturing elements of the environment as explained by the participants and description of people who helped the participants rise above a sticky situation. The third major theme, Growing, illustrates how young people developed beyond their trauma and pushed passed the negative outcomes they are frequently associated with to their current status. The theme encapsulates the young adults' aspirations, their personal strengths, how someone else has benefited from their strengths, and the participants' messages related to what they believe people should know about the developmental capital of youth who have experienced foster care.

One idea that became apparent across the primary themes of uprooted, regrounded, and growing is the concept of development oriented towards the participants building personal versus interpersonal themes. The personal and interpersonal themes are intertwine and constant throughout the stories of the participants and are highlighted (see the regrounded and growing section) to organize the collective experiences of the storytellers.

Uprooted. The nature of the concept of the storytellers' being uprooted is based on their social economic status, as youth who are disconnected, resulting from the systematic barriers and challenges faced. The review of literature groups the population of interest in this study, youth

who are disconnected, and more specifically youth in foster care based on normative labels used in various fields from federal policy to academic disclosure, such as 'socially excluded', 'hard to reach', and the 'youth underclass' (MacDonald, 2008). The barriers these youth and young adults face in this shared social class of marginalization are essential characteristics of the perception of the population.

Barriers that characterize the population by the way of being associated with youth who are disconnected, include detachment from school, work, or housing. In this study, the characterization of disconnected youth is expanded beyond challenges related to school and work. Systematic barriers discussed by storytellers in the narrative inquiry included, but were not limited to poverty, lack of financial resources, drugs within communities, housing issues that can be traced back to the lack of owning property, and discriminating environments. For example, Karima shared,

> *"Granted, I'm not saying crack dealing is the way to go about it, you can go get a loan or some shit, but that positively influenced me because it set me on the path of having an independent spirit I never wanted to be a dope girl, because I don't like talking to or being around dope fiends because they steal, but I always felt like from the business point so many of those guys and men, and this is off the subject, but there are so much talent in the black community. That shit ain't easy. Crack is everywhere. Think about it. It's an over exploited industry. You have to find your niche then make a profit on it, when you can literally get crack in the hood anywhere."*

To further understand the nature of the participants being uprooted within this study, the elements of the interview, roots, have been highlighted. Roots of a tree often symbolizes a link to

one's past and showing connections between one's struggles and aspirations. The roots section was aimed to reveal the socio-cultural influences on the participants, through asking, "How did your biological family positively support your progress?" The original network and fundamental support of the participants were highlighted to share the general origins of the youth. Within the study, the characterization of youth who are disconnected is operationalized more so related to the connection youth have with their biological families and state child welfare agencies. A key characteristic of the participants elected for the study was a nontraditional relationship with their parents (as compared to the dominant population: youth with their biological parents).

In summary, participants shared a general hesitation to answer the question given the disconnection from their original network. The question prompted thoughts related to benefits of their biological family that had not been thought of before. Initially the responses started at a place where positive influences could not be seen. In the words of Adrian, "It sounds funny because you are asking an uprooted person, what are their roots… we were torn from our roots, we had to root ourselves in each other." More attention was given to the fact that the young person had risen from the space of their origins with their biological families. Many of the participants spoke to the value of avoiding drugs, diminished resources, and mental, physical, and spiritual negative effects of poor environments as a value of leaving their original network. For example, Sam shared,

> "*so my original network did not exist when I went into care. I was second*
>
> *generation foster child, so they come into the picture later. But the way that they*
>
> *supported me, in a sense, is that they motivated me to be different. So like I grew*
>
> *up with all my aunts and uncles and birth mom were all in car. In the California*
>
> *system and also the Chicago system, so the system had failed them a lot. And*

that's something that I learned early on. I learned to make decisions differently

than they did. I learned how to stay away from relationships that I saw were

partaking a lot and stay away from drugs and alcohols and getting married too

young and things like that. So they weren't necessarily in my life but they had a

huge impact because I just wanted to do whatever was the opposite they did."

Their biological family often served as the basis to understanding the value of establishing

healthy boundaries. Sarah shared,

"She still wanted me to parent her, because we were still connected while we

were in foster care, even tho I wasn't connected to the rest of my family. So I did

continue to take care of her. Like as soon as I got my license I was picking her

up from her placement everyday, taking her to school, and other things that I

naturally did. And as an adult I was like this is crazy, I'm kinda your mom. I

don't know if this is healthy. And so I tried to break away from that and say we

need to be sisters… I think sometimes it can be a weakness when I let myself get

too deep in worrying how other people feel."

Sarah's understanding of the power of self -care stemmed from lessons of the downfalls

to worrying too much about others. The ideology of the survival of the fittest appeared as one

became more aware of self and separate from the collective they were among. However, the

opportunity to care for others also provoked many positive elements.

After digging deeper and even asking about the positive effects of the lack of interaction

with the biological family more responses emerged. Within their original network, intrinsic

sensibilities, such as empathy, kindness, cooperativeness, integrity, gratitude, commitment, and

vision emerged. Those close to their family spoke to valuing spending quality family time,

which further helped them socialize and be more comfortable. Aside the stress associated with the pressure of responsibility, several of the participants spoke to early opportunities to participate in problem solving and positively effecting their homes and those within their close knit communities. Some of the young adults reflected and remembered a time of using their resources to benefit family members. Early parentification sometimes resulted in the practice of handling business interactions, often exemplified through paying utilities bills. Many of the participant developed skills in using allocating and maximizing resources. For example, Sarah shared,

> *"I was the parent. I was the parentified kid just because that was the strength I*
> *had and still have. I was the one that kept everything together. You know when*
> *utilities bills were paid and things were getting shut off and you had to stretch*
> *the food stamps. I was the kid, while my mom was off doing her thing, I was like*
> *alright, Ima figure this out."*

The basis of the uprooted section speaks to how the youth were disconnected from original networks and fundamental support. Attention is often times given to the reason the shift from one space to another was justified. However, the purpose of this section is to highlight the value within the space, prior to the move. Exposure to macro social and environmental factors within the homes of their original networks/biological families inspired elements of their passion points related their advocacy. For example, Vee spoke to how issues of mass incarceration affected her family by removing a love one from her house and that inspired her to help people visit their love ones. Karima spoke to how the issues related to poverty inspired her to help others be able to have social mobility through her professional endeavors. The fundamental support from the biological family often was mentioned by several participants to come in the

form of allowing and supporting one to follow their dreams. For some of the storytellers, motivation to be their best selves, to achieve higher quality of living emerged from their original support or biological family.

Regrounded. To understand the nature of the participants being regrounded within this study, the elements of interview, seed, ground, and stem have been grouped together. Those sections were pieced together to illustrate the nature of how the young adults were able to catch their footing or rebalance after a major shift. Symbolically, when thinking of a tree or plant being regrounded, attention is given to the roots being shifted from one space of nourishment to another.

The seed section aimed to reveal a significant moment within their lives to serve as the core of the conversation. Participants were asked to describe a significant moment within their life that created a seed of triumph, glory, fulfilment, or health to match the theme of using an anti-deficit lens. For the sake of succinct presentation, as opposed to sharing the details of all participants' responses, examples will be given that fall into either the commonality of personal or interpersonal development categories.

The commonality of the interpersonal development examples come from the stories of Karima and Key. Their examples of the significant moments within their lives that created a seed of fulfillment were related to others becoming aware of their situation and connectivity arising through overcoming hardships. Moments of significance that emerged in Karima's story started during the phase of reunification with her biological parent. The hard transition with her housing plan, by the way of eviction, resulted in public awareness of the lack of resources within their home.

"Like our shit was out there, people coming up asking how much you want for

that TV. How much you want, what's that, how much you want for this. Tryna

hustle, get their money up, I remember at 11 like, I didn't know anything about

negotiation, I really didn't know how much it cost for a TV, but I realize like ok

even when you're down you can always come back up. You can hustle your

way."

The experience presented an opportunity of understanding of economics as people barter money

for her belongings. Key's moment of significance materialized through pubescent development

of trial and error. Her teenage pregnancy presented a greater opportunity to seek resources,

understand the value of resources, asses the quality of people's character and their resources, and

prevent future damage in a love one's life.

"Being as it wasn't my time to be a mom, you know, or I didn't feel it was my

time. Finding a family who generally cares for somebody else, outside of

themselves, who is completely unselfish, who took her in knowing she has her

differences and she's coming from a different background or a different

bloodline, it was in itself just an amazing way to see how people come together

from different places and can still care from one another. It's the one thing that

does give me pleasure knowing that regardless of what's going on in my life my

daughter is fine."

The communality of personal development that emerged in the examples of Adrian and

Marissa's significant moment were related to a deeper level of their inner selves emerging.

Adrian spoke to the significance of having a teacher recognize his spiritual state and support him

spiritually by extending the opportunity for him to practice spiritual acts. Having the support of

the teacher during such a trying time inspired Adrian to be spiritually supportive to others. *"It showed me the impact I can have on someone when they are feeling down because I felt the impact that she made on me."* Marrisa's violation of personal space, sparked her greater voice and the value of voice in general. The act ignited a passion to empower others and was a moving force with her advocacy. The development of her story inspired her to want to develop the stories of others.

Undertones of the experiences that at first glance, might be perceived as traumatic, are moments of triumph, fulfillment, glory, and the development of health. The send of transitioning from their natural homes, often shook things up and sometimes to the point of the identification or the development of their capital. The participants shared significant moments that started from a number of different places and phases in their life. The trend amongst all participants was the fact that these moments were elements of their personal story and these moments were recognized by the participants as places where growth commenced.

The ground section of the interview aimed to reveal resources available to the participants within the space they grew. To get a better understanding of how the group was nurtured and positioned to grow, participants were asked to talk about nurturing elements of the environment. The commonality of the interpersonal development examples within the ground section come from the stories of Sarah and Sam. The nurturing environment of Sarah's school and her alternative home provided the opportunity for her to interact with peers with diverse experiences. Sarah spoke to how her group of friends were really helpful in her ability to rise above. She had the ability to hang with kids her age and be normal. She shared,

> *"You know rather than after school, having to go hang out with a therapist and*
>
> *take your meds and blah, blah, blah. It wasn't like you was a foster kid all in the*

face all the time. You know I had that space to be a normal teenager and that

made a big difference."

Each of Sam's foster homes encouraged her to be a part of the larger community and were supportive in their own way. She shared, "A lot of the time I had true friendship and I was seen as a human being in those environments… Each family pushed me to move beyond the stereotype of a foster child or what was generally expected of me because I was a foster child."

The communality of personal development emerged in the examples of Vee and Gee as they discussed elements of their environment that were nurturing. While Vee's school environment gave many examples of people who "came from nothing and made something", and allowed space for her creativity to flourish and provided equipment for her creative skills, she valued more the elements of her home environment. It provided the space to have the freedom to think and stability. She shared,

> "*Because I was bartering, where I was working with somebody for a place to live, I built a relationship with the person so it was a pretty stable place for me to live. I wasn't stressed about getting put out. So that's why I would say it was stable. Somebody that actually cared about seeing me grow."*

Gee credited the foster care system environment for maturing him faster than other adolescents.

> "*Like I got thrown in when I was 14 and I had to learn how to be an adult and look after myself because I didn't have my dad or mom to bail me out of situations and I had to be tough. You know, foster care is not something I want to go through again and it's not something I want the next person to go through, but it really helped mold me into who I am. And helped me to become resilient: withstand all the pain, hurt, and trauma."*

Gee also spoke to the importance of stability through his foster mom. He shared,

> *"In a time where that was the roughest journey of my life really showed me*
>
> *hope and really motivated me. And because she gave me a place to stay and she*
>
> *was nurturing and she looked after me, having my best interest I was able to*
>
> *focus more on other things like school and the board as well."*

A set of primary elements of nurturing environments that came up in participants' stories is stability and motivation. The commonalities of personal and interpersonal development revealed how the spaces occupied by the participants provided inspiration to improve their quality of living through application of creative strengths.

The section that shaped and revealed the support available to the young adults is the stem. To get an understanding of how one was able to rise above, participants were asked to speak to how an entity, rather individual or organization, helped them to rise above a sticky situation. The commonality of the interpersonal development examples within the stem section come from the stories of Gee and Key. Gee spoke to the help he received help from professionals and friends when experiencing a tough break up.

> *"It was the same feeling when I was put into the system and abandoned, left by*
>
> *my parents. The same thing was triggered in me and I didn't know how to cope*
>
> *in it. I have to say that was the most defining moment in my life, the lowest I've*
>
> *ever been, but also the most defining and strongest moment. Knowing how to*
>
> *build social support systems also proved to be helpful during this time. Here I*
>
> *had to start from the ground up and go socialize and also stay in touch with*
>
> *people back home and let them know, hey man I'm not going thru the best*

moments right now, can I talk to you and process some of this right now. So my

social capital system was able to help me get out the situation."

Key recognized her grandparents as important to helping her to be able to leave from one un-

nurturing space to a nurturing space. Through them, she had the ability to relocate a number of

times, a number of ways. She shared,

"And those resources had to do with my grandparents as well as my friends. I

had them to count on to support me. So if I needed a place just to be, crash, and

be to myself, somebody would be like ok Kesha, we got you, you can come over

for a little bit. ... Crashing, meaning, where I could come and go as I please, if

need be. I had access to vehicles. Their food. Things like that."

The communality of personal development in this section related to the stem emerged in the

examples of Vee and Marrisa, where the support led them to feeling kind and strengthened. "I

know my kindness and all of that comes from the little moments I had with my grandparents

throughout my life. … when I would be around them, I felt calm." Marrisa shared her

grandparents were kind, loving and comfortable people. She also acknowledged her advocate

supervisor as significantly supportive. "She was super open and she allowed an open space for

me without judgement. And when someone does that it creates a whole life change when you

never experienced that." Vee shared, "I feel like connecting with my dad has strengthened me a

lot." Vee's father played a significant role in making her capable of facing her fears, fixing

things and seeing the world in a practical way. Vee also mentioned her mentors played a

significant role in helping her develop her technique of accomplishing goals.

"I'm still working on that technique, but my mentor has been very analytical of

my behavior and certain things that I would do. And she would come and tell

me that you are very impulsive and you need to slow down and plan stuff out

before you make a decision. That has helped me."

The commonality of personal and interpersonal development revealed how various elements of the storytellers' social networks aligned with the stem metaphor and supported them to rise above sticky situations. The quality of the relationships available to the young adults aided in their sense of belonging and offered protective factors tied to their social environment.

The purpose of the regrounded section speaks to the ability of youth and young adults, once in the custody of the state, to shift from their natural homes to other environments and find nourishment. The nourishment or developmental capital in this section is based on a significant moment that provoked human triumph or health; resources available to the youth, and support that helped during a trying time. The seed of the conversation ranged in positive experiences. Some of the experiences could be considered traumatic, but through the pain of the experiences, participants spoke to being provoked to take a step towards fulfillment. The resources available to the youth, as they transitioned into adulthood, empowered the storytellers, by setting a stage for success. The young adults with foster care experience also had supporters to circumvent obstacles that might cause them to feel stuck at a stage in their development. Examples of supports ranged from biological family members to friends, educators, and other professionals. The narrative inquiry revealed that after being uprooted from their natural homes with their biological family, youth with experience in foster care find factors to balance their experience, meet their needs, and help them meet their goals.

Growing. To understand the participants' growing nature, within this study, the elements of the interview: trunk, branches, fruits, and leaves have been grouped together. Those

sections were pieced together to illustrate the nature the young people continued to develop beyond their trauma and negative outcomes with which they are often associated.

The trunk connects the top of the tree to its roots. In the metaphor of this study, the trunk section aims to reveal the participants' interest, and even more, their aspirations. To understand this key element to individuals, they were asked, "What are you dreams?" The commonality of the interpersonal development examples within the trunk section come from the stories of Marrisa and Adrian, who both hold interest in youth development. Adrian aspires to open a group home for children who are not often accepted by foster parents. He shared, "I want to give them people who have had the experiences they have who can feed into a spirit that uplifts. I want to give them the right tools and take them everywhere and I want to make my childhood dreams come true." Marrisa aspires to open a non-profit to empower young women. She shared, "I don't want girls to walk around in a world where they feel like they aren't pretty enough, or smart enough, or that they don't belong there. I want to create rock solid women."

The commonality of the personal development examples within the trunk section came from the stories of Sam and Key, who share the common desire of resting in their being. Sam was interested in presenting a higher caliber of her professional self. At the time of questioning, Sam was at a pinnacle in her life and was ready to write her memoir and start a family. As it related to her memoir, she wanted to increase her professional engagement with public policy.

> *"In the last couple of years, I felt like I was only seen as a former foster youth*
>
> *or like people in the foster care ministry only sees me as having experience with*
>
> *foster care. I wanted to become more qualified with that so I feel in love with*
>
> *public policy and wanted to move beyond the stigma attached to me because of*
>
> *my foster care experience."*

Key aspires to be happy. "That means, doing what I choose to do without judgement, without interrogation, without having to report to anyone, being independent, [having the space to be] an individual." She looks forward to doing what she believes is best for herself including using her preferred way to relax. "When I'm around certain people, I don't open up as much if I'm like talking to you sober. But me with the euphoric moment, it'll just come out. Everything that I'm feeling and everything that's on my mind comes out a lot easier."

The interests and aspirations of the young adults, rather personal or interpersonal, is a force that keeps them going. Their dreams are a source of motivation and are essential to their development of moving beyond the risk factors working toward promoting negative outcomes.

Branches on a tree often symbolizes balance. Within this study, the branches aim to reveal the personal strengths of the participants. They were asked, "What are some personal strengths that helped you to reach your dreams?" The commonality of the interpersonal development examples within the branches section come from the stories of Adrian and Gee and related to what it takes to be connected and family-like. The first strength Adrian mentioned spoke to his conviction. "My mind is made up and I don't care if I sound crazy… Everyone at the cusp of progression, sounds crazy." In conversation of leading people, he spoke to customs he would share.

> *"The customs will be treat people right. Don't kill anyone, don't steal from*
>
> *them, don't hate on them. Don't rape them. Don't be greedy. And that's*
>
> *essentially what a family is, but I think we have moved from that and people*
>
> *don't understand that you are creating your own world, your lineage."*

When asked about his personal strengths, Gee shared, "Being vulnerable and being open and accepting the help from people. I think vulnerability is a strength. A lot of people don't think of

it as a strength because they think if you are vulnerable you are weak, but I think it is strength in having the courage to ask for help and support." Other personal strengths he mentioned included ambition, optimism, and resilience.

The commonality of the personal development examples, within the branches section, come from the stories of Karima and Sarah, who both spoke to their personal strengths contributing to their ability to persevere. Karima recognized herself first as innovative and preserving. She shared, "If I can't go left, I'll find a way to go right then left. And I think I don't stay down for long." Other personal strengths she identified included being confident, literate, and having the ability to figure things out. Sarah's first set of strengths included being empathetic and having the strength to establish healthy boundaries.

> "*My empathy has been super useful to me in every area of my life. I've used it in more intentionally in my professional world because before this job now I was case managing girls who were aging out of foster care. And now I'm working with young people with mental health issues. It's easy for me to do that, take a walk in someone else's shoes, so it's been helpful in building rapport in getting young people to trust me.*"

Sarah identified reflection, self-care, optimism, and patience as other personal strengths. The identification of strengths expands the narrative of the nature of youth with foster care experience beyond a deficit perspective. Highlights of the personal strengths of the participants revealed capabilities with respect to intellect, creativity, and skills associated with specific disciplines among youth with foster care experiences. Strengths mentioned that helped the participants to reach their dreams could be separated into strengths that were personal, interpersonal, or occupational. Occupational strengths render income. Interpersonal strengths

influence the quality of interactions with others, and personal strengths are tied to concepts of self. Some disciplines that emerged in discussion of the participants' skill included social services, marketing and business, art, cinematography, and web design. Interpersonal strengths that emerged included, but were not limited to were the ability to decode body language, community building values, resource identification and allocation to those in need, ability to work with diverse personalities, and willingness to impose justice.

The fruit section was crafted to highlight how the storytellers used their strengths to enhance the lives of others. To examine the power and value of participants' strengths, the relevant elements that benefited others were highlighted. Participants were asked to share how someone else had benefited from the strengths that emerged from their experience in foster care. The commonality of the interpersonal development examples within the fruit section come from the stories of Karima and Sarah. Karima said she has attempted to help develop the business of everyone with whom she comes in contact and understand what they are about. The help she provides stems from her understanding of how money and power are connected and often come in the form of technical marketing and general business consultation. She also spoke to helping young girls who have experienced trauma, by sharing her story with a hope of serving as a sense of "you can always get there. There is somebody who has done it before you." Sarah spoke to how she was currently serving 35 girls aging out of foster care on her caseload. She shared how one girl in particular had a bleak perspective that she once had. It wasn't until after Sarah shared pieces of her story that the girl was taken aback that a person she looked up to had a similar experience. "Her behavior changed as she began to believe that she too could excel beyond her experience."

The commonality of the personal development examples within the fruit section come from the stories of Key and Adrian. Key shared how her daughter had benefited from the way she connects. Now in elementary school, her daughter makes friends similar to Key.

> *"Her [adoptive] mom tells me that she just went into this room and it was her*
>
> *first day. And you know she was looking forward to the by mommy I'ma miss*
>
> *you and a horrible cry. Bye mom, that was it. Immediately she [Key's daughter]*
>
> *walked in the first girl she saw, your hair is nice and that is exactly what I*
>
> *would have done. And whether it was a lie or not, that was the true innocence in*
>
> *it of her connecting with people."*

Key has also encouraged her young sister to open up more to connect with more people to accomplish her goals. Initially, Adrian had a hard time speaking to how other had benefited from his strengths because "people don't really say hey you blessed me that helped [x, y, z]." However, he felt that he helped people as they hear his story and bear witness to his spirit. "Sometimes all you can give is the vision of yourself. I just want to show people you can have a happy spirit."

Similar to others, youth with foster care experience use their strengths to influence the lives of others. Sometimes the impact made is intentional and sometimes the impact is made as a by-product of the values of the individual. The range of people impacted by the participants in this study spanned across biological relatives, community members or people in close proximity, individuals with similar backgrounds and those they serve via their occupations. Recognizing the impact of youth with experience in the foster care, beyond costing society money or serving as a burden to their caretakers expands the narrative of the youth to a more positive orientation.

Like leaves fall from trees into various territories, pieces of the participants were extracted to share across spaces. For the leaves section, participants were asked to share messages related to what they would like people to know about the strengths and resources of individual with experience in foster care. The commonality of the personal development examples within the leaves section came from the stories of Marrisa and Sam, who speak to the power of listening to the voices of youth in foster care. Marrisa shared, "some people can be pushed in the dirt and still rise a better mindset than expected." For her, those who with experience in care, who advocate for foster youth, inspire people to change and be their organic, authentic self. "It's probably the most organic, authentic shit you will ever hear coming out someone mouth. Like instead of hearing sob stories, you hear the real stories going on there. Organic." Sam says too often children in foster care are case numbers and do not see them as children. Not seeing them as children keeps people from letting them be children. She wants people to know it's important to help youth identify their strengths so that they can use them to face their own problems. For those who may not know how to identify the youth strengths, Sam recommends just asking the youth. Instead of emphasizing the fact that they are in care and the deficits of their parents, she thinks there is more value in asking the youth, "What do you like about yourself? What do think are good things about yourself"?

The commonality of the interpersonal development examples within the leaves section come from the stories of Vee and Gee, who want to debunk the myths of the nature of youth in foster care behavior. Vee wants people to understand that "youth who are placed in care are not by default lazy or trouble makers." She shares the youth often work harder than the average person because of their needs. Having to meet their needs, results in these youth being vigilant, in the sense they have ability to identify manipulative and controlling people with bad intentions.

She says, "Youth tend to do well dealing with people and their personalities as a result of having to deal with so many." Gee spoke to youth in foster being exceptionally resourceful and resilient because without parents to bail them out of certain situations and provide basic support. He believes many of the youth are very skilled at using what they have and doing the best with it. He also wants people to know that "youth with experience in foster care have the capacity to love big." He believes, the defensive mechanism to being betrayed causes people to feel like the youth are shut out, stuck up, and closed. Gee says, "the hurt cause them to tread lightly, but they are some of the biggest lovers in society."

Clear insight and knowledge is attained when youth are asked directly about what professionals and others who wield power over the vulnerable populations should know about their strengths and resources. The responses to the question reflect the youth's understanding of their situations and the impact of the perceptions of the authority figures within their lives. The messages included in this study touched on themes of individuality, the need for room to exhibit developmentally appropriate behavior, recognition of traits associated with potential to do well versus at risk behavior, and the need for trauma-informed professionals with the ability to recognize maladaptive strengths.

Within the major themes of the study, Uprooted, Regrounded and Growing, are the metaphorical elements that break down the developmental capital of the participants. Using an anti-deficit approach, the strengths, values, resources, and supports of youth with foster care experiences emerged as their developmental capital was matched analogously to a parts of a tree to organize and form the comprehensive narrative of the storytellers of the study. Participant profile descriptions were detailed for the eight young adults with foster care experience. For the cross case themes analysis, to succinctly report the finding, instead of listing all the participants'

responses for each section, four examples were presented and parsed into commonalities of personal and interpersonal development. The developmental capital highlighted in the findings included the socio-cultural influences from the biological family, a significant moment of triumph glory, fulfillment, or health, nurturing elements of their environments, supports to rise above sticky situations, aspirations, personal strength, influence, and messages of the participants related to the strengths of youth in foster care.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Fruits of Our Labor – The Discussion

The intent of this discussion aligns with the constructivist approach to offer perspective and to encourage dialogue among perspectives rather than aim at a singular truth and linear predictions (Patton, 2015). Uprooted, Regrounded and Growing: An Anti-Deficit Approach to Understanding the Developmental Capital of Youth with Foster Care Experience is a study that provides a rudimentary review of the positive influences on the lives of a people on the edge of social norms. The purpose of the study was to gain insight from the personal experience and perspective about the strengths, interest, and supports of youth with foster care experience. Youth who are disconnected, like foster youth, have unique experiences that lend to their competence, values, supports, resources, and strengths. This narrative inquiry explored the past lived experiences of young adults to better understand the elements lending to the positive nature of their social status, cumulatively known as developmental capital. The problems that precipitated the study were rooted in the gap in the literature associated with the positive side of the abilities of youth who are disconnected. While existing literature highlights the deficient statuses associated with youth in foster care, this study aims to shift the tone associated with the capital of disconnected populations by focusing on youth voice, lived experiences, and elements that increase one's health, happiness, productivity, and peace.

This study provided a collection of narratives, assembled with an anti-deficit perspective, from the vantage point of those from a marginalized population. The narrative inquiry

empowered young adults with prior involvement in the foster care system to shift to a more positive orientation of the experiences of individuals associated with a disconnected population.

Comparison: Findings contrary to existing literature

The literature review revealed that when considering the status of health of youth, useful information is often extracted from their social histories. The National Resource for Diligent Recruitment (2015) discussed how significant events and circumstances from a child's past are examined through the identification of stressors, issues, and need assessments. The definition of youth who are disconnected is rooted in the major barriers to finding a path to stable adult life (Bloom, 2010; Fernandes-Alcantara, 2015; MacDonald, 2008; Manpower Research Corporation, 2013). MacDonald (2008) described some normative labels used in literature related to youth who are disconnected to include, 'hard to help', 'socially excluded', and 'the youth underclass'. Contrary to the existing literature, this study moves beyond a deficit perspective and does not described the youth as individuals who have presumed social dislocation from others. Instead, the range of similarities are highlighted in conversation about their resources, supports, strengths, values and competencies.

Gaps in literature being bridge through findings

The social constructivist theoretical approach respects that knowledge is actively constructed by individuals in response to interactions with environmental stimuli. Despite having shared experiences, constructivist understand that each individual will base their meaning personal to them. This study uses a social constructivist approach to expand the empirical body of knowledge that exists about disconnected populations such as youth in foster care. It is more common of studies related to youth in foster to capture the voices of adults and authority figures,

such as caretakers, educators, and health and child welfare professionals. The current study illuminates the voices of the youth and young adults with direct experiences. By highlighting the perspectives of those with personal experience, the gap in a relational viewpoint is covered. Beliefs of youth with foster care experience are revealed. The literature review was organized in four categories, corresponding with the anti-deficit perspective of the major themes of the study: Uprooted, Regrounded, Growing.

Discussion of Uprooted

The section of the literature review, Uprooted, provided descriptions of disconnected youth, related to their social status, economic status, educational outcomes, and mental health. The section also discussed youth in foster care's participation in talent development and gifted programs. Within this dissertation, the stories of the participants reflected several elements that emerged in the literature related to nature of dis-connectivity. The participants of the study met the criteria of being youth who are disconnected, as defined by federal policy, and were selected for their experience of aging out of foster care. All eight of the participants also reported being youth from low income families and one participant mentioned being a teen parent.

The Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative 2016 Issue Brief provided descriptions of several social indicators related to youth in foster care. As it relates to permanency, within the study, three main types: legal, physical, and relational were present. Physical and relational permanency were indicated as most valued and important, within the stories of all the participants. In the stories of their stem or the entities that help them rise above a sticky situation, the young adults shared how much they valued love ones extending their house to provide them a home. Some relational permanency extended to youth obtaining physical permanency were

provided by mothers, grandparents, siblings, supervisors, social workers, clinical psychologists, community serving organizations, and friends. For example, Sam told the story of how her relationship with her social worker helped her be able to secure housing and access mental health services even after she aged out of care and her independent living program.

Several participants spoke to the enjoyment of activities that might aide in the status of their health. For example, Gee, Vee, Sarah, Adrian, Karima, Key, Sam, and Marrisa shared multiple ways they enjoyed outdoor activities, journaling/reflecting, spending time with friends or mentors, and participating in spiritual activities, such as reading the bible or attending church. Consistent with what the literature revealed about education leading to a career and achievement of financial goals, some participants also spoke to how educational spaces supported their happiness and wellbeing. Vee spoke to the value of the hands on experience, including access to equipment relevant to her field of interest and exposure to pathways of her interests provided through her teachers. The development she received through school was directly tied to the way she contributes to her community and family, as a writer, photographer and advocate.

Elements of social capital emerged through the narrative inquiry. The quality of relationships and the value of the resources made available through connections with people emerged in the study. Several of the narratives spoke to how the participants were able to develop as caring, confident, and competent as a result of positive connections with families and communities.

Discussion of Regrounded

The section spoke to the previous work related to viewing marginalized populations through an anti-deficit perspective. Similar to Harper (2010) and Stokes (2013), the focus of the

dissertation moves away from perceived weaknesses and barriers and is placed on strengths, resources, support, and values of the young adults with foster care experience. Within the study, highlighting strengths rather than the deficits of the participants sometimes resulted in participants juxtaposing their experiences/past circumstances to stereotypes associated with the image of the low class and others separate from the hegemony mainstream society. As a researcher, facilitation of critical self-reflection was essential to support the participants in challenging the dominant discourse of no value existing in the homes from where they were taken.

Participants highlighted moral, cultural, and behavioral strengths emerging from their original networks/fundamental support (closest to their biological families), internal characteristics, and some environments inhabited during their time in foster care. For example, Adrian initially struggled with providing the value of returning home to his old neighborhood after experiencing foster care. Upon returning, he recognized the barren nature of his home. Asked how his biological family influenced the way he regrounded himself, he shared that he gained the ability to avoid drugs and was reminded of the quality of his spirit in contrast to the environment. The anti-deficit perspective helped to further highlight the developmental capital within the young adults' lives.

Discussion of Growing

This section provided an analysis of the gifts, strengths, and talents associated with populations that are disadvantaged. To illustrate the themes of gifts, strengths, and talents associated with populations that are disconnected, a quote from each participant was used. The gifts, strengths, and talents were matched to literature from gifted education including,

Torrance's (1964) Creative Positives and Frasier et al (1995) Traits, Aptitudes, and Behaviors. From sociological literature, Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model was included.

Several elements discussed within Torrance's (1964) Creative Positives emerged in the narrative of the participants. For example, Vee proved to have the creative positive of the ability to improvise with common place objects as she discussed being frugal and building her fashion without purchasing clothes. She credited her home state as an origin of the skill.

> *"Living in Detroit, like they call us 'Hustle City' because people will find a way to make some money out of nothing. Like literally one day I seen a sign that said boo locked up, license suspended, we can get you there. So helping people visit their love ones in prison was a business. Everybody is an entrepreneur here in some type of way."*

Adrian illustrated the creative positive of emotional responsiveness as he described the feelings associated with his father's passing. He also spoke to how others interpreted his emotional expressions.

> "My whole life that spirit that has been in me people have witness that and that's what drew people too me that helped me get above situations. That fight that people saw in me it's like they knew where I was going to be in the end and they knew their role was to help me get there. And they knew because they bear witness to my spirit. They could feel my spirit no matter how my physical was, no matter the situation I was currently in, they knew my spirit and knew there's something unshakeable. And this is my perspective, and I've been told this too. People have helped me to get through sticky situations because of my spirit.

Because of how they felt when they talked to me or what they knew or felt like

they knew from speaking with me. I don't know how to explain that better."

Karima demonstrated the creative positive of having storytelling capabilities when she shared her

item of valuable. In the following excerpt you can recognize elements of good storytelling such

as a premise, a protagonist, and conflict.

"It is my white teddy bear. His name is polar. I've had Polar since I was

probably 6 or 7 Everywhere I go he goes with me. What's funny about the story

of how I got polar is, you know how when you go to school and you suppose to

sell shit. You know they give you one of those booklets where you are to sell

something and folks supposed to donate to kids. Well my family wasn't trying

to buy nothing. And so I remember I had the book and I just wanted to

contribute because you get tired of being the only person coming to school. And

you don't want to say, like well my mama don't go to church so I can't sell

anything, her work people don't like her, so I can't contribute to scholastic. I'm

not saving the whales somewhere. So my mother… I remembered I had asked

my father. I never had a close relationship with my father. I had begged her, if

you can't buy it maybe my father can. And so next couple of weeks later, I got

the bear polar. I wasn't very good at naming. She told me oh your father

brought this for you. So probably up until adulthood, I always thought my father

brought me the bear, my mother brought me the bear. She just told me my father

did it. And ever since then, I kid you not, this is the only thing I moved around,

being in foster care, I've been in like houses, I've been in a lot of places, but

Polar was the one thing that made it with me everywhere I went. Polar done

travel. He done been to countries. He's living a good life. Sometimes, I'm neglectful leaving him in the closet, but I visited you and he's in my bag. I wasn't prepared for this at all, but he made the trip. He's a reminder that no matter what, no matter what life journeys I have and everything I've seen through and I'm going through, there is consistency. There's purpose. There's something I can hold on to. That's the good times. I remember how excited I was when I thought my father bought it. He didn't buy shit basically, but I thought he did and that made me feel special."

Elements relevant to the Frasier et al (1995) Traits, Aptitudes, and Behaviors Referral Form, an observation tool used to recognize the potential of gifted students, emerged within the narratives shared by the participants. Participants demonstrated or spoke to the core attributes of giftedness, fundamental to TABs in alignment with Frasier's description. For example, Sam applied her problem solving skills through the poverty reduction department in which she works. She is a part of a team that provides emergency food, clothing, hygiene products, and household items in the largest food desert in her state. A key part of her problem solving skills is rooted in her ambition. She shared,

"I have a lot of drive. I also like to think things out. So I didn't just linger into school, I got my masters done in a year and a half. In undergrad I had a lot of drive to actually finish, I was rear-ended by a drunk driver after my freshman year. So there was a little bit of delay, but I still graduated on time, with a different degree then what I started with. I feel like I am an overcomer in a sense. I see a barrier, but I get through. I see what my resources are and what I need to accomplish goals and then I just get it done."

Sarah shared how she was motivated to help young girls who shared similar past experiences, as well as how she was able to motivate one of the girls to excel beyond her experience.

> "So concretely I can say I had 35 girls on my caseload when I was managing girls aging out of foster care in Hawaii. And I didn't tell all of them that I had been in foster care, but I did tell like five or six. And I remember one girl particularly. We were driving somewhere and she said, "How can I ever going to have a healthy life when this is what I came from and we were at a stop light." I turned to her and I said, "What do you mean." And she said," you wouldn't understand Sarah, you are normal." And I said, "I came from the same thing you did." I kinda disclose, yeah I've been in foster care and this is some general pieces of my experience. And she was like, wow and you are here. And I was like "yeah, I'm sitting here, right next you" And she was taken back that there was a person that she looked up to who had been through something similar to her."

Key's communication skills emerged in her stories of opening up to people. When discussing her strengths, she shared,

> "Networking. Open communication. I'm pretty much an open book and I feel like most people come into contact, like the other day I was chilling with some guy, he was Haitian, we had been talking for a little while. He wanted to hang out, I told him I don't feel comfortable going to his house. We met in a public parking lot, sat for two hours and just talked. He was like, you know I haven't talked to anyone since I've been here because I'm not trusting of everybody and you seem to be a cool person to just be able to open up to. So I think just being

myself, being open minded to other people and their situations, I think that also

allows me to come into other people world because they feel now they can open

up to me more and more. And that's fine."

The Growing section also includes highlights of the capital that influence the social status of participants. The term developmental capital is used in this study to describe the elements that contribute to the sustainability of one's social status over the course of changes within one's life. This is a term used by the researcher with the intent to highlight elements that increases one's health, happiness, peace, and productivity.

Focusing on the array of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities of the individuals with foster care experience aligns with the strength-based perspective of Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model. As described by Yosso (2005), capital emerged in the study in the form of aspirational, linguistic, familial, social capital, navigational, and resistance capital. Within the study, elements of capital from Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth emerge. Aspirational capital is illustrated in Marrisa's exclamation of her dreams. She shared,

"I want to open my own non-profit to help young women with everything that

your mom is supposed to teach you, kind of things. I don't know the name of it

yet. Like an empowerment to young girls. But my dreams are just to make a

difference. Like I don't want girls to walk around in a world where they feel

like they aren't pretty enough, or smart enough or that they don't belong there. I

want to create rock solid women. Like rock solid girls that aren't intimidated by

man or intimidated by what the boss say, or what people say to them at school. I

just want to create that for girls who don't have that or who don't see that in

themselves."

Navigational capital was found in Gee discussion in relation to having to find resources to help him through a tough situation. He shared,

>"Ok, I'm going to get deep and personal. I have to think Butlers hospital for helping me get out of my situation. Butler hospital is a mental facility. …After two weeks, my depression and anxiety was high. It was the same feeling when I was put into the system and abandoned, left by my parents. The same thing was triggered in me and I didn't know how to cope in it, so I checked into the financial program, I went there for a week long program and I learned about mental health and how to manage all of that. I have to say that was the most defining moment in my life, the lowest I've ever been, but also the most defining and strongest moment."

Implications and Recommendations for the Future

Few, other than those with the shared experience understand the positive influences and more specifically the developmental capital that is associated with being separated from one's biological parents. The interviews permitted inquiry into and understanding of the phenomenon studied. The study reveals that young adults with foster care experience, similar to all young adults, have a wide range of abilities that might be unique to their own interests and experiences. To understand the strengths, resources, supports, values, and competencies of disconnected populations, one would benefit from hearing from those with foster care experience. Considering the voices of the young adults with foster care experience, the following implications are suggested.

Informing Professionals Engaged with Youth In Foster Care About their Strengths.

Educators and child welfare professionals can benefit from support to understand practical techniques and strategies to recognize the developmental capital of youth who are disconnected such as youth in foster care. Existing techniques and strategies to increase cultural diversity and reduce disproportionality often have roots in expanding the perspective of the identifier of potential. As the understanding of the myriad of ways that strengths, gifts, and talents can be manifested through various traits, aptitudes, and behaviors is improved, the number of gifted recognized among disconnected populations can increase. It is recommended that educators and child welfare professionals are exposed to information related to the developmental capital of youth who are disconnected to increase this capital.

Providing exemplars of the ways the strengths of youth with foster care experience emerge, might help reduce the barriers inhibiting the pursuit of equity in gifted programs and participation in extracurricular activities which might increase developmental capital. Payne (2010) noted several barriers and contributing factors to disproportionality in gifted education among disadvantaged students such as deficit orientation, low expectations, and culturally bias assessments. It is recommended a coordinated approach taking into account referral processes, assessment, and identification is implemented. Exemplars of the developmental capital existing among youth in foster care might inform and serve as inspiration to constituents of youth who are disconnected to promote recognition and nurturing of potential in underserved populations. Informing educators and child welfare professionals of the strengths, values, competences, support, and resources of youth in foster care can increase the opportunities the youth have to increase their developmental capital, improve their quality of living, and enhance their social mobility. Professionals serving youth in foster care can be better informed of their strengths

though discussion of interpersonal dynamics between those with personal experiences and those who wish to serve individuals with the experience of interest. Such might be manifested through research and evaluation with youth in foster care instead of for the youth. Much can be learned through youth serving as co-researchers rather than as research participants. As the youth learn to think more systematically and gain knowledge, they can use these skills for their own purpose as well as gain research skills through participating in collaborative and participatory research. Child welfare professionals, educators, and inquirers can gain knowledge. The knowledge may be transferred into data, publications, and advancement of a field.

Characteristics of Accomplishment of Natural Growth vs. Characteristics of Concerted Cultivation Revealed.

While sharing childhood stories, the participants' reflected on how their development was socially situated and shared details of the experience of childrearing while distant from their biological family. Upbringing or how one experiences child rearing is an element of human development that influences how one is socially situated rather directly or indirectly to their social status. Through descriptions of past social interactions within their lives, elements of developmental capital, related to the childrearing experience of former foster youth were revealed.

Though this study offers a different methodology and context, details related to the accomplishment of natural growth and concerted cultivation within the context of foster care can be extrapolated to understand the nature of how their upbringing increased their developmental capital. Lareau (2003) recognized two forms of childrearing related to promoting children's talent: concerted cultivation and accomplishment of natural growth. The key element of

concerted cultivation spoke to how parents actively foster and asses a child's talents, opinions, and skills. The key element to accomplishment of natural growth spoke to how parents care for the child which allows a child to grow. Lareau (2003) posits middle-class parents engage in concerted cultivation by attempting to develop children's talents through organized leisure activities and extensive reasoning. On the other hand, she theorized parents who are working class and poor engage in the accomplishment of natural growth where leisure activities are left to the children themselves (Lareau, 2003). The dimensions Lareau mentioned that distinguished concerted cultivation from accomplishment of natural growth included organization of daily life, language use, social connections, and interventions in institutions.

For example, participants of this study shared supports made through their unique experience of being separated from their biological parents. Because of lack of financial resources, engagement with community members such as the small business owners and local drug dealers that Karima mentioned provided insight that helped her navigate real life problems. For Key, navigating homelessness helped her learn how to build relationships with people with resources as well as with people with shared and different experience as her own. Vee discussed how serving her community helped her further develop her skills as a magazine editor, photographer, and web designer.

One implication of this study plays to how the examination of social situations of youth in foster care reveals elements of accomplishment of natural growth. Lareau's (2003) examination of the micro-interactions between parents, their children, and their activities revealed relations with people and trust in practices of schooling. When children partake in experiences under Lareau's childbearing framework of accomplishments of natural growth their organization of daily life and experience with language use differs than the childrearing approach

of concerted cultivation. According to Lareau, youth of working class parents are more likely to turn responsibility of educating their students to the school, as opposed to middle class parents who intervene more with the school. Such dynamics offer an opportunity for institutions to make room for the conditions that promote natural growth to exist to develop creative strengths and allow to flourish valuable elements that the institution's space might demote. For example, schools could offer free time to allow students to have unstructured time for accomplishments of natural growth to emerge. The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry notes that unstructured time reduces children's anxiety and diminishes stress. Unscheduled time can encourage play, which leads to increased competencies, leadership skills and lifelong hobbies. The time for accomplishments of natural growth can help youth learn to enjoy being in their own company, entertain themselves and develop identity.

The elements of natural growth make room to pay respect to Dewey's (1938) understanding that experiences have no preordained value. Dewey posited the value of experience is to be judged by the effect that experience has on the individual's present, their future, and the extent to which they can contribute to society. Dewey recognized that what can be rewarding for one person could be a detrimental experience for another. More structured space, such as the classroom, often prefers for children to be quiet, obedient, and respective of the social nature of the space. This can be difficult for students who have more fulfilling experiences in third spaces, spaces between school and work where youth are not necessarily subjected to institutionalization. Time spent outside, among peers, such as cousins, and lightly supervised might allow youth to be more expressive, independent thinking, and active in influencing the nature of the space they inhabit. Such characteristics might be supported within spaces of

concerted cultivation, if the conditions are set to be open to the diversity of expression of the developmental capital of youth who are disconnected.

Youth who are Disconnected, Not Just Youth in Foster Care.

Are there other disconnected populations who can benefit from an anti-deficit perspective of their strengths and resources to render better social outcomes? The term youth who are disconnected is used so often throughout this study because the researcher's general population of interest lies with a larger population of youth, beyond those involved with the child welfare system. The term is used to describe those who relate more to the experience of an upbringing less aligned with the cultural logic of the larger social system in which they are expected to survive. The definition was chosen to align with the constructivist interest of how youth marginalize to the dominant social class make sense of their developmental capital.

Lareau (2003) characterized natural growth as an upbringing used primarily by the working-class and poor families marked by the use of scarce resources to take care of their children, permission of free time for the children to hang out, use of clear directives, and the value of responsibility to schooling. In addition to youth in foster care, other youth who are also without parental support from a parent from a social class of power, include, but are not limited to teens who are adjudicated, and youth who are homeless and/or migrant. Industries involved with the other populations of youth who are disconnected might also be inspired to conduct a similar study to be more informed on the nature of development of the youth they serve.

Other than child welfare agencies that serve youth in foster care, youth detention centers, homeless shelters, and alternative education centers might benefit from an interest in the developmental capital of the youth they serve. The benefits of knowing the strengths, resources, supports, values, and competencies of marginalized youth begin to provide professional

constituents the opportunity to gain an insight about their behavioral patterns and potential to live

with health, happiness, peace, and productivity. Understanding the status of the youth's

developmental capital can lend to crafting developmentally appropriate services and programs

for the populations that are disconnected. Application of developmentally appropriate

opportunities can improve outcomes, such as education and financial capability, of the youth

from disconnected populations.

Opportunity Youth Movement. Opportunity Youth Movement is currently a national

initiative to engage businesses, foundations, celebrities, and other community partners to support

youth living in high poverty areas in identifying and achieving their employment and educational

objective. The goal is to help young people placed at risk to acquire necessary skills and work

experience to make successful transitions to adulthood, careers, and further education training.

The identification and development of developmental capital can benefit the Opportunity Youth

Movement by increasing awareness and knowledge of self for youth to understand the best fit to

civil contribution and social mobility. Through education of their developmental capital,

opportunity youth may have an increased chance to reach their potential, by matching curriculum

and wrap around services to their capital. These youth are more likely to experience economic

growth with an awareness and understanding of their values, competencies and strengths.

Through professional development, work environments can learn how to pull from the

youth's developmental capital to optimize their outcomes. Developmental capital provides

insight that lend to understanding skills, capacities, and characteristics that enable youth to

navigate through society in healthy, positive ways. Stakeholders may also be informed of the

unique supports and resources associated with youth in foster care and other youth who are

disconnected to support retention in employment. By recognizing and properly utilizing the

developmental capital of the youth, employers can build their capacity to strengthen

communities and advance the common good.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to create a space for the perspective of youth who are

disconnected to be re-centered beyond a deficit perspective. The essence of the study can be

captured in three words: uprooted, regrounded, and growing. Uprooted is used to symbolically

illustrate how marginalized populations of youth who are disconnected, more specifically youth

in foster care are distant from the mainstream narratives that exist. As a population that has been

forced from their homes, regardless of the circumstance, often youth who are disconnected have

experiences that vary and diversify bond to family, community, and natural environment.

Uprooted is a reference to the displacement from their original fundamental support. It has

become a key identifying characteristic of the individual and is often associated with significant

problems in multiple domains of functioning. Within the field of child welfare and education,

when assessed, disconnected populations are viewed more frequently in a deficit perspective,

where the context they are perceived in, one separate from the dominant narrative of social norm,

recognizes the maladaptive nature of their strengths and risk factors more often than not

(Gorski,2010; Grant 2002; Stahmer et al, 2005). However, elements associated with being

uprooted have more than just negative influences on the nature of these individuals. There are

multiple factors related to uprooted contributing to one's status of wellbeing.

It is the diversity of experiences and effects of such experiences that transition us from

the Uprooted section, the focus of the characteristics of disconnected populations, to Regrounded

section, the facilitation of philosophical hopefulness of the anti-deficit perspective through social

constructivism. Using an anti-deficit perspective to examine the capital, rather capabilities or fruitful experiences of youth in foster care, creates a basis for these youth to be seen more holistically, through a broader viewpoint. With a rationale shared by Denzin (1994), claiming "…politics of liberation must always begin with the perspective of desires, and dreams of those individuals and groups who have been oppressed by the larger ideological, economic and political forces of a society, or historical moment" (p. 575), the regrounded section expands the narrative of the capital of youth in foster care by moving beyond the voices of adults and professionals including the evaluative voices of youth. The narrative inquiry produces thick and rich descriptions to discover meaning and gain insight from a voice not often heard, in a light not often shined. Exposure to more diverse narratives of the nature of youth in foster care provides an opportunity to have more diverse practices and policies that relate to the truth shared. Social constructivism recognizes the essence of reality to rest in the interactive nature of how things are defined interpersonally and intersubjectively. According to the paradigm of social constructivism, truth is not a matter of correspondence with an objective reality but the truth is a matter of consensus among informed and sophisticated constructors (Denzin, 1994). Weakening the argument of the relationship between research, human experiences, and objectivity is an idea of social constructivism reinforcing the concept of the multiplicitous nature of truth. As opposed to focusing on the deficient nature of the youth, typically compiled by child welfare professional and educators via need assessments, the focus of this study shifts to positive characteristics from the perspective of the young adults.

Transitioning from regrounded to growing, the results of the study extended the body of knowledge related to disconnected youth, their capital, capabilities, and experiences. While the basis of the study was to reveal the strength, resources, supports, values, and competencies of

former foster youth, the dissertation shares the stories of youth associated with a disconnected population in a unique way, in an anti-deficit way, by focusing on the positives of their current status and the potentiality and intentionality to progress. Their stories revealed the aspirations of the young adults associated with disconnected populations illustrating their intentions to move forward through life and continuing to be more than the things they struggle to do and more than the things they do not have.

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APPENDIX

Uprooted & Reground: Fugerson's Results of an Anti-Deficit Approach to Disconnected Youth's Capital

Semi-Structure Interview Guide

Narrative Inquiry should provoke a story.

"That's the nice thing about being human. We only have one life, but we can choose what kind of

story it's going to be."

― Rick Riordan, *The Hidden Oracle*

 I would like to retell your life story using an anti-deficit approach. The purpose of this interview

is to understand the capital/personal assets (internal and external) of individuals with experience

in foster care.

Tell Me About Yourself

a. What do you do for a living?
b. What do you do for fun? What are your passions and interest?
c. Where are you from?

Item of Conversation– Something Valuable

1. What is the item that you have brought? Tell me about it.
2. What makes it valuable to you?

Seed

- - Core of conversation
- Can you retell your life story, and focus on success, overcoming challenges & problems, and the valuable things you have obtained or learned from your experience?

Ground

- - Nurturing Environment
- Can you talk about how the environment has positively shaped your life to be like your metaphor of choice – Question to get at resources

Stem

- - Ability to rise above
- Can you talk about an individual or organization that has helped you to overcome a challenge within your life being as you described in the metaphor? – Question to get at support

Roots

- - Original Network and Fundamental Support
- How did your family positively support your progress? – Question to get at sociocultural influence?

Trunk

- - Dreams/ key element to individual
- What are your dreams? – Question to get to aspirations/ interests?

Branch

- - Personal strengths
- What are some personal traits that helped you reach dreams – questions to get to strengths?

Leaves

- - Messages to Share
- What do you want people to know about the strengths and resources of individuals with experiences with foster care?

Fruit

- - Relevant elements other people benefit from
- Can you share how someone else has benefited from your life being as you described in the metaphor?