Examining the Relationship Between Social Capital and Career Success Among Welfare to Work Participants in Louisiana

Dionne Marie Davis-Green
*University of Southern Mississippi*

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EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL CAPITAL AND CAREER SUCCESS AMONG WELFARE TO WORK PARTICIPANTS IN LOUISIANA

by

Dionne Marie Davis-Green

Abstract of a Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate School of The University of Southern Mississippi in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2012
ABSTRACT

EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL CAPITAL AND CAREER SUCCESS AMONG WELFARE TO WORK PARTICIPANTS IN LOUISIANA

by Dionne Marie Davis-Green

December 2012

The study examined the relationship between social capital and career success among welfare to work participants in a Louisiana program from 2007 to 2009. Based on the high percentage who do not complete the Louisiana STEP program, outcomes from 2007 to 2009 suggest current STEP work activities may not prepare participants for career success and may neglect the development of social capital (e.g. networking skills). The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between social capital and the ability to produce social resources and social network benefits for the attainment of career success as perceived by welfare to work participants in Louisiana. Using Granovetter’s (1973, 1995) *Strength of Ties* theory and Seibert, Liden & Kraimer’s (2001) *Social Capital Theory for Career Success*, this study integrates social capital theory and career success to understand their influence on welfare to work participants in Louisiana. Social networks of welfare to work participants are assessed to identify the social resources utilized on the job, and the network benefits they produce. Finally, this study examines social capital’s effects on a full set of career outcomes (e.g. current salary, promotions over entire career, and career satisfaction) for welfare to work participants.
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2012
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by

Dionne Marie Davis-Green

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Approved:

Cyndi Gaudet, PhD
____________________________________
Director

Heather Annulis, PhD
____________________________________

Brian Richard, PhD
____________________________________

Patti Phillips, PhD
____________________________________

Susan A. Siltanan
____________________________________
Dean of the Graduate School

December 2012
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Approved:

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Director

____________________________________

____________________________________
Dean of the Graduate School

December 2012
DEDICATION

For Dominic…1Samuel 1:28

&

Mommy & Kerry, you two said I could do it…And I Did!!
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge God for everything—that is probably the best way to sum it all up. Thank you for being my everything, the Light unto my path, my Confidant, Counselor, Best Friend who never left nor forsake me. Thank you for blessing me with wonderful gifts and talents that will bring glory to your Kingdom. Thank you Heavenly Father; I am truly honored. I would also like to thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Cyndi Gaudet, for being an angel leading and guiding me through this process with green ink instead of red. I appreciate your kindness, wisdom, and expertise you shared with me, thank you for letting God use you to change lives and the world. I am blessed to have worked with my other committee members as well—Dr. Heather Annulis, Dr. Patti Phillips, and Dr. Brian Richard. You were an amazing group, and I thank you for pushing me to new heights of greatness. I would like to thank Dr. Bobbie Decuir, Mr. Joseph Cotton, and Sandra Broussard, for your advice, support, and prayers through this journey. I don’t know how this journey would have ended without the help of my angel, Cathy Wallace, who held my hand and wiped my tears during difficult times. I am so thankful that God sent you to me when I needed you most!

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And the journey begins…
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In the 2012 State of the Union Address, President Barak Obama stated that the United States needs more investment in human capital to replicate the achievements of the prior generations (Obama, 2012). Turbulent economic times in the United States dictate that the country and people of this nation must find new ways to address old problems. Nationally, individuals with degrees are unemployed and industries are disappearing, leaving thriving cities at bankruptcy’s door step (e.g. Detroit, Michigan). As of January 2011, approximately 269,275 children in Louisiana were living in “poor families”; families with income 100% below the federal poverty level (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2011). Louisiana’s total welfare recipient caseload totals around 14,280 cases paying out over $2,752,204 in benefits in July and August of 2011 alone (Services L. D., 2011). Welfare to work programs throughout the country fumble to develop programs that assist welfare recipients with entering the workforce and end state benefit dependence but somehow fall short with many recipients still requiring some type of assistance after leaving the programs. Career success research affirms that social capital can have a positive effect on career success for various individuals (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001). Social capital refers to connections in or between individuals or collective groups. This study seeks to determine if a relationship exists between social capital and career success among welfare to work participants in Louisiana.
Background

Evolution of Social Capital

In reaction to the influence of economic theory on sociological thought, Coleman (1988) argues that well-known concepts of financial and human capital (Becker, 1964) should be supplemented by the concept of social capital when attempting to explain human action (Teachman, Paasch, & Carver, 1997, p.1343) and career success (Seibert et al., 2001). The central proposition of social capital theory is that networks of relationships constitute a valuable resource for the conduct of social affairs, providing their members with “the collectivity-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249). Seibert et al. (2001) emphasize that social capital is a key variable in realizing career success. Human capital is necessary for career success but is useless without the social capital and opportunities in which to apply its functions (Burt, 1997).

Becker (1964) states that human capital is absolutely essential to growth in the modern world. He further explains that countries must rely on their human capital, placing people at the center of the economy (Becker, 1964). “For these reasons the last part of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century are called, the Age of Human Capital (Becker, 2002). Becker (1964) further explains that a country’s standard of living is determined by how well it succeeds at investing and utilizing the skills, knowledge, and health of its people, which in turn create a sound economic environment structure. Despite Becker’s sound theoretical and practical research, Putnam (1995) describes how America’s social capital and civic society are declining like never before. Becker (1986) agrees with Putnam in his Nobel Prize lecture discussing the decline in the American
family. Becker (1986) explains that divorces are at an all time high, birth rates are plummeting, and the number of women in the workforce is higher than ever before. The evolution of the family has greatly impacted the amount of social capital produced and passed on to their children:

I believe that these strong bonds are necessary in order to maintain an ethically, morally and socially effective society. I have long been concerned with these social issues because we cannot live by bread alone, as the saying goes. Social, cultural, ethical values are at least as an important part of life as the economic side. On the other hand, you cannot live well if your economic circumstances are very bad, either, so there is a need for both (Becker, 2002, p. 3).

Balance is needed between social, cultural, and economic capitals in all families to ensure children are afforded equal opportunities at success in today’s society.

Poverty is evident in every U.S. state now more so than ever and is cyclical in certain ethnic groups and geographic locations (Coulton & Panda, 1992; Flora & Flora, 2008; Gottschalk, McLanahan, & Sandefur, 1994). Coleman (1988) explains that human capital represents a filter through which parents transmit financial and human capital to their children and future generations and used by children (generations). The financial and human capital of parents are necessary to the development of human capital in their children, but alone is not sufficient and must be accompanied by social capital that allow resources to be transmitted to and used by children (Becker, 1964; Coleman, 1988; Teachman et al., 1997). Social capital originates in the family and is passed down through generations and affects one’s ability to find, attain, and maintain careers (Becker, 1964). Coleman’s studies have historically involved children and schooling:
What I mean by social capital in the raising of children is the norms, the social networks, and the relationships between adults and children that are of value for the child’s growing up. Social capital exists within the family, but also outside the family, in the community…in the interest, even the intrusiveness, of one adult in the activities of someone else’s child (Coleman, 1990, p.334).

Coleman (1988, 1994) suggests that social capital deserves attention precisely because it helps us understand the nature of human capital. Just as physical capital is created by changes in materials to form tools that facilitate production, human capital is created by changes in persons that bring about skills and capabilities that make them able to act in new ways (Coleman, 1988, p. 100). Social capital comes about through changes in the relations among persons that facilitate action and provide access to social resources critical for success and occupational attainment (Lin, Ensel, & Vaughn, 1981). Human capital is less tangible than other capitals and embodies in the skills and knowledge an individual acquires, while social capital exists in the relations among individuals (Coleman, 1988). Just as physical and human capital each facilitates productive activity, social capital does so as well (Baker, 2000; Teachman et al., 1997). Social capital enables us to create value, get things done, achieve goals, fulfill missions in life, and make contributions to the world (Baker, 2000; Tsai, 2001). Coleman (1994) and Field, Schuller, and Baron (2000) agree that social capital parallels physical, financial, and human capital which are grounded in economic theory and treated as private goods. Social capital is mainly a public good, considered fungible, and for some purposes impossible to trade the benefits across different contexts.
Social capital is a vital part of obtaining career success and must be accompanied by investments in financial and human capital (Seibert et al., 2001; Krebs, 2008). Increasing human and social capital of the U.S. population through investments in education, training, and healthcare will change the landscape of the country and its competitiveness (Becker, 1964; Coleman, 1988, Seibert et al., 2001). In 1868, Cornhill Magazine published the quote, “A chain is only as strong as its weakest link” (Stephen, 1868). The weakest links in the United States’ workforce are individuals who cannot attain career success because they are living in poverty and require assistance from government programs like welfare (Wilson, 1996; Meyers, 2003).

Current welfare programs and participants are not exempt from the hardships of the current economy (Davidson, 2005; Pilkauskas, Currie & Garfinkel, 2010; Zedlewski, 2008). Federal welfare reform dramatically shifts the focus of welfare from cash assistance to work (Blank & Haskins, 2001; Davidson, 2005; Schneider, 2006; Wilson, 1996). In order to receive government assistance, individuals must find work or enroll in welfare to work programs unless exempt by federal law (PRWORA, 1996). Each work activity is created to increase the human capital of individuals, increasing competence and household income. Unfortunately, most participants find themselves working in jobs that pay little wages and offer few opportunities for advancement. Many impediments at societal and individual levels for families moving from welfare reliance to full-time paid labor exist (Monroe & Tiller, 2001; Vlosky, Monroe, & Tiller, 1999). Barriers include lack of job skills, low educational attainment, single-parent households with heavy family responsibilities, severely limited employment opportunities in local communities (especially in the rural South), lack of reliable transportation, and lack of quality
affordable child care (Brayfield & Hofferth, 1995; Brown, 1995; Hao, 1995; Harris, 1996; Livermore, Powers, Davis, Lim, 2010; Nord & Beaulieu, 1997; Livermore et al., 2007; Livermore, M.M., Davis, B., Tiller, V., Harrison, R., & Lim, 2008; Livermore ). Barriers like these leave welfare recipients out of the workforce and keep them living below the national poverty level.

According to the U.S. Census, over 40 million people, 13.2% of the 2008 U.S. population, were living below the poverty line in 2008 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1999). This is an increase of three million from the 12.6%, roughly 37 million, reported in 2005 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1999). According to Blalock (2002), Blank and Haskins (2001), Davidson (2005), and Livermore et al. (2010) more attention must be given to those households in poverty that are not attached to the workforce in an effort to ensure positive outcomes and the attainment of self-sufficiency. Many impoverished families are maintained by single female head of households where no one or at least one person is in the workforce with at least three or more children in the residence (U.S. Census Bureau, 1999). In addition, many are minorities with less than a high school education and are currently receiving social security income or some other form of government assistance. Training and education are needed to lift them these individuals out of poverty cycle that has affected their families for generations (Blank & Haskins, 2001; Bok, 2004; Gottschalk et al., 1994; Hendley & Bilimoria, 1999). Too often, the education programs designed to prepare welfare participants for the workforce offer certificates (e.g. medical assisting, certified nursing assistants, and phlebotomy) that do not offer enough income to boost families out of poverty, resulting in a population still unable to realize career success, the working poor (Greenberg & Cebulla, 2008; Danzinger, Heflin, Corcoran,
Oltmans and Wang, 2002; Livermore et al., 2010). The Louisiana welfare population is no exception to the working poor dilemma. Louisiana’s welfare to work program and outcomes are discussed below.

Strategies to Empower People (STEP)

The Strategies to Empower People (STEP) Program is the result of the Personal Responsibility and Universal Engagement Act of 2003 passed by the Louisiana Legislature. The purpose of the STEP program is to provide opportunities for work-eligible families on welfare, also known as the Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program (FITAP) to receive job training, employment and supportive services that enable them to become self-sufficient (Louisiana Office of Family Support, Department of Children & Family Services, 2009). Work-eligible families include an adult under sixty years of age, or teen head of household, who is not disabled, incapacitated, or caring for a disabled family member who is incapacitated as documented by a qualified medical expert (Louisiana Office of Family Support, Department of Children & Family Services). STEP requires work-eligible recipients to participate in various work activities to increase the education and training of participants, essentially their human capital (Louisiana Office of Family Support, Department of Children & Family Services, 2009). Becker (1964) defines human capital as related expenditures (investments) in education, training, and healthcare in order to produce a viable and skilled workforce. Each state invests in Welfare to Work programs that will create human capital and assist individuals in gaining self-sufficiency. However, not all states are successful with this endeavor.
Over the last three years, the majority of Welfare to Work participants in Louisiana do not complete the Strategies to Empower People (STEP) program, designed to move participants off of welfare and into work, within the specified time limits of 24 months (Livermore et al., 2007, 2008, 2009). Only 31.33% (6,953 participants) of the Louisiana 2009 participants reportedly left the program for employment or excess earnings (Livermore et al., 2009). The average annual wages for these “leavers” totals $7265 annually and $1816 quarterly (Livermore et al., 2009). The 2009 STEP evaluation documents 54.7% of the 6,953 participants maintain employment for four quarters after leaving the program (Livermore et al., 2009). Louisiana is consistent with national welfare to work program statistics.

Nationally, welfare to work programs are not designed to assist participants in the attainment of self-sufficiency. Greenberg and Cebulla (2008) evaluated the welfare to work programs throughout the U.S. and concluded that only 25 out of 100 programs were deemed good at assisting participants in gaining self-sufficiency. Blank and Haskins (2001), Handler (1995), and Johnson and Corcoran (2003) agree that self-sufficiency was a neglected portion of welfare to work programs prior to 1996. In 1996, President William Jefferson Clinton III signed and Congress enacted legislation to revise the welfare system in the U.S.. Brodsky and Ovwigho (2002) contend most states and programs utilize a “work first” approach to match welfare recipients as quickly as possible to any job. Brodsky and Ovwigho (2002) assert this approach contrasts the human capital development (HCD) model of building the human capital necessary for long-term job success and advancement (p. 64). Access to social networks containing social resources such as contacts throughout the organization provide access to
information, resources and career sponsorship increase the individual’s chance for remaining with an organization and attaining career success. In addition, a personal network containing social resources from various functions and positions in the organization will aid in keeping individuals attached to organizations (Seibert et al., 2001; Lin, Ensel, & Vaughn, 1981).

The enactment of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 changed the landscape of welfare programs across the country and the roles for participants as well (Blank & Haskins, 2001; Davidson, 2005). The changes transformed a program designed to meet the material needs of poor women and their families into a program that focuses on preventing governmental dependency by promoting work and fathers meeting child support obligations (Blank & Haskins, 2001; Teitler, Reichman, & Nepomnyaschy, 2004; Lens, 2006). PRWORA (1996) mandates state responsibility for welfare to work program administration and implementation through federal block grants. States are responsible to establish time limits not to exceed five years for welfare recipients, and appropriate work activity development for clients (Blank & Haskins, 2001). PRWORA (1996) includes behavioral-based reforms that mandate work and penalize the absence of work through sanctions and financial penalties to welfare recipients.

Since 1996, the number of recipients receiving welfare is (Danziger et al., 2002) declining substantially, but many obstacles to self-sufficiency remain (Blank & Haskins, 2001; Brodsky & Ovwigho, 2002). Many previous welfare participants enter the workforce in low wage jobs, with little benefits and opportunity for advancement. More specifically in Louisiana, a majority of the welfare to work participants do not attain
employment or complete the program (Livermore et al., 2007; Livermore et al., 2008; Livermore et al., 2009).

STEP participants are assessed and individuals who do not possess basic workplace or basic literacy skills, combine employment and job readiness and job search activities with activities that will increase their basic workplace literacy skills. Work related activities for STEP participants include unsubsidized employment, subsidized employment (public or private), work experience placements, on the job training, job search, vocational education, and school attendance (Livermore et al., 2010; Livermore et al., 2007; Livermore et al., 2008; Livermore et al., 2009).

STEP participants must complete different types of programs based on their individual needs and desired employment outcomes. STEP participants exit the program for different reasons. Reasons for exiting the program are provided in Department of Social Services (DSS)/Office of Family Support (OFS) case records in the form of closure codes. The most commonly reported closure code in Louisiana for 2009 is “work-related sanction”, accounting for 36.42% (n=8,524) closures (Livermore et al., 2009). An example of a work-related sanction is having benefits discontinued because participant failed to work a required number of hours each week. The second most commonly used code is “employment and/or excess earnings”, indicating that 30% or 6,953 participants left STEP due to “employment and/or excess earnings”.

No data exists that identifies the link between participants who do not complete the STEP program and participants who leave for earnings and employment and their associated workforce readiness. No one knows if program participants are ready or prepared to be socially integrated into the workplace, especially if they have never
worked before. Work activities in the STEP program provide opportunities to develop and refine hard skills but can neglect social capital and the role it can play in developing soft skills, also crucial to employability and career success. (Coates, Duffy, Hills, & Whitfield, 2007) defines hard skills are technical or administrative procedures related to an organization’s core business that are easy to observe, quantify, and measure. In contrast, Coates et al. (2007) defines soft skills as people skills that are less tangible and harder to quantify. Examples of hard skills include job skills like typing, writing, math, reading and the ability to use software programs; soft skills are personality-driven skills like etiquette, getting along with others, listening and engaging in small talk.

Social capital is an avenue to address the social, softer side of career success (Seibert et al., 2001). Social capital refers primarily to the resources accessed in social networks. Developing a solid social network of a variety of individuals may increase the participant’s ability to attain career success.

Granovetter’s paramount work, *The Strength of Weak Ties*, examines the relationships individuals use to secure information for the job search process (Granovetter, 1973). Granovetter (1973; 1985) defines the strength of a tie as the combination of the amount of time, emotional intensity, the intimacy, and reciprocal services that characterize the tie. Participants need relationships with individuals they know indirectly (weak ties) to provide information on jobs (Granovetter, 1973, 1983; Bian, 1997; Yakubovich, 2005). In addition, participants need access to individuals they know intimately (strong ties) who can provide additional support (e.g. transportation, child care, monetary support, etc.) as they enter new careers and the workforce (Briggs, 1998; Dominguez & Watkins, 2003; Wortley & Wellman, 1990). An individual’s social
network is a social structure inclusive of all relationships they have with individuals on and off the job (Ibarra, 1993; Ibarra, 1995; Lin et al., 1981; Lin, 1999). Social networks rich in both strong and weak ties produce social resources that can be used to achieve career success (Dominguez & Watkins, 2003; Ibarra, 1993; Ibarra, 1995; Seibert et al., 2001). Social resources can be individuals in the workplace, as well as family members who provide support of some type to an individual (Ibarra, 1993, 1995; Lin et al., 1981; Lin, 2001; Seibert et al., 2001).

Seibert et al. (2001), Lin et al. (1981) and Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz Jr. (1994) agree that using social resources available through one’s social network creates benefits for the individual to use in their new workplace, such as increased access to information, resources, and career sponsorship. The social network benefits are directly related to career success as defined by Seibert et al. (2001) and include current salary, promotions over the entire career, and career satisfaction. No research exists to determine the relationship between an individual’s social capital on career success in welfare to work programs or if social capital can increase the number of participants who complete the program and leave for earnings and employment.

Statement of Problem

Based on the high percentage who do not complete the Louisiana STEP program, outcomes from 2007–2009 suggest current STEP work activities may not prepare participants for career success and may neglect the development of social capital (e.g. networking skills) (Livermore et al., 2007; Livermore et al., 2008; Livermore et al., 2009). In 2009 alone, over 68% of the welfare to work participants in Louisiana did not leave the program for earnings and employment. This majority left the program for
“sanctions” or “failure to meet requirements” closures, “family circumstances change,” “time limits”, “voluntary closures”, and “other reasons not stated” (Livermore et al., Strategies to Empower People (STEP) Evaluation, 2009). Results of the 2009 evaluation indicate that when participants leave STEP, earnings growth is still minimal because earnings growth gained via employment is outweighed by the loss of federal benefits (e.g. food stamps, Medicaid, child care assistance, etc.) (Livermore et al., 2007; Livermore et al., 2008; Livermore et al., 2009). Statistics indicate that participants migrate from welfare to the working poor classification based on salaries reported for participants working after leaving STEP from 2007–2009 earn wages below the federal poverty level in positions that offer little or no advancement opportunities (Livermore et al., 2010; Livermore et al., 2007; Livermore et al., 2008; Livermore et al., 2009). In 2009, the average annual wages for participants “gaining employment or excess earnings was $7265 (Livermore et al., 2009). Excess earnings refer to income above the maximum allowed to receive welfare which typically is the federal poverty level.

No research is available to determine if welfare to work programs neglect the development of social capital and networking skills necessary to realize career success. No information is available for program providers or funding agencies that speaks to the neglect in social capital development among welfare to work participants. No single element of the work related activities explains the importance of forming relationships or the social resources that can be provided by a social network if created. No single element explains the benefits of having a social network or how it can assist participants in the attainment of career success. Participants need work activities that will assist them
in not only finding a job but realizing career success; social capital may be the missing link.

Most research on social capital and its relationship to career success has been conducted with a target population of college students, professional managers and business executives (Granovetter, 1973; Judge et al., 1994; Seibert et al., 2001). Yet no research exists that explores the relationship between social capital and the career success of the welfare to work population. The lack of social capital development could be a contributing factor for current program outcomes and is needed for post-program career success and self-sufficiency.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of social capital on the ability to produce social resources and social network benefits for the attainment of career success as perceived by welfare to work participants in Louisiana. Using Granovetter’s (1973) *Strength of Ties* theory, this study will integrate social capital theory and career success to understand how they may influence welfare to work participants in Louisiana. Social networks of welfare to work participants will be assessed to identify the social resources utilized on the job, and the network benefits they produce. Finally, this study will examine social capital’s effects on a full set of career outcomes (e.g. current salary, promotions over entire career, and career satisfaction) for welfare to work participants in Lafayette Parish from 2007 to 2009.

The literature clearly establishes social capital development as a strong indicator of career success. However, most research on social capital and its impact on career success concentrates on a target population of college students, professional managers,
and business executives (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991; Granovetter, 1973; Judge et al., 1994; Seibert et al., 2001), with no available research exploring the impact of social capital on the career success of the welfare to work population. Turbulent economic times, pressure for programs to produce positive results, and the increasing population of the working poor demand creative, yet viable solutions.

Research Objectives

The following research objectives examine the relationship between social capital and career success among welfare to work participants in Lafayette Parish from 2007 to 2009.

- **RO$_1$:** Describe the STEP participants by socio-economic status, in terms of (a) year of birth (b) ethnicity (c) marital status (d) number of children (e) highest education, (f) academic program of study (g) STEP work activities (h) total years in workforce (i) total organizations employed by and (j) current occupation of STEP participants.

- **RO$_2$:** Determine if a relationship exists between social network structure (a) strong ties and (b) weak ties and career success as perceived by STEP participants.

- **RO$_3$:** Determine if a relationship exists between weak ties categorized by (a) contacts in other departments in the organization where the participant is employed, (b) contacts at higher levels of management in the organization where the participant is employed and (c) extended kinship networks of the participant and career success as perceived STEP participants.
• RO4: Determine if a relationship exists between strong ties (a) contacts in other departments in the organization where the participant is employed, (b) contacts at higher levels of management in the organization where the participant is employed and (c) extended kinship networks of the participant and career success as perceived by STEP participants.

• RO5: Identify social network benefits derived from social resources (a) access to information (b) access to resources and (c) access to career sponsorship for career success as perceived by STEP participants.

• RO6: Determine if social network (resources) benefits derived from social resources produce and career success as measured by (a) current salary, (b) promotions over entire career and (c) career satisfaction as perceived by STEP participants.

Theoretical Perspective

Granovetter’s *Strength of Ties* (1973) is the focal theory that drives this study. His research on social network structure identifies strong and weak ties and provides guidance for their utilization in locating information and resources for the job search process. In his work over 20 years, Granovetter (1995) concludes that “finding work is a social process” (p. 138). He stresses that weak social ties provide new information and resources for the job search process and neglects the importance of strong ties (Granovetter, 1973). Granovetter’s work centers around professionals but neglects insight on how weak ties impact disadvantaged populations with minimal education and job experience. Meanwhile, studies on minorities and impoverished communities articulate the necessity and significance of kinship and extended support networks in
realizing career success (Ibarra, 1995; Parish, Hao, & Hogan, 1991; Thomas & Alderfer, 1989; Dominguez & Watkins 2003; Briggs, 1998) echo the same findings where strong ties provide mothers with emotional and expressive support, as well as certain forms of instrumental help like rides, small loans, or a place to stay in case of emergency. Together, weak and strong ties create social resources vital to career success in organizations.

Lin et al. (1981) affirm that “power, wealth, and prestige possessed by others can be accessed through weak ties that link persons of different status” (Bian, 1997, pp. 366-367). Social resources are embedded in social networks and maintained in relationships between the participant and their social resources. A social resource is a person that the participant is tied to in the social network like personal and professional contacts or family members. Social resources include associates, usually in different departments or at higher levels in organizations, as well as individuals outside of the workplace who provide additional support mechanisms for the participant. The participant’s social network benefits from additional support that includes but is not limited to access to information, resources, or career sponsorship in order to realize career success.

Building on the work of Granovetter (1973; 1995) and Lin et al.1981), Seibert et al. (2001) published *A Social Capital Theory of Career Success*. Their “investigation strongly suggest the relevance of integrating social capital theory with research on careers” (p. 233). Seibert et al. (2001) compare social capital’s effects on career success by incorporating subjective and objective measures. Social capital is identified as a key variable in relation to both subjective and objective career success (p.233). The “integrated social capital theory of career success further supports the findings that
information, resource access, and sponsorship play a mediating role in the relation between social network variables and career outcomes” (p.234). This type of information is needed to assist current welfare to work participants in not only finding jobs but in creating careers and obtaining self-sufficiency as well. This study seeks to examine the relationship between social capital and career success for the welfare to work population in Lafayette, Louisiana from 2007 to 2009.

Conceptual Framework

**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework to Examine the Relationship between Social Capital and Career Success
Limitations of Study

The primary limitation to this study is not having access to confidential information on welfare to work participants in Louisiana. With no personal contact information accessible, the researcher will have to use technology mediated processes to locate participants for this study. In addition, not having access to confidential information eliminates the possibility of triangulating participant responses to their actual welfare to work files.

Significance of Study

This study on the relationship between social capital and career success for welfare to work participants will extend existing knowledge in the areas under study; welfare to work programs, social capital, and career success. The additions to the fields under study may have both theoretical and methodological implications for welfare to work programs across the U.S. This current study will produce research findings that are theoretically based and can be implemented by welfare to work administrators and practitioners. Results of this study on the relationship between social capital and career success for welfare to work participants may influence state welfare to work administrators and policymakers to reexamine current program components and consider revising to create viable solutions for self-sufficiency among program participants. And even more specifically, decision makers might be able to offer programs better equipped to help participants achieve career success and self-sufficiency not only in Louisiana but across the U.S.

Results and recommendations may provide solutions to increasing the percentage of welfare to work participants capable of retaining employment for at least four quarters
at leaving their respective program. In addition, participants may have access to programs and activities that provide social capital development and networking skills as well as improving their overall communication and employability skills.

Definition of Terms

1. *Strategies to Empower People (STEP)* is Louisiana’s welfare to work program that originated in 2003 replacing FINDWork that was implemented in 1997. (Louisiana Office of Family Support, Department of Children & Family Services, 2010)

2. *Social tie strength* is a combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1361).

3. *Strong ties* are emotionally intense, frequent, and involving multiple types of relationships, such as those with friends, advisors, and coworkers (Granovetter, 1973).

4. *Weak ties* are not emotionally intense, infrequent, and restricted to one narrow type of relationship unlike strong ties (Granovetter, 1973).

Summary

Welfare to work participants are in need of social capital to realize career success. Development of social networks rich in strong and weak ties provide access to social resources that permit participants to thrive in the workforce. Through contacts in other departments, contacts at higher levels in the organization and career sponsorship, welfare to work participants can gain access to social network benefits that include information, resources, and career sponsorship. Social network benefits in turn have the potential to
provide welfare to work participants with valuable resources that foster career success, both subjective and objective. Social capital may be the missing link in the work activities for welfare to work programs and essentially improves the outcomes of participants. This research will examine the effects of social capital on career success for welfare to work participants.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

History and Defining Social Capital

Social capital is as old as human civilization. Emile Durkheim, a great nineteenth-century French sociologist/anthropologist, introduced the concept of collective representations or social solidarity when he studied the social structures of native North American and Australian aboriginal populations. Durkheim’s results suggest that even simple social structures and societies have overlap in interactions in and among groups of people (Flora & Flora, 2008). These thoughts echo through the work of Karl Marx and his study of social relations and the exploitation by the capitalists (bourgeois) of the proletariat (working class) (Marx, 1935).

Marx defines capital as having a part of the surplus value between the use value (in consumption market) and the exchange value (in production-labor market) of the commodity. Furthermore, Marx contends that capital is also an investment in the production and circulation of commodities. Capital represents two related but distinct elements, it is part of the surplus value generated and pocketed by the capitalists and it represents an investment (in the production and circulation of commodities) on the part of the capitalists, with expected returns in a marketplace (Lin, 2002). Lin (1999) explains that Marx’s theory of capital is referred to as classical since it represents the foundation upon which neoclassical theories of capital are grounded. At this time, the neoclassical concepts of capitals as belonging to the categories; human, cultural and social capitals were non-existent as a field of study. Neoclassical theories differ from the classical theory in that laborers, workers or masses can now invest, and thus acquire certain capital
of their own because they can generate surplus values in trading their labor or work in the production and consumption markets (Lin, 1999). The neoclassical theories include human capital, (Becker, 1964) cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) and social capital which are introduced in the twentieth century body of sociological and economic theories.

The term “social capital” was first used by Hanifan (1916) and described tangible substances utilized daily in people’s lives in a rural community whose logical center was a school, namely, good-will, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse among a group of individuals and families who make up a social unit. He further explained that social capital is accumulated through interaction among neighbors. Social capital remains relatively in the background of sociological study and not discussed until 1986 when Pierre Bourdieu provides a definition in his chapter entitled, *Forms of Capital*. The central proposition of social capital theory is that networks of relationships constitute a valuable resource for the conduct of social affairs, providing their members with “the collectivity-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word (Bourdieu, 1986, p.249). In other words, membership in a group provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital; a credential’ which entitles them to credit they can use as needed. The collectively-owned capital is absent among the welfare to work population where the majority of participants come from impoverished households. Bourdieu’s work laid the foundation for many contributions and conceptualizations to come.

For the next thirty years, many researchers make theoretical contributions to the fundamental definition and understanding that social capital represents the investment in
social relations with expected returns (Bourdieu, 1980; Bourdieu, 1986; Burt, 1992; Coleman, 1988; Erickson, 1995 & 1996; Flap, 1991; Flap, 1994; Lin, 1982; Lin, 1986; Lin, 1999; Portes, 1998; and Putnam, 1993; Putnam, 1995). The group agrees on the basic definition of social capital but converge between two perspectives relative to the level at which returns or profits accrue; as an individual or collective asset.

One perspective concentrates on the use of social capital by individuals; how individuals will access and utilize resources embedded in social networks to gain returns or profits through various activities (e.g. finding and securing better careers). At this level individuals make investments with the expectation of receiving some benefit. The pivotal points of the individual perspective are (1) how individuals invest in social relations and (2) how individuals capture the embedded resources in relationships to generate a return (Lin, 1999). Authors contributing to the individual perspective include Lin (Lin, 1999; Lin & Bian, 1991; Lin & Dumin, 1986; Lin et al., 1981); Burt (1992, 1997 & 1998), Marsden (Marsden & Hurlbert, 1988; Campbell, Marsden & Hurlbert, 1986), Flap (Boxman, DeGraaf & Flap, 1991; DeGraaf & Flap, 1988; Flap & De Graaf, 1988; Flap, 1991; Sprengers, Tazelaar & Flap, 1988; Volker & Flap, 1996), and Portes (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). All affirm their work brings an important perspective and stress the need for the participant to accrue social capital through the development of individual social networks for career success. Coleman (1988, 1990), Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and Bourdieu (1986) also understand the individual perspective but lean more towards defining social capital within collective assets or groups. These works are important components of future work activities for welfare to work programs for their participants.
The second perspective focuses on social capital in work as a collective asset at the group level. This perspective concentrates on (1) how certain groups develop and maintain more or less social capital as a collective asset and (2) how such a collective asset enhances group members' chances to become successful. Dense or closed networks are viewed as a means to maintain collective assets and reproduce the group and its beliefs. Group norms and trust are essential for the group to produce and maintain the collective asset (Coleman, 1988; Lin, 1999). Bourdieu’s view considers social capital as an investment in a particular group in society, the bourgeoisie, or upper class, as the dominant group. Representative works in social capital contributing to this perspective include Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1990), and Putnam (1993, 1995) who explore closure or density in social relations and social networks. As a group, welfare to work participants do not capitalize on collective assets in the job search process because they are absent in minority and poverty-stricken communities and most of their relationships are redundant and have access to minimal contacts in other groups. Even though collective assets are not shared among the group, dense networks are vital to welfare to work participants because they provide additional support that would not be available otherwise (i.e., child care, transportation, and monetary support).

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) contends that acquiring social capital requires deliberate investment of both economic and cultural resources by the collective. Bourdieu’s definition comprises two elements; first, the social relationship itself that allows individuals to claim access to resources possessed by their associates, and second, the amount and quality of those resources (Bourdieu, 1986). The network of relationships is the product of time investment strategies, individual and collective,
consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short and long term. Bourdieu (1986) explains that transforming contingent relations, such as those of neighborhood, the workplace, or even kinship, into relationships that are at once necessary and elective, imply durable obligations subjectively felt (feeling of gratitude, respect, friendship, etc.) or institutionally guaranteed (rights) (Bourdieu, 1986). Current work related activities in the welfare the work program do not provide activities that foster relationship development over time.

Social capital has been applied since its early use to elucidate a wide range of social phenomena, although researchers increasingly have focused attention on the role of social capital as an influence not only on the development of human capital (Coleman, 1988; Loury, 1977, 1987) but on the economic performance of firms (Knack & Keefer, 1997; Baker, 1990), geographic regions (Putnam, 1993, 1995), and nations (Fukuyama, 1995). Like other forms of capital, social capital constitutes a form of accumulated history, here reflecting investments in social relations and social organization through time (Bourdieu, 1986; Granovetter, 1992). Time is important to social capital because relationship development depends on stability and continuity of the social structure. Social capital is owned jointly by the parties to a relationship, with nonexclusive ownership rights for individuals, thus the development of social capital is significantly affected by those factors shaping the evolution of social relationships (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). In order for social capital to remain intact, parties must utilize the relationships or they will diminish. Welfare to work programs must provide work
activities that will afford the accumulation of social resources over time to utilize once they are in the workforce.

Portes (1998) explains that the acquisition of social capital requires deliberate investment of both economic and cultural resources. To possess social capital, a person must be related to others who actually are a source of their own advantage (Portes, 1998). Portes went on to identify three basic functions of social capital, applicable in a variety of contexts as a source of social control, as a source of family support, and as a source of benefits through extended family networks. Coleman’s (1988) work specifically addresses differences between intact families and those where one parent has the primary task of rearing children and thus possess more of this form of social capital than do single-parent families or those where both parents work. The children of these families benefit from this resource; education and personality development are enhanced according to their environment. Portes (2000) states that “social capital tends to be lower for children in single-parent families because they lack the benefit of a second at home parent and because they tend to change residences more often, leading to fewer ties to other adults in the community” (p. 11). According to the 2009 STEP Program Evaluation, a majority of the welfare to work participants are single, female head of households with at least one child (Livermore et al., 2009). Increasing the social capital of participants can essentially increase the social capital of their children and future generations.

Loury (1977) uses the term social capital in his critique of neoclassical theories of racial income inequality and their policy implications (Portes, 1998). In A Dynamic Theory of Racial Income Differences, Loury examines the black demographic and finds
that orthodox economic theories are too individualistic, focusing on individual human capital and on the creation of a leveled competitive field based on such skills. The process might never end, according to Loury, because of two reasons. First, the inherited poverty of black parents, which would be transmitted to their children in the form of lower material resources and educational opportunities, second, the poorer connections of young black workers to the labor market and their lack of information about opportunities:

The merit notion that, in a free society, each individual will rise to the level justified by his or her competence conflicts with the observation that no one travels that road entirely along. The social context within which individual maturation occurs strongly conditions what otherwise equally competent individuals can achieve. This implied that absolute equality of opportunity…is an ideal that cannot be achieved (Loury, 1977, p. 176).

Loury’s work paves the way for Coleman’s analysis of social capital’s role in the creation of human capital. Social capital can be distinguished in its origin, usage, and consequences from human capital (e.g., Burt, 1992; Coleman, 1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Putnam, 1993; Lin, 1998). Human capital theory suggests that education or training raises the productivity of workers by imparting useful knowledge and skills, hence raising workers’ future income by increasing their lifetime earnings (Becker, 1964). Becker (1964) and Mincer (1974) provide an explanation that links investment in training with workers’ wages and status attainment in organizations.

Coleman (1988) defines social capital by its function in a variety of entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they
facilitate certain actions of the participants, whether persons or organizations, within the structure. Unlike physical or human capital, social capital requires the interaction or relationships between individuals or groups. It originates in the relations among the individuals that facilitate action and productive activity. Coleman (1988) provides a theoretical framework for social capital and explains that social capital can take on three forms; obligations and expectations which depend on the trustworthiness of the social environment, the capacity of information to flow through the social structure in order to provide a basis for action and finally the presence of norms accompanied by effective sanctions (Coleman, 1988). Flora and Flora (2008) agree with Coleman (1988) that social capital includes networks, norms of reciprocity, and mutual trust that exist among and within groups and communities (p. 18). Becker (1964) contends that parents affect educational attainment, marital stability, propensities to smoke and to get to work on time, and many other dimensions of their children’s lives. No discussion of human capital can omit the influence of families on the knowledge, skills, health, values, and habits of their children. Three valuable and reliable sources, Becker (1964), Coleman (1988), and Portes (2000), agree that the parental structure of families affects the social capital of children. The home environment will influence education, socialization, and personal development. Single parent head of households lack the resources necessary to create sufficient social capital among their children (Portes, 1998; Teachman, Paasch, & Carver, 1996). Welfare to work programs must incorporate social capital for its participants, the majority single parent head of households to end the cycle of dependence within their respective families.
Development in this body of scholarship addresses many variables relative to success in welfare to work programs. Social capital influences career success (Burt, 1992; Gabbay & Zuckerman, 1998; Podolny & Baron, 1997) and executive compensation (Belliveau, O'Reilly, & Wade, 1996; Burt, 1997a). Social capital helps workers find jobs (Granovetter, 1973; Granovetter, 1995; Lin & Dumin, 1996; Lin et al., 1981) and creates a richer pool of recruits for firms (Fernandez, Castilla, & Moore, 2000). Social capital facilitates inter-unit resource exchange and product innovation (Gabbay & Zuckerman, 1998; Hansen, 1998; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998), the creation of intellectual capital (Hargadon & Sutton, 1997; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), and cross-functional team effectiveness (Rosenthal, 1996). Social capital reduces turnover rates (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993) and organizational dissolution rates (Pennings, Lee, & van Witteloostuijn, 1998), and it facilitates entrepreneurship (Chong & Gibbons, 1997) and the formation of start-up companies (Walker, Kogut, & Shan, 1997). Social capital strengthens supplier relations (Asanuma, 1985; Baker, 1990; Dore, 1983; Gerlach, 1992; Helper, 1990; Smitka, 1991; Uzzi, 1997), regional production networks (Romo & Schwartz, 1995), and inter-firm learning (Kraatz, 1998). Social capital leads to career success for individuals in managerial and executive roles (Seibert, et al., 2001). Social capital may lead to the same outcomes for welfare to work programs if included as a work activity for participants. Social capital addresses not only the individual needs of welfare to work participants, but also addresses the cyclical poverty that most minority groups experience collectively.
Social Networks

Social network researchers take the lead in formalizing and empirically testing theories related to the concept of social capital (Seibert et al., 2001). Researchers refer to relationships within these social networks as social ties (Granovetter, 1973). A network can be defined as the pattern of ties linking a specific set of persons or social actors (Seibert et al., 2001). Each person has linkages to other people or actors in the network. The focal person in such an analysis (supplying the data) is referred to as “the participant” or “the individual” and those he or she is tied to are “social resources” or “network members”.

Social networks are not only important to find jobs, but also for most other things people want in life, physical safety, esteem, belongingness, etc. Social networks play a huge part in the process of status and income attainment (de Graff & Flap, 1988). Persons with more social resources acquire better living conditions that include a better job and wages than persons with less social resources. In the job seeking process, a social relationship with contact persons of relatively high prestige will lead to a better job. Although using personal contact does not always further one’s occupational status (Lin et al., 1981), one cannot deny that some persons or groups are better off occupationnally because of their social connections. De Graff and Flap (1988) and Lin et al. (1981) conclude that even in industrial societies success is related to “whom you know” in organizational settings. Relationships in informal social networks have also been identified as important factors likely to influence organizational advancement and promotion (Kanter, 1979; Tsui, 1984). Minority groups and organizations do not create and nurture these valuable relationships.
Ilgen and Youtz (1986) argue that informal networks in organizations do not always openly and fully accept minority members. Nixon (1985) confirms this in a study where 56% of the African-American managers in the sample perceive partial or total alienation from both formal and informal aspects of their careers in the corporate business world (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990). The results of this study further confirm that opportunities for power and integration within organizations exclude blacks and that such exclusion may be detrimental to their job performance and ultimate career success (Greenhaus et al., 1990). Minorities receive less favorable assessments of promotability from their supervisors, are more likely to have career plateaus, and experience more career dissatisfaction than caucasians. Five distinct sources further validate that black managers experience restricted advancement opportunities and career dissatisfaction (Alderfer, Alderfer, & Tucker, 1980; Brown & Ford, 1977; Fernandez, 1981; Jones, 1986; Greenhaus et al., 1990). Integrating minority members into informal networks can increase the size of their social network and create relationships that foster career growth and development.

Granovetter’s Strength of Weak Ties

Granovetter’s (1973) pioneering work *The Strength of Weak Ties* exhibits the significance of social networks for career mobility. Since 1973, Granovetter’s work has been cited in 14,937 publications according to Google Scholar (2011) and affirms the theory’s relative importance to career success. Granovetter (1973) confirms that ties among members of a social clique are likely to be strong which he defines as emotionally intense, frequent, and involving multiple types of relationships, such as those with friends, advisors, and coworkers. Weak ties are not emotionally intense, are infrequent,
and restricted to one narrow type of relationship unlike strong ties (Granovetter, 1973). Until this time most sociological theory addressed strong ties and small intimate groups that were well defined. Weak tie theory focuses on the strength of the social tie a person uses in the process of finding a job (Granovetter, 1973). The argument asserts that our acquaintances (weak ties) are people we may not engage often and do not know one another. Close friends (strong ties) are people that an individual knows intimately and communicates with on a regular, ongoing basis (Granovetter, 1983). For example, one individual will have many friends who know each other- a densely knit social structure. This participant also has a collection or network of associates referred to as social resources, or what Granovetter calls weak ties, who are unrelated and few of whom know each other. Each of these social resources is likely to have his own social network involving close friends different from the ones they share with the participant. The weak tie between the participant and his social resources becomes a bridge between two different social networks. These networks will not connect if no bridge is created by weak ties.

Granovetter (1973) argues that weak ties have a special role in a person’s opportunity for mobility because they have better access to information on job openings. Unlike the strong ties that bind groups of individuals and primarily convey redundant information, weak ties are sources of new information because they bridge local cliques (Podolny & Baron, 1997). More weak ties present in an individual’s social network makes it a more valuable source of information. Podolny and Baron (1997) emphasizes that information benefits derive from large, nonredundant networks. In his study, Granovetter (1973) used a random sample of professional, technical, and managerial
personnel who had recently found jobs through social contacts to determine the frequency of interaction between the job seeker and the contact. Results show that 16.7% of the job seekers saw their contact often at the time of the job search, 55.6% occasionally, and 27.8% rarely (Granovetter, 1973). Using frequency as a gauge of tie strength, Granovetter concludes that job seekers use weak ties rather than strong ties to obtain information on job openings. Additional evidence also supports the claim that those who use weak ties experience more satisfaction in their new jobs than those who use strong ties (Granovetter, 1995).

Lin et al. (1981) also study weak and strong ties, investigating the relationship between tie strength and occupational status attainment for a representative sample of men aged 20-64 in an urban area of upstate New York. Lin et al. (1981) further believe that weak ties facilitate the reaching of higher status contacts, which in turn, directly affects the attainment of occupational status. The central findings concur with Granovetter’s previous work, and affirm that the use of weak ties in finding jobs has a strong association with higher occupational achievement only insofar as the weak ties connect the respondent to an individual who is well placed in the occupational structure (Granovetter, 1983). Podolny and Baron (1997) like Lin et al. (1981) and Granovetter (1983) have consistent findings that confirm that having a large, sparse network of informal ties for acquiring information and resources increases an individual’s mobility in organizations.

The strength of ties perspective implies that weak ties lead to better social resources and status attainment in organizations. From the social resources perspective, however, the value of weak ties seems to depend on the job seeker’s original position in
the hierarchical structure (Lin et al., 1981). When an individual’s initial position in an organization is relatively low, only weak ties can provide access to social resources significantly higher up. When the individual’s initial position is relatively high, there is little reason to expect weak ties to have greater advantage than strong ties. The strength of weak ties might lie in the participant’s network of social resources’ ability to access social positions vertically higher in the social hierarchy, which had the advantage in facilitating the instrumental action that fosters promotion and overall career success (Lin et al., 1981).

An individual’s personal resources may greatly affect, at least initially, what social resources are available to him or her. Individuals accumulate social resources, however, these become more directly important than personal resources in further elaborating social networks and, therefore, these social resources become the personal (and prescribed) resources for the next generation of actors (Lin et al., 1981, p. 404). This is an essential consideration giving the recurrent generational poverty and welfare dependence that persists in minority communities, especially the African-American demographic (Williams, 1997).

**Strength of a Tie**

Granovetter (1973) defines the strength of a tie is a combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie (p. 1361). Researchers assume that ties are positive, symmetric, and independent of each other; not considering negative or asymmetric ties. Granovetter (1973) classifies ties as strong, weak, or absent. Relationships with multiple meanings or dependencies indicate strong ties. Some anthropologists suggest
“multiplexity,” that is, multiple contents in a relationship, as indicating a strong tie (Kapferer, 1969, p. 213). In fact, some ties with only one content or with diffuse content may be strong as well (Simmel, 1950). At the individual level, people are more likely to trust the competence of strong ties and be more comfortable to openly discuss ideas with strong ties, individuals will think more creatively when combining non-redundant information received from strong ties to generate new ideas (Yong, 2008). Absent ties include both the lack of any relationship with social resources and ties without substantial significance, such as a “nodding” relationship between people living on the same street, or the tie to the vendor from whom one customarily buys a morning newspaper (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1361). Two people who know each other by name need not move their relation out of this catthe participantry if their interaction is negligible.

On the other hand, Granovetter (1973) says that weak ties are often a bridge between densely interconnected social cliques and thus provide a source of unique information and resources. Granovetter’s work focuses on the strength of the social ties a person uses in the process of securing employment. Granovetter (1973) and Seibert et al. (2001) agree that weak ties were more likely than strong ties to be the source of information about job openings for the sample of job incumbents in their respective samples of managers, technical professionals and college graduates. The information and access to resources that one member of a social group (clique) possesses will likely be either shared quickly or is already redundant with the information that others members of the clique possess. Weak ties that reach outside of one's social clique are likely to be
weak (that is, not emotionally in-tense, infrequent, and restricted to one narrow type of relationship) rather than strong ties.

**Strong Ties**

Strong ties by definition, represent commitment, trust, obligation and therefore motivation to help (Granovetter, 1973; Lin, 1999). Strong ties also have an important value and play a significant role in obtaining career success. Weak ties provide the participant with access to information and resources available through a network of social resources beyond those available in their own circle; but strong ties are social resources that provide social support and are typically more easily available (Granovetter, 1983, p. 209). Pool (1980) argues that the use of weak or strong ties by an individual for any purpose will depend on the number of ties the participant has a various levels of tie strength and also the utility of ties of different strength (Poole, 1980 as cited in Granovetter, 1983). Therefore, the participants who utilize weak ties often are much more successful than those who use strong ties because they may still be constrained to use the latter if weak ties make up an extremely small portion of their contacts. Conversely, one for whom strong ties are more useful may be socially isolated and forced to fall back on weak ones (Granovetter, 1983, p. 210). Given the welfare to work population’s demographic makeup of majority single mothers, strong ties are vital in most cases to assisting participants with additional work supports like transportation, childcare, and additional monetary funds as needed. A number of studies indicate that people living in poverty rely more on strong ties than do others. Ericksen and Yancey (1977) conducted a study in Philadelphia, concluded that the “structure of modern society is such that some people typically find it advantageous to maintain strong networks and
we have shown that these people are more likely to be young, less well educated, and black” (Ericksen & Yancey, 1977, p. 23). Granovetter further explains that:

Two ethnographic studies demonstrate the same point: Stack (1974) studied a black, urban American, midwestern ghetto, Lomnitz (1977) a shantytown on the fringes of Mexico City. Without apparent knowledge of one another's work, and despite the enormous cultural differences between these two populations, the investigators came to nearly identical conclusions. Stack: "Black families living in the Flats need a steady source of cooperative support to survive. They share with one another because of the urgency of their needs. . . . They trade food stamps, rent money, a TV, hats, dice, a car, a nickel here, a cigarette there, food, milk, grits, and children. . . . Kin and close friends who fall into similar economic crises know that they may share the food, dwelling, and even the few scarce luxuries of those individuals in their kin network. . . . Non-kin who live up to one another's expectations express elaborate vows of friendship and conduct their social relations within the idiom of kinship" (1974, pp. 32-33, 40). Lomnitz: "Since marginals are barred from full membership in the urban industrial economy they have had to build their own economic system. The basic social economic structure of the shantytown is the reciprocity network. . . . It is a social field defined by an intense flow of reciprocal exchange between neighbors. The main purpose . . . is to provide a minimum level of economic security to its members" (1977, p. 209). The similarity extends also to the use of fictive kinship as both effect and cause of further reciprocity (Granovetter, 1983, p. 213).
The strength of social ties, be they weak or strong, create access to social resources that individuals can use to realize career success. Weak ties are not intimate, do not require extensive time investment, yet can produce information and resources about jobs that were unknown to the individual or by others in a specific social network. On the other hand, strong ties are intimate and characterized by frequent personal contact. These social ties can provide assistance that permits individuals to access additional support not otherwise available that may also assist in the achievement of career success. Social ties produce social resources that are beneficial and vital to career success. Social resources are embedded within social networks and provide an avenue where social ties can produce network benefits because of their availability.

Social Resources and Network Benefits

Social resource theory (Lin et al., 1981) concentrates on the resources within a social network. The concept of social resources encompasses two components: social relations and the resources embedded in positions reached through such relations. The concept contrasts and complements the concept of personal resources as Sorenson (1977) describes in the social mobility and status attainment literature. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) agree with Lin et al. (1981) that social capital consists of all actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit.

Social capital may refer to a variety of features in the social structure, according to different scholars, community norms (Coleman 1990), group solidarity (Hechter, 1983; Portes & Senssenbrenner 1993), participation in voluntary and civic organizations (Putnam 1995), it has become clear that social capital refers primarily to resources

While personal resources involve the individual’s wealth, status, and power, social resources are embedded in the positions of contacts the participant reaches through his social network (Sorenson, 1977). These characteristics include but are broader than the reputational or prestigious characteristics as emphasized in the works of Laumann (1966) and Goode (1978). The proposed definition of resources is also consistent with Goode’s four types of resources in the social-control processes: force, wealth, prestige, and friendship-love-affection (pp. 2-6). When seeking a job an individual gains more by contacting someone upward in the hierarchical structure, who has, in other words, greater social resources. Reaching greater social resources is positively related to occupational status attainment (Lin et al., 1981).

Lin et al. (1981) use data from a sample of working males ages 21-64 in the metropolitan area of Albany-Troy-Schenectady, New York, and found that the job seeker’s personal resources (initially family background, but more importantly later his educational and occupational achievements) as well as his use of weak ties affect his ability to reach a contact of high status. The contact’s status, in turn, has a strong and direct effect on the prestige of the job that an individual gets (Lin et al., 1981).

In addition, Lin et al. (1981) argue that it is not the weak ties that convey advantage but instead that fact that such ties are more likely to reach someone with the type of resource that an individual requires to fulfill his or her career objectives. Social resources are accessible through one’s direct (strong) and indirect (weak) ties (Lin, 1999). Access to and use of these resources are temporary and borrowed. For example, the
occupational position of a friend or associate may be a social resource to secure a position in their company. A person in an individual’s social network who possesses characteristics or controls resources that are useful for the attainment of an individual’s goals serve as a social resource (Seibert et al., 2001, p.221).

The strength of ties and social resources are related as explained thus far. They are concepts articulating an individual’s interactions with structures of statuses and roles (Granovetter, 1979), and thus seem to be useful concepts in our attempt to bring social structure into an analysis of the status attainment process (Lin et al., 1981).

Lin et al. (1981) in their work, *Social Resources and Strength of Ties*, contrast Granovetter’s work and place emphasis on dense networks as a resource and the strength that derives from strong ties. This is essential when working with welfare to work participants; the majority consists of single parents who rely heavily on close family and friends for additional childcare, transportation, and monetary support. The problem is that the social ties seldom reach beyond their neighborhood, thus depriving its inhabitants of sources of information about employment opportunities elsewhere and ways to attain them (Portes, 1998). Wacquant and Wilson (1989) and Wilson (1987, 1996) also emphasize the ways in which the departure of both industrial employment and middle-class families from black inner city areas have left the remaining population bereft of social capital, a situation leading to its extremely high levels of unemployment and welfare dependency (Portes, 1998, p. 14).

Social network research suggests that access to useful information might be the greatest in a network with diverse members throughout the organization instead of one department (Morrison, 2002). Diversity enables the tapping of multiple information
sources. Campbell et al. (1986) contend that diversity has been referred to as network range. Informational contacts from a variety of functions throughout the organization provide a broader social and learning perspective for the employee; a wider network range.

Social network research also emphasizes the instrumental value of network status, defined as the extent to which one’s network contacts hold high positions in the relevant status hierarchy (Lin, 1982). Ibarra (1995) emphasizes that political advantages exist for individuals in higher positions. In addition, informational benefits may also be associated with organizational status, as persons at higher levels in an organization may be better sources of certain types of information than those at lower levels (Louis, 1990; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Wegener (1991) concludes that the prestige of the person contacted has a strong positive effect on the prestige of the found job.

Social capital signifies resources (e.g. information, influence, solidarity) that an individual has at one’s disposal by means of the nature of one’s relational ties with others and one’s position in a particular social structure (Bozionelos, 2003; Adler & Kwon, 2002; Coleman, 1988). Interpersonal processes create social capital and make “possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible” (Coleman, 1988, p. S98). The appropriability and substitutability properties of social capital, accomplish the interpersonal processes (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Substitutability refers to the ability of social capital to substitute for or complement other resources or qualities (e.g., direct access to information or individuals, performance, position power) (Bozionelos, 2003). Appropriability refers to the fact that relationship ties of a certain type (e.g., friendships) can be used for multiple purposes (e.g. emotional support, access
to information, performance feedback, exposure to senior organizational decision makers) (Bozionelos, 2003).

Consistent empirical findings indicate that individuals’ personal relationships affect their social standing and status attainment in organizations (Nakao, 2004). A primary source is through social contacts of others with high status as capital (Lin et al., 1981; DeGraff & Flap, 1988; Marsden & Hurlbert, 1988; Wegener, 1991; and Bian, 1997). Granovetter (1974) explains that 56% of the professionals and managers in his study obtain jobs through personal contacts. In addition, Corcoran, Datcher, and Duncan (1980) found that 50% of their sample found jobs through contacts. Lin et al. (1981) concur with their study of males ages 20-64, who were in the civilian workforce in a tri-city area of the Northeastern United States. In their sample, 59% of the sample used contacts to secure information on jobs available. Marsden and Hurlbert (1988) report that 64% of their participant sample is able to locate jobs based on personal contacts with individuals in their organization. These five studies confirm the importance and independent effect of social resources on occupational achievement.

Morrison (2002) contends that organizational knowledge is likely to be enhanced by a newcomer’s having informational contacts from a variety of different organizational departments, since this type of learning requires a broad perspective on the organization (p. 1151). Morrison (2002) further elaborates on task and role learning may be easier for newcomers if their informational network contains supervisors and not just peers, because the former are likely to have greater relevant experience and greater understanding of the newcomer’s role responsibilities. Ibarra (1995) suggests that individuals derive the most information, social and career support from close-knit
networks of relationships. Newcomers with friendship ties that span organizational units and levels, as opposed to those with ties only within a single unit and only with peers at the same level, will have a stronger attachment to their overall organizations. In addition, newcomers with larger informational networks that cut across organizational units report greater organizational knowledge, whereas those with denser and stronger informational networks indicated greater mastery of their jobs and greater clarity with respect to their roles (Morrison, 2002). Finally, having individuals from higher management (as opposed to just peers) in one’s informational network results in career success through increases in job and role learning (Morrison, 2002, p. 1156). Due to the lack of workforce attachment, welfare to work participants can benefit from forming a social network with both strong and weak relationships.

**Kinship (Kin) Networks as Social Resources**

The welfare to work populations being studied consists of single mothers who often rely on others for additional family support. Most young mothers have access to family and friends for additional childcare transportation, and monetary needs (Parish et al., 1991). Kinship networks clearly extend beyond the immediate nuclear family and they improve the quality of life for some young mothers. More than a third of all working mothers turn to kin for assistance with low-cost childcare (Parish et al., 1991; Brandon, 1995). For a small minority, financial assistance from others also covers half or more of all living expenses (Parish et al., 1991). Child care and income support are areas where welfare to work participants need the most assistance (Livermore et al., 2007; Livermore et al., 2008; Livermore et al., 2009). The greatest benefits are still not enough
in Louisiana especially if parents need non-traditional child care for work or school offered at night and on weekends (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2011).

Young mothers are more likely to finish high school if they remain with their parents after having a child. The kin network must remain important for on-going social contact and for rare emergencies, events not easy to capture in an annual survey. This role can change once women mature and decide to move into their own households. Parish et al. (1991) found that young black mothers were more likely to live near kin and to receive in-kind child care assistance from kin. They also reported that black mothers were no more likely to enter the labor force when kin were available than were similar groups of white mothers. This is consistent with findings of another study conducted by Tienda and Glass (1985) that found that while extended households promoted women’s work among Hispanics, it failed to do so among African Americans or Caucasians. Even while potentially providing short-term relief, kin support does not easily compensate for other conditions that inhibit women’s long-term economic well-being (Parish et al., 1991).

Although many women escape the cycle of welfare dependency of their parents, the numbers among the general population continue to increase. Factors that lead to intergenerational welfare dependency include but are not limited to less attachment to work or careers, less acquaintance with proper on the job behavior, fewer job-search skills, and fewer informal job contacts (Parish et al., 1991, p.213).

Kin networks provide significant assistance to coresident and residually dispersed kin. Many forms of kin assistance fade rapidly with increasing age and distance, and seem modest in comparison to practices in other societies, such as Japan
and Taiwan, where kin availability has much stronger effects on women’s employment (Chang, 1982; Morgan & Hiroshima, 1983). Significant cultural differences exist between racial and ethnic groups in the United States. African Americans are more likely to receive assistance from family and relatives (Hays & Mindel, 1973). Much of the help by kin depends on these kin themselves, male and female, being employed and having the income to provide occasional cash assistance. Teitler et al. (2004) conducted a study where 76% of unwed mothers participate in the labor market, usually full-time and had to rely on kin networks for support in addition to their earnings and paternal contributions, such as child support.

Edin and Lein (1997) report that welfare recipients had an average budget shortfall of $311 per month in a study of 379 low income single mothers in four U.S. cities. Edin and Lein (1996) contend that welfare recipients generated extra income by working at side jobs and by obtaining cash from network members, community groups, and local charities to supplement additional income. They demonstrate that mothers who managed to sustain their families while working at low-wage jobs usually have low expenses and/or receive regular and substantial cash help from people in their personal networks (Edin & Lein, 1996). They conclude that these social ties to individuals and networks for additional resources were forms of social capital. Kinship networks serve as social ties and provide monetary and nonmonetary resources to single mothers to assist with shortfalls and the achievement of career success (Angel & Tienda, 1982; Edin & Lein, 1996; Hofferth, 1984; Hogan, 1991; Hogan, Hao, & Parish, 1990; Marks & McLanahan, 1993; Martineau, 1977; Parish et al., 1991; Stack, 1974; Taylor, 1993; Wellman & Wortley, 1990).
Edin and Lein (1996) and Brandon (1995) affirm that some nonmonetary resources are available to working mothers through kinship or strong social ties and include, but are not limited, to low-cost or no cost child care with friends or relatives, living with friends or relatives who charged them little or no rent, low commuting costs because they could walk or have someone drive them, to name a few. These resources are sometimes just as valuable to a mother's career success because it provides her with freedom and time to concentrate on her career. The strength of tie and social resources are, of course, related. Both are concepts articulating an individual’s interactions with structures and statuses and roles Granovetter (1979), and thus seem to bring social structure into an analysis of the status attainment process (Lin et al., 1981). Social capital is more than social relations and networks; it evokes the resources, monetary and nonmonetary, embedded and accessed within them.

Social Resources, Career Sponsorship, and Minorities

Ilgen and Youz (1986) and Kanter (1979) suggest that minority members are less likely than others to have access to these resources because potential sponsors or mentors, most of whom are likely to be Caucasian, tend to chose proteges who are similar to themselves in social background and with whom they can more readily identify (Greenhaus et al., 1990). Ibarra (1995) comment that minorities feel excluded from a variety of social activities that take place after working hours (e.g., Davis & Watson, 1982; Fernandez, 1991); demographically different individuals are also found to be the least socially integrated within their groups (Ibarra, 1995, p.677; Kanter, 1977; and O’Reilly, Caldwell, & Barnett, 1989). Wegener (1991) contends that most real social networks are somewhat heterogeneous, containing some persons of high status and some
lower status (Wegener, 1991). This is not the case for most minority groups that often manage multiple social circles in the workplace because they often develop both minority networks, which provide social support and information or advice on unique issues faced by minorities, and ties to the majority group, which provide access to important resources (Dickens & Dickens, 1982; Thomas, 1990).

An individual’s social resources are the result of the number of people who want to help him/her, the resources that he/she can mobilize in this indirect way, and the extent to which others are prepare to give support (DeGraff & Flap, 1988). Although using personal contacts does not always further one’s occupational success (Lin et al., 1981), without a doubt some persons or groups are better off occupationally because of their social connections (e.g., Corcoran et al., 1980; Granovetter 1974; Habich 1984; de Graff and Flap, 1988).

Many argue that exclusion from social networks explains the failure of minority managers to advance more rapidly in their careers and organizations (Dickens & Dickens, 1982; DiTomaso, Thompson, & Blake, 1988; Irons & Moore, 1985; Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990 as cited in Ibarra, 1995). Social networks in organizations can serve as social resources if the affiliations provide access to task-related, career, and social support. The representation of minorities in the ranks of management in the Fortune 500, for example, averages less than 12% and gaps of 15 to 30 percentage points commonly exist between the proportions of minority members in the overall managerial ranks and in middle and higher levels of management in those companies (Cox, 1991). According to Ibarra (1995), members of minority groups often develop relationships within and across nonoverlapping social circles. Bell (1990), Ibarra (1995), Thomas and Alderfer (1989)
add that the use of biculturalism explains the experience of African Americans, who require access to both the black community and the dominant culture in order to obtain social support and job-related resources. Granovetter (1973) points out that an important component of tie strength is interpersonal closeness of a network relationship. As stated in Ibarra (1995) cross-race relationships tend to be weaker than same race ties (Thomas, 1990), and informal social relations (friendship ties) tend to develop between people who share commonalities, including race and gender (Ibarra, 1992; Lincoln & Miller, 1979; Tsui & O’Reilly, 1989). Therefore, welfare to work participants must create relationships that cross racial boundaries to ultimately create a diverse social network that will provide resources heavier in social capital.

Network Benefits and Career Success

Bozionelos (2003) investigated the relationship between intra-organizational network resources with extrinsic and intrinsic career success with a sample of 264 white-collar workers. Results suggest that network resources are associated with intra-organizational career success over and above human capital, demographics, and mentoring received. Results further explain that investments in the accumulation of network resources and in an exclusive relationship with a mentor have complementary effects on career success.

Career success research is derived from career theory and its underlying assumptions. Career success is an outcome of a person’s career experiences (Arthur, Khapova & Wilderom, 2005). Careers are personal and unique. Success is the retrospective sense making we attach to our past travels, how we feel about our current position on the map, and the nature of the future destinations we can visualize in our
minds. The landscape of career pathways and opportunity structures consist complex network structures along with changes across times and cultures, and the ability of individuals to move within them is delimited in each case by the types of social networks they belong to and the person’s specific location within the network (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005). An individual’s point of origin in society, geographical, location, historical juncture, social position of their family, and personal attributes, all strongly constrain the possible scope of that person’s career journey if not the detailed route (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005; Caston, 1989; Sieben & de Graaf, 2001).

Career success is the concept that refers to extrinsic and intrinsic accomplishments of individuals in their work lives (Bozionelos, 2003; Heslin, 2005; Judge et al., 1995). Career success can also be described in two different ways; subjective and objective. Subjective career success is one’s perceived or own sense of his or her career and what it is unfolding to be (Stebbins, 1970). Objective career success provides more accurate concrete measures of success; observable positions, situations, and status ‘that serve as landmarks for gauging a person’s movement through the social milieu’ (Barley, 1989, p. 49). Subjective and objective career success together provide a concrete understanding of one’s perception of career success in the workplace.

Subjective Career Success

Arthur et al. (2005) define subjective career success as the individual’s internal apprehension and evaluation of his or her career, across any dimensions that are important to that individual (Van Maanen, 1977, p. 9). Individuals will place different values on those things deemed important. For some it may be income, status, work location, access to professional development or promotions throughout the company as
opposed to personal and family time. The subjective careers of people in similar social
and employment circumstances—such as women, minorities, white males, doctors,
secretaries, construction workers—may overlap, but ‘it would be a mistake. . . to assume
that all members in a particular social category’ would share the same subjective career
orientations (Bailyn, 1989, p. 482).

Career satisfaction is one of the most widely used measures of subjective career
factors as cited by 18 different scholars of the last 20 years (Martins, Eddleston, & Veiga,
2002; Seibert et al., 2001; Campion, Stevens, & Cheraskin, 1994; Turban & Dougherty,
1994; Schneer & Reitman, 1993; Harris, Moritzen, Robitschek, Imhoff, & Lynch, 2001;
Aryee, Chay, Tan, 1994; Nicholson, 1993; Cable & DeRue, 2002; Seibert, Crant, &
Kraimer, 1999; Lyness & Thompson, 1997; Chao, O’Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Kleen, &
Gardiner, 1994; Murphy & Ensher, 2001; Blake-Beard, 1999; Kirchmeyer, 1998; Judge
& Bretz, 1994; Aryee, Wyatt, & Stone, 1996; Wayne, Liden, Kraimer, & Graf, 1999). Of
the 68 articles on career success reviewed by Arthur et al. (2005), one-half (34) included
career satisfaction as a measure of subjective career factors. Other subjective career
factors used to measure career success include career management outcomes, knowledge
and skills perceptual outcomes (Campion et al, 1994; Poole, Langan-Fox, & Omodei,
1993), peer support and social integration with fellow co-workers (Burlew & Johnson,
1992 & Wallace, 2001), perceived career plateau (Tremblay, Roger, & Toulouse, 1995),
organizational commitment (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Judge, Thoresen, Pucik, &
Welbourne, 1999), career involvement, identity resolution and adaptability (Chao et al.,
Objective Career Success

Objective career success can be defined as the quantifiable value that attaches to any social position, in terms of current utilities (such as standard of living) plus the range of values that, actuarially, could be reasonably expected to accrue in the foreseeable future (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005). In every society there are the haves and the have-nots, the advantaged and the disadvantaged; an individual’s utility is mainly determined by where you were born, who is disposed to invest in your future, and what gifts and handicaps you carry with you (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005).

Arthur et al. (2005) define objective career success an external perspective that delineates more or less tangible indicators of an individual’s career situation. Occupation, family situation, mobility, task attributes, income, and job level (Van Maanen, 1977, p. 9). The objective career is publicly accessible, and concerned with social role and official position in society and the workplace. Objective career success reflects shared social understanding rather than distinctive individual understanding (Arthur et al., 2005). Objective career factors are quantifiable and tangible. These factors can be used for comparisons in and among individuals.

Seibert et al. (2001) examined the impacts of social capital on career success. They identified salary, promotions, and career satisfaction as factors leading to career success. A significant number of scholars have attributed salary and promotions as two of the main objective career factors used to evaluate career success (Judiesch & Lyness, 1999; Campion et al., 1994; Turban & Dougherty, 1999; O’Reilly III & Chatman, 1994; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Judge et al., 1999; Stroh, Brett, & Reilly, 1992; Blake-Beard, 1999; Tharenou, 1999; Orpen, 1995; Orpen, 1998; Seibert & Kraimer, 2001;
An individual’s salary is an indication as to whether they are successful or not. Martins et al. (2002) measured career outcomes and satisfaction using financial outcomes, career advancement, autonomy, and power as measures of objective career success. Tharenou (2001), while studying managerial advancement, also selected salary as well as position type, span of control, and managerial promotions as measures of objective career success.

Social Capital and Career Success

Human capital is vital to career success yet is useless without the social capital of opportunities to apply it (Burt, 1997). Seibert et al. (2001) revealed the importance of social capital on career success. In their study “social resources were positively related to current salary, number of promotions over the career, and career satisfaction through their positive relationships with three measures of network benefits—access to information, access to resources, and career sponsorship” (p.232). The results of the study show that the number of weak ties in an individual’s network has independent effects on the level of social resources available (Seibert et al., 2001). In addition, the results also emphasize the importance of strong ties in providing information and social support as did studies by Festinger (1950) and Krackhardt (1992) (Seibert et al., 2001). Strong relationships permit the exchange of additional information and resources. It is best for a person to invest in the development of weak ties to increase the level of social resources embedded in his or her network, but then to invest (perhaps selectively) in strengthening those ties to increase the benefits actually mobilized on his or her behalf (Siebert et al., 2001, p.232). Welfare to work participants essentially must develop both strong and weak ties in order to establish relationship with social resources that in turn will provide access to
information, resources, and career sponsorship. All of these factors will foster career success in the welfare to work population.

Career Success and Minorities

In considering the welfare to work population one must consider the effects that race has on organizational experiences, job performance evaluations, and career outcomes. Unlike access discrimination which prevents members of a subgroup of the population from entering a job or an organization, treatment discrimination occurs when subgroup members receive fewer rewards, resources, or opportunities on the job than they legitimately deserve on the basis on job related criteria. Such discrimination is based more on their subgroup membership than on their merit of achievements (Levitin, Quinn, & Staines, 1971). Relationships in informal social networks have also been identified as important factors likely to influence organizational advancement and promotion (Greenhaus et al., 1990; Kanter, 1979; Tsui 1984). Ilgen and Youtz (1986) suggested that minority members may experience treatment discrimination and not be fully accepted into the informal networks in their organizations. This was proven in Nixon’s (1985) study where 56% of the black managers in the sample perceived themselves as either partially or totally alienated from the formal and informal aspects of corporate life. Thomas (1990) found that racial differences were often an obstacle for white mentors in identifying positively with their African American protégés, and Tsui and O’Reilly (1989) reported that demographic similarity affected superiors’ personal attraction to and identification with subordinates (Ibarra, 1995). Clearly, this is an important component of establishing ties in organizations.
Treatment discrimination experienced by minorities may reduce their job performance and career prospects, since they would receive fewer opportunities to enhance work-related skills and develop supportive relationships within an organization than other employees (Greenhaus et al., 1990). A Greenhaus et al. (1990) study concludes that race has direct effects on job performance evaluations, career plateaus, and career satisfaction. In addition when compared to white managers, black managers felt less accepted in their organization, perceived themselves as having less discretion in their jobs, received lower rating from their supervisors on their job performance and promotability (Greenhaus et al., 1990). It also strengthens the conclusion of Fernandez (1975) Fernandez (1981) and Nixon (1985) that blacks may be excluded from opportunities for power and integration within organizations and that such exclusion may be detrimental to their job performance (Greenhaus et al., 1990). These studies further stress the need for welfare to work programs to incorporate work activities that will increase the density of participant’s social networks and provide opportunities to develop relationships with individuals at all levels of the organization and integrate them into the workforce.

Historically, minorities have been excluded from informal social networks in organizations that possess the resources they need for promotion and advancement. Welfare to work programs must create avenues for minorities to develop the social networks needed to catapult them into higher levels of the organization and realize career success.

Social networks provide a platform for establishing relationships in organizations, whether they are strong or weak. These social networks produce social resources that can
be utilized by individuals to navigate their personal career success ladder. Developing social networks and relationships in them requires time investments by the participant and their network of social resources. These resources are valuable and produce benefits that can ultimately lead to career success for welfare to work participants over time. Welfare programs can foster social capital development through work activities that promote the establishment of social networks consisting of relationships with strong and weak ties.

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA)

President Bill Clinton signed the welfare reform bill, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) on August 22, 1996. Blank and Haskins (2001) stated that this “legislation passed Congress with a bigger bipartisan majority-consisting of nearly all Republicans and about half the Democrats in the House and Senate- than the bipartisan majority that enacted Medicare of 1965” (p.3). This bill varies greatly from the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program. Unlike the process driven AFDC program that provided limited assistance to its’ participants, the outcome driven TANF program’s main goal was to help families reach self-sufficiency through work and work related supports (Danziger, 2001; Weaver, 2000).

The 1996 Welfare Reform Law includes eight provisions that distinguish the program from the previous AFDC program. Each provision is listed and explained in Table 1 below.
Table 1

*Major Provisions in the 1996 Welfare Reform Law*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Title I: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families</strong></td>
<td>Block grants to states to help needy children, to reduce non-marital births, and for other purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title II: Supplemental Security Income</strong></td>
<td>A permanently authorized entitlement program intended to tighten the standards by which children qualified for cash SSI benefits and thereby reduce the number of children receiving SSI.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title III: Child Support Enforcement</strong></td>
<td>A permanently authorized entitlement program aimed at improving the performance of the child support program so that more noncustodial parents would be located, more paternities established, more child support orders put in place, and more money collected to help single mothers leaving welfare and to reimburse the government for providing cash welfare payments for needy children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title IV: Restricting Welfare and Public Benefits for Aliens</strong></td>
<td>The amendments that restrict alien eligibility for welfare benefits are permanent, free-standing provisions of law. Ended welfare for noncitizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title V: Child Protection</strong></td>
<td>Provided funding to conduct a longitudinal study of children with confirmed cases of abuse or neglect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title VI: Child Care</strong></td>
<td>Combined several programs that provide child care for low-income and welfare families. Provision also increased total child care funding by about $4.5 billion over six years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title VII: Child Nutrition</strong></td>
<td>Authorized child nutrition program through 2003.</td>
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Table 1 (continued).

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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Title VIII: Food Stamps and Commodity Distribution</td>
<td>Expanded state options and control of food stamps, with regard to sanctions for noncompliance with various state requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title XI: Miscellaneous</td>
<td>Abstinence education grants</td>
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From Blank and Haskins, 2001, New World of Welfare.

The most important elements of the TANF reforms include the following five major provisions. The first provision was that states were given primary responsibility for designing their cash assistance program and determining the rules under which families could receive assistance. In addition, the entitlement to benefits provided under AFDC was abolished. Thirdly, the AFDC funding mechanism of open-ended federal matching payments for state welfare expenditures was replaced by a block grant to each state. Fourth, states are required to place an annually accelerating percentage of their caseload in work activities for a specific number of hours, although states can also meet this requirement by reducing their caseload below its 1995 level. Finally, states are not allowed to use federal TANF dollars to pay the benefits of families who have been on welfare for more than five years. Twenty percent of the caseload may be exempted from this time limit.
Louisiana’s Welfare Reform Since 1997

In 1997, Louisiana implemented two TANF programs; the Family Independent Temporary Assistance Program (FITAP) that provides cash assistance to low-income families and the Family Independence Work Program (FIND Work), an employment and training program for adult FITAP recipients (Berkley Policy Associates, 2002). Following federal TANF rules, the State established a lifetime limit of 60 months for receipt of cash assistance by adult-headed families, a mandatory work requirement for adult recipients, and a child support enforcement requirement. In addition, Louisiana adopted a 24-month time limit on receipt of cash assistance during any five-year period, school attendance and immunization requirements for children, a time limited $900 month earnings disregard for employed recipients, mandatory screening of all adults recipients for illegal drug use, and transitional transportation payments for FITAP recipients who leave the program for employment (Berkeley Policy Associates, 2002).

Since 1997, Louisiana has had a drop in its TANF cash assistance caseload. Berkeley Policy Associates (2002) reported a decline of over 60% in the FITAP caseload and roughly 20,000 open FITAP cases. Many of the recipients are single mothers, less than 30 years old, and about half did not complete high school or receive a GED (Berkeley Policy Associates, 2002). Statistics confer that recipients need additional education and training in order to become self-sufficient. The FIND Work program was designed to prepare adult FITAP recipients for employment. The new United States TANF programs require that states have at least 50% of their families in these activities for at least 30 hours per week by 2000 (Louisiana Division of Administration's TANF Office of Oversight and Evaluation, 2003). As of 2003, Louisiana reported a 62%
decline in the state’s welfare caseload. In this year alone, 46% of welfare recipients left welfare for employment and 87% had earnings below the poverty level (Louisiana Division of Administration's TANF Office of Oversight and Evaluation, 2003). Most employed welfare leavers in 2003 worked over 30 hours a week and earned an average of $6.68 per hour (Louisiana Division of Administration’s TANF Office of Oversight and Evaluation, 2003). In addition, about 50% of the adult welfare recipients did not graduate from high school or possess a GED and consequently earned up to $1 less than those with did complete high school. Unfortunately 15% of welfare participants that left the program two years previously returned in 2003. An additional 41% of welfare leavers were off welfare and not working in 2003. “Under federal TANF regulations, the FIND Work program is required to balance two sometimes competing objectives, placing TANF recipients in jobs as quickly as possible while preparing those with minimal skills or low levels of education for jobs that provide them with the prospect of attaining self-sufficiency” (Louisiana Division of Administration’s TANF Office of Oversight and Evaluation, 2003, p. 3). Overall, the 2003 TANF program evaluation concluded that FIND Work was not effective in preparing recipients for employment or increasing basic literacy. Berkeley Policy Associates (2002) agree that the FIND Work program did not provide broad assistance to recipients in workplace literacy and educational advancement. Carville (2005) added that “under FIND Work, approvals were granted for very limited educational activities, for a very limited period of time, and usually for a subset of welfare program recipients in certain age and educational categories” (p. 10).

Louisiana revamped FIND Work in 2003 replacing it with Strategies to Empower People (STEP). The STEP Program is the result of the Personal Responsibility and
Universal Engagement Act of 2003 passed by the Louisiana Legislature. The purpose of the STEP program is to provide opportunities for work-eligible families of FITAP to receive job training, employment and supportive services to enable them to become self-sufficient. Unfortunately, this has not been the case in Louisiana’s welfare to work program.

In 2009, only 31.33% (6,953 participants) of the welfare to work program participants in Louisiana left the program because of employment or excess earnings. 47.64% of these leavers were employed for the first four quarters after leaving the welfare to work program. 52.36% of these leavers were not employed for all four quarters after leaving the program. Table 2 details the percentage of STEP leavers and their quarterly and annual earnings from 2007–2009.

Table 2

*STEP Employment and Wages*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% left STEP for Employment/Earnings</th>
<th>Average Quarterly Wages</th>
<th>Average Annual Wages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>26.77%</td>
<td>$1327.23</td>
<td>$4229.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>16.77%</td>
<td>$1337.20</td>
<td>$5348.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>31.63%</td>
<td>$1816.00</td>
<td>$7265</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individuals leaving the program are moving from welfare to the “working poor” classification; jobs being obtained still do not provide financial support to achieve self-sufficiency. In 2009, the average annual wages for these leavers was $7265 and quarterly
$1816 (Livermore et al., 2009). While still very low, these wages were higher than those realized by leavers in the two prior years. A demographic profile of STEP leavers for earnings or employment in 2009 include a majority females (97.62%), who were single (94.7%), belonged to a minority group (81.67%) and had at least a high school diploma or GED (67.99%) (Livermore et al., 2009). The average age of STEP leavers for earnings and employment was 27.

With regard to work activities, from 2007 to 2009 STEP Program evaluations have made recommendations that participants be involved in more, rather than, fewer work activities to encourage engagement in job search activities, unsubsidized employment, vocational education and on the job training (Livermore et al., 2009). Complying with program rules during this time period was also related to higher wages upon completion. Participants who realized higher earnings after leaving STEP had higher compliance rates, participated in more work activities, and participated at a higher rate in unsubsidized employment, job search and on the job training (Livermore et al., 2009).

Summary

Welfare to work programs are essential to ending the cycle of poverty and unemployment among the welfare population. While the Louisiana welfare to work program does address job search and workplace readiness for participants, these activities are inadequate at producing the amount of social capital necessary for not only acquiring employment but career success ultimately. Participants must identify adequate social resources that can assist in the development of social networks consisting of weak and strong ties. Social networks containing a variety of social resources, a combination of
strong and weak ties, produce social network benefits that include access to information, access to resources, and career sponsorship. Social network benefits are vital to producing subjective and objective career success measures for welfare to work participants. Increasing social capital production among welfare to work participants may improve program outcomes and participant career success in the STEP program.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methodology for data collection and analysis used to examine the effects of social capital on career success for welfare to work program participants, employed after leaving the STEP program in Louisiana. In addition, the study population and sample selection are described and selection feasibility addressed. The interview instrument containing questions for the in-person semi-structured interviews is described and served as a guide for data collection and analysis. Finally, validity and credibility of the research study are discussed to support rigorous and effective research.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between social capital and career success among welfare to work participants in Louisiana. Six research objectives are utilized to accomplish the goals of this study.

• RO1: Describe the Louisiana STEP participants by socio-economic status, identifying education, occupation, financial status and gender, race, and marital status.

• RO2: Determine the relationship between weak ties and (a) contacts in other departments in the organization where the participant is employed, (b) contacts at higher levels of management in the organization where the participant is employed and (c) extended kinship networks of the participant and career success as perceived by Louisiana welfare to work program participants.

• RO3: Determine the relationship between strong ties and (a) contacts in other
departments in the organization where the participant is employed, (b) contacts at
greater levels of management in the organization where the participant is employed
and (c) extended kinship networks of the participant and career success as perceived
by Louisiana welfare to work program participants.

- **RO4**: Determine the relationship between social network structure ((a) strong ties
and (b) weak ties) and career success, as perceived by Louisiana welfare to work
program participants.

- **RO5**: Identify social network benefits derived from social resources and (a) access
to information (b) access to resources and (c) access to career sponsorship for career
success as perceived by Louisiana welfare to work program participants.

- **RO6**: Determine the relationship between the social network (resources) benefits
derived from social resources and career success and (a) current salary, (b)
promotions over entire career and (c) career satisfaction as perceived by Louisiana
welfare to work program participants.

**Population**

Lafayette Parish was chosen as the focus area of study because it ranks highest for
percentage of STEP participation as of the fourth quarter of 2007. The Lafayette Region
2007 welfare to work participation rate was 57.77%, exceeding the state average of
51.12%. Lafayette Parish participation in the STEP program rate surpassed regional and
state averages with 58.11% reported for the fourth quarter of 2007. Historically, the
STEP program reports low percentages of participants who work continuously for four
quarters after leaving the STEP program (Livermore et al., 2007; Livermore et al., 2008;
Livermore et al., 2009).
Louisiana’s STEP program provides benefits STEP participant’s 24 months to educational and vocational training must be completed within the 24 month period Louisiana allows for (Louisiana Office of Family Support, Department of Children & Family Services, 2010). Participants entering STEP in 2007 are required to complete a specific program of study by the end of 2009. As of 2011, STEP participants starting in 2007 and completing the program on or before 2009 should have at least two years of work experience by the time of this study. Participants who entered the STEP program after 2009 would possess less work experience since most of their 24 month program eligibility expiration at the end of 2011. Career success, in general, is measured over time, inferring that more time spent in the workforce will provide a more accurate measure of success for STEP participants.

STEP Program evaluations from 2007–2009 report the number of STEP participants employed at least four quarters after completing the program (Livermore, et al., 2007; Livermore, et al., 2008; Livermore, et al., 2009). The STEP program measures of success provided in the annual reports from 2007–2009 include participants who left the program for earnings and employment, and those employed at least four quarters after leaving the program (Livermore, et al., 2007; Livermore, et al, 2008; Livermore, et al, 2009). Each annual STEP evaluation provides the number of statewide participants working at least four quarters after leaving STEP, but this data is not publicly available. To increase the sample size of the study, snowball sampling was used.

Sample

Snowball or chain referral sampling method has been successfully used in exploratory sociological research focusing on sensitive issues like welfare (Bernacki &
Snowball or chain referral sampling yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know of others possessing some characteristics of research interest and is very useful in situations when the focus of a study is a sensitive issue, possibly concerning a relatively private matter, and requires the knowledge of insiders to locate people for the study (Bernacki & Waldorf, 1981). This research fits this criterion because of the strict confidentiality of state welfare participant data, the frequent mobility of participants, and the lack of follow-up data available. Several studies focusing on sensitive issues or hard to reach populations have successfully used snowball sampling. In addition, the snowball technique has been used to investigate family and parent experiences during the welfare to work transition focusing on psychological, social and disability factors (Eberhard, 1999; Lewis, 2008). Locating former STEP participants was a challenge since participant contact information is not released to the public for inspection by the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services. The snowball sampling method allowed the sample to grow as the study continued and more STEP participants were identified by their cohorts.

Independent interviews with previous STEP program directors identified by Louisiana Technical College- Acadiana Campus, Lafayette Parish STEP program personnel produced a list of 2007–2009 STEP participants. Preliminary criteria used to identify participants for this study were (1) participating in STEP program in Lafayette Parish from 2007 to 2009, (2) STEP participants gaining employment after leaving STEP program and (3) reside in Lafayette Parish while in STEP. The total number of STEP
participants and the number leaving for “earnings and employment” cannot be validated using the data provided by DCFS from 2007–2009 since program files and personnel records are confidential and not shared by the state of Louisiana.

Key informants are individuals who know the most about a particular subject and can provide specific information not known by a typical audience (Myers, 2009). Past STEP program directors in Lafayette Parish were contacted to identify past STEP participants from 2007 to 2009 for inclusion in the study. All STEP participants identified by key informants were contacted, but only past STEP participants meeting the preliminary criteria were asked to participate in the study. Each participant completing the interview provided the name of other people from the program.

Research Design

An ex post facto exploratory research design utilizing qualitative methods was used to examine the relationship between social capital and career success for welfare to work participants employed post STEP in Louisiana from 2007 to 2009. The main benefits of qualitative research are the researcher can see and understand the context within which decisions and actions take place and explains why someone acts a certain way (Myers, 2009). In addition, qualitative research is best if the researcher wants to understand motivations, reasons, actions, and the context for participant beliefs and actions in an in-depth way (Myers, 2009). The research design included in-depth, in-person, semi-structured interviews with welfare to work participants from Lafayette Parish, Louisiana from 2007 to 2009.

Pure phenomenological research essentially describes rather than explains and starts from a perspective free from hypotheses or preconceptions (Husserl, 1970). All
qualitative research is phenomenological, in a sense, including interviews (Merriam, 2009). Phenomenological research methods were effective at eliciting the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives.

Many researchers examined the phenomenological experience from welfare to self-sufficiency focusing on feelings, attitudes, perceptions and beliefs of the participants yet one of the biggest problems in many public policy discussions of poverty has been the lack of the perspectives from the poor themselves (Morgan, 2002). Ignoring the voices of the poor may lead to inaccurate reporting on the true lived experiences that are part of the daily transition from welfare to work. Qualitative research provided an avenue to uncover STEP participants’ personal and sensitive information that may not be shared otherwise. Welfare reform and recipients have been stigmatized for many years, and their stories are sometimes lost in the vague statistics reported annually on federally and state mandated reports and evaluations. The methods employed during this study ensured the participant’s voice was included and data were reported from their perspective and lived experiences which cannot always be quantified.

While prior research studies yielded reports and findings displaying statistical tables, charts, graphs, they lack essential explanations of the personal and sensitive information not captured in quantitative statistics. In studies such as the design of this study where the researcher does not have access to confidential documents, case files, or participant information, various qualitative design methods integrating personal interviews, focus groups and case studies successfully provided pertinent information and insight into the lives of welfare to work participants (Eberhard, 1999; King, 2007; McCullough, 2006). A majority of the past research and evaluations of welfare to work
programs, participants, and outcomes were completed by entities or individuals contracted for services or employed by the state regulated program under study, such as TANF, FITAP, welfare to work, etc. (Davidson, 2005; Livermore, et al., 2007; Livermore et al., 2008; Livermore et al., 2009). Contracted individuals and organizations have a vested interest in reporting data in a light that esteems reputation of federally and state officials and programs which can sometimes undermine important factors and measures of success.

Semi Structured Interview Instrument

This section reviews the semi-structured interview instrument used to examine the relationship between social capital development and career success for welfare to work participants. The semi-structured interview combined structured and unstructured interview questions, minimizing risks, providing some structure and allowing for some flexibility. This type of interview gives participants the opportunity to add important insights about personal experiences as they arise during the interview. Semi-structured interview questions were constructed from across a spectrum of theoretical fields including sociology, business management, and career success, but additional or follow up questions emerged during the conversation and were encouraged (Myers, 2009). Methods for controlling researcher bias are discussed in a later section of this chapter. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to gather rich data about personal welfare to work experiences and perceptions from participants that may not have been captured by quantitative research methods or other previous STEP evaluations. A good interview helps focus on the subject’s world and builds a trusting relationship to elicit sensitive information (Myers, 2009). Welfare and poverty are sensitive subjects that
participants may not want to discuss openly if they are uncomfortable or distrustful of the interviewer. Trustworthiness is important because the validity of this study depends on the truthfulness and honesty of STEP participants.

Interview Questions

Qualitative research strives to understand how phenomena emerge from within data as opposed to testing theory already established by the field. The broad research purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between social capital and career success among welfare to work program participants employed post-welfare to work in Lafayette Parish, Louisiana, from 2007 – 2009. Questions were based on the reviewed literature and relevance to the subject matter under study (Greenhaus et al., 1990; Hogan, 1991; Seibert, et al., 2001; Spreitzer, 1996).

Initial interview questions gathered socio-economic data from participants including ethnicity, number of children, marital status, and total years in the workforce. Several questions targeted the participant’s social capital in terms of network size, strong and weak ties. Participants were asked to identify social network benefits accessed from their social network. Finally, career success data collected from participants included salaries, number of promotions received and overall career satisfaction. Interview questions are listed in Appendix B.

Research Objective and Interview Question Map

Developing a survey map demonstrates how research objectives relate to interview questions asked during the data collection phase of a study (Dillman, 2009). Although this is not a quantitative study, a survey map allowed the researcher to accomplish the same task. Research objectives and the accompanying interview
questions used to examine the relationship between social capital and career success among welfare to work participants in Louisiana are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3

*Research Objective & Question Map*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Objective</th>
<th>Related Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Objective 1 - Demographic</td>
<td>Question- 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Objective 2 - Weak Ties</td>
<td>Questions 2 &amp; 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Objective 3 - Strong Ties</td>
<td>Questions 2,3, 4, &amp; 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Objective 4 - Social Network Structure</td>
<td>Questions 2,3, &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Objective 5 - Social Network Benefits</td>
<td>Questions 6, 6a, 6b, &amp; 6c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Objective 6 - Career Success</td>
<td>Question 7, 8, 9, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Additional Information</td>
<td>Question 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Referral (Snowball)</td>
<td>Question 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data Access*

A comprehensive list of welfare to work participants and their annual benefit amounts was provided by the Louisiana State Department of Family and Children Services (DCFS) for 2007 to 2009. The state of Louisiana provided Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF formerly known as welfare), benefit recipient names, and amounts received annually to the public for inspection at $.05 per photocopy page. Written permission for inspection and confidentiality of welfare reports was signed by the researcher and retained on file with DCFS. Annual TANF listings were
sorted by state, region, and parish, listed in alphabetical order by last name, and included cumulative benefit amounts for each individual.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection section covers processes and procedures used to collect data for this study. Table 4 displays a data collection plan for qualitative in person semi-structured interviews. A communication plan is reviewed for contacting participants throughout the study. Semi-structured interviews with welfare to work STEP participants in Lafayette, Louisiana, are then used to examine the relationship between social capital and career success among welfare to work participants in Lafayette Parish.

Table 4 details a structured data collection plan based on the data collection and analysis planning processes outlined by Phillips and Phillips (2005).
Table 4

Data Collection Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Research Objective Variables</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Data Collection Method and Instruments</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RO1</td>
<td>Demographic</td>
<td>Verbal feedback</td>
<td>Semi-Structured interview</td>
<td>STEP Participants</td>
<td>Nov-Jan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO2</td>
<td>Weak Ties</td>
<td>Verbal feedback</td>
<td>Semi-Structured interviews</td>
<td>STEP Participants</td>
<td>Nov-Jan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO3</td>
<td>Strong Ties</td>
<td>Verbal feedback</td>
<td>Semi-Structured interviews</td>
<td>STEP Participants</td>
<td>Nov-Jan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO4</td>
<td>Social Network Structure</td>
<td>Verbal feedback</td>
<td>Semi-Structured interviews</td>
<td>STEP Participants</td>
<td>Nov-Jan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO5</td>
<td>Social Resources</td>
<td>Verbal feedback</td>
<td>Semi-Structured interviews</td>
<td>STEP Participants</td>
<td>Nov-Jan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO6</td>
<td>Social Network Benefits/ Career Success</td>
<td>Verbal feedback</td>
<td>Semi-Structured interviews</td>
<td>STEP Participants</td>
<td>Nov-Jan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The goal of this study was to examine the relationship between social capital and career success among welfare to work participants in Louisiana. The data collection plan was implemented based on processes established by the researcher in the communication plan for this study. Each research question is listed along with data to be collected, method of collection, and timing. Data collection tables showing research variables, interview questions and collection methods that were used for each interview are
provided in Appendix A. Specific data collection processes are discussed later in this chapter.

*The Interview Questions*

To ensure ethical standards were maintained during the course of this study, participants were informed about the purpose of the study so their informed consent could be obtained before the study commenced. Participants' privacy and confidentiality was protected by allowing anonymity and reassurance that all data collected would not be disclosed to unauthorized persons. The researcher took care to minimize any harm caused to the participants, inquiring about objections and fully explaining the potential harm and benefits at the beginning of the process.

The nature and purpose of the research under study were reviewed and signed by participants prior to the interview starting through the Informed Consent agreement along with assurance of confidentiality to make them more comfortable in sharing and explaining their personal views. The study used 10 initial interview questions and additional follow up questions as needed to examine the relationship between social capital and career success among welfare to work participants in Louisiana. Interview questions are listed in Appendix B.

After completing the *Informed Consent Form*, the researcher turned an audio recording on and began the interview with a brief personal introduction. Participants were informed that all documents including notes and transcripts, along with audio files, would be kept in a secured location and destroyed at the end of the study and then destroyed. Additionally, participants were informed that participation in this study was
voluntary and confidential. The identity of participants remained confidential and was not directly associated with the data.

Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and were provided with contact information for the researcher and IRB during the interview and respondent validation processes. The researcher provided a telephone number and email contact to participants for follow up or concerns regarding the study.

All interviews were completed in less than one hour. Participants were asked to review and verify their responses provided during the interview within one week after the initial meeting, which should take no more than 30 minutes of their time. The total time required of welfare to work participants to participate in the study was estimated to be one to two hours. Each interview was conducted in a place convenient for the subject, whether their home or a public coffee house.

Interview data was stored in nVivo 9 (QSR International) and maintained on a password protected computer. The transcripts, including participant information, consent forms and data collection sheets, were kept in individual file folders and stored in a locked cabinet at the researcher’s home, to be destroyed at the end of the study.

Communication Plan

Technology has transformed the way we communicate with each other over the last century, allowing interpersonal communication around the globe in the blink of an eye. Although true for most Americans who have access to technology in their homes, many families living in poverty do not have access to the Internet or a home computer. In addition, families in poverty are highly mobile, changing addresses frequently, sometimes living with relatives and extended family members, making them difficult to
locate with traditional mailing addresses. A rise in cellular phone usage among impoverished communities, especially prepaid phones with no contract, increases the difficulty of locating members of a population who cannot be easily tracked with home telephone numbers. The efficiency and advantages of each communication medium are summarized in Table 5.

Social media were used to facilitate the search for participants. Personal identification searches by the researcher located welfare to work participants identified for inclusion in the study from Lafayette Parish, Louisiana, using the Internet, social media websites, and government records available to the public. Participants were contacted first by Internet, then telephone, or mailing address to ensure an efficient communication process (Thill, 2009). An introduction letter sent to all welfare to work participants identified for inclusion in the research study included the purpose of the study, an explanation of benefits of the study, how the results would be used and time commitment requirements. The introduction letter provided advance notice of the opportunity to participate (See Appendix C). Letters were emailed or delivered via postal service when possible. When only a telephone number was available, the participant was contacted by phone and the contents of the introduction letter were explained verbally.
Table 5

*Communication Mediums Efficiency & Advantages*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Efficiency Ranking</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electronic</td>
<td>Most Efficient</td>
<td>Speed, low cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written</td>
<td>Efficient</td>
<td>Provide permanent record, allows planning and control of message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral</td>
<td>Least Efficient</td>
<td>Immediate feedback, rich non-verbal cues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After participants were located and screened for inclusion in the study using the predefined selection criteria, the researcher contacted all who agreed to participate in the interview process. Interviews were scheduled and conducted in a public place convenient and comfortable for the welfare to work participants. An oral consent and authorization to participate in the research project was reviewed and signed prior to the beginning of the interview. Participants not responding to the initial request were sent a follow-up letter one week after the initial contact to encourage participation (Dillman, 2009). A final letter was sent to all non-respondents requesting participation in the interview. Three weeks after initial contact was made with welfare to work participants, a final letter was sent to any remaining non-respondents.

Each interview was audio taped by the researcher for transcription and data analysis. One week after the initial interview participants were contacted by telephone or email to review transcripts for validation. Respondent validation increases the validity of research by allowing interview participants to review, verify, and edit information.
provided during the interview process. This process was utilized to increase the accuracy of information collected by the researcher.

Incentives has become fairly common and further research indicates that incentives, both monetary and non-monetary, increase overall response rates (e.g. Goyder, 1987; Ryu, Couper, & Marans, 2005; Sudman & Bradburn, 1974; Willimack, Schuman, Pennell & Leprowski, 1983). Qualitative literature review suggests that response rates increase when incentives are offered for mail, telephone, and face to face surveys (Armstrong, 1975; Houston & Ford, 1976, Kanuk & Berenson, 1975), Linsky, 1975 and Willimack et al., 1995). Additionally, incentives increase participant willingness to cooperate and improve overall response quality; participants spend more time answering questions and providing more distinct examples throughout the interviews (Willimack et al., 1995). A small incentive was offered to all eligible STEP participants upon completion of the interview and respondent validation processes. Gift cards valued at $10 from a choice of Wal-Mart, BestBuy, or Office Depot were mailed to all participants who completed the required processes. The researcher plays a vital role in all research, but particularly in qualitative research. The researcher’s role in this study is discussed next.

Researcher as Instrument

Following the qualitative model for research, the investigator acted as the research instrument (Patton, 2002). As a participant observer during the interview process, the investigator was immersed into the experiences and the perceptions of the recipient. The researcher’s previous work experience as Interim Program Director for the welfare to work program in Lafayette Parish, Louisiana, in 2006 provided key insight.
experience conducting interviews with individuals from impoverished communities included conducting in-person interviews to assess health disparities among residents in rural Louisiana through the Health Informatics Center of Acadiana.

Building a level of trust with each STEP participant to elicit honest and very sensitive information that might not be shared otherwise was critical to the success of this research. Building trust facilitates a more relaxed, safe, and accepting relationship and environment to further encourage welfare to work participants to communicate unique experiences, perceptions, and thoughts (Reinharz, 1992). During the introduction, the researcher shared her story as a single parent in graduate school and the workforce, noting personal challenges with childcare, transportation, and money shortage.

Semi-structured interviews of welfare to work participants and reflections provided by the investigator yielded a holistic view of the relationship between social capital and career success within the welfare to work population in Louisiana. An interview guide was used to guide the conversation with participants during interviews. The interview guide was constructed to elicit information needed to answer the proposed research objectives that examined the relationship between social capital and career success for welfare to work participants.

Following documented qualitative techniques, interviews were audio recorded for a permanent verbatim record of the interviews (Myers, 2009). This allowed the researcher to use exact words and quotations from interviewees which are more credible than paraphrases in research. An explanation of the importance and relevance of audio recording for accuracy was presented, and participants were extended an opportunity to review their recorded interview.
Controlling for Researcher Bias

The methodological framework of this study reduced researcher bias and permitted better understanding of each participants' situation. As discussed in the previous two sections, several measures were implemented to control for bias throughout the study. These measures included establishing trustworthiness, keeping detailed field notes in a personal reflection journal, and acknowledging the presence of bias in qualitative research and in current study (Mehra, 2002).

Trustworthiness was essential to abstracting accurate and thorough data. As previously noted, the researcher shared her background with participants and scheduled interviews in places and at times convenient for participants. Personal, identifiable participant information was kept confidential to assure trustworthiness as well. Interview records included researcher reactions to what was seen and heard during the process. Keeping a personal journal forces objectivity by focusing on the participant while remaining in touch with objective reality, mediating the researcher’s personal beliefs and bias. Reflections recorded in the personal journal provided multiple perspectives and interpretations of the relationship between social capital and career success among welfare to work participants. Following written recommendations of Mehra (2002), the researcher acknowledged awareness of researcher bias in qualitative research, data collection, and analysis processed, and measures have been employed to monitor bias and subjectivity. Documenting the reality of the welfare to work participants was possible by keeping the voices of researcher and interviewer separate when collecting, analyzing, and reporting findings.
All personal participant contact information was anonymous and was not documented or shared in the research findings. If data was quoted verbatim from interviews, respondents were assigned a unique identifier to ensure confidentiality.

Data Analysis

This section discusses the data analysis for evaluating data provided by welfare to work participants employed since leaving the STEP program. A three phase analysis process for qualitative data: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verifying, has been used by several researchers in previous studies on welfare programs and participants, some discussed earlier in the study.

Data Reduction

The first phase of data analysis was data reduction. Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming data that appear in notes, transcripts, documents, etc. One of the simplest ways to analyze qualitative data is to perform coding on the data.

The data reduction process involves the following steps:

1. Read all data collected from semi-structured interviews/ transcriptions.

2. Mark data relevant to the questions or issues asked regarding social capital and career success for welfare to work participants.

3. Code data collected from semi-structured interviews as follows:
   a. Reduce data to short descriptions, usually the most important ideas for each research objective and associated questions.
   b. Categorize the descriptions based on answers provided during semi-structured interviews.
c. Note links between codes (pattern coding) through data analysis between questions and interviews.

In this study, interview notes and transcription files from meetings with STEP participants were reviewed and coded using a systematic process. Variables were assigned specific codes by the researcher to be used when transcribing and coding interviews. Additional data codes for words and phrases used by participants were developed for analysis if no current classification code existed. Consistent with the qualitative methodology of Corbin & Strauss (1990), a participant providing an answer not previously provided by another participant to the same question during the interview process, was given a code. A classification system was developed by the researcher to identify subcategories within the larger code categories as observations were collected. After all interview data from the participants was reduced question by question through the coding process, patterns and themes across issues were identified, and clustered into broader concept groups for connections, comparisons and contrasts between responses and verified as done is similar studies that examined welfare participants.

The researcher coded each interview as a separate data file to identify individual themes and avoid cross case generalizations. Each audio recording was downloaded to a web-based transcription software program, transcribed, and transferred to Microsoft Word for further analysis using spelling and grammar checkers, and saved for future use in the study. Initials and abbreviations of participants and other individuals identified during interviews were used throughout the data reduction process to protect and ensure anonymity. Once this process was completed, the next step in the data analysis process was to identify data displays.
Data Display

Data displays provide an organized way of compressing information and assembling in ways to help draw conclusions; data displays can be text, diagrams, charts, or matrices. They show systematic patterns and interrelationships of the “chunks of meaning” in the data and often reveal new connections and themes in the data beyond those already noticed. Additionally, graphic displays afford opportunity to review support for answers to the research questions so tables, charts, and graphs were used to display study findings and interpretations of welfare to work participant perceptions. The final phase of the qualitative data analysis process yielded conclusions and comprehensive findings from all interviews.

Verification & Summaries

The final data analysis phase was forming and verifying conclusions. In this phase, the researcher referenced the data displays and raw data previously summarized to verify and draw conclusions from this study that examined the relationship between social capital and career success for STEP participants. Answers to each interview question resulted in identification of predominant themes and yielded the reported social capital and career success results. Systematic, organized, and accurate coding and notes ensured efficient, accurate access to data. After all interview data was reduced and displayed, the research reviewed and verified conclusions based on emergent themes and details provided. Results of the relationship between social capital and career success of STEP participants were reported question by question and included exact quotes from participant interviews to increase validity. In order to complete the verification and conclusion data analysis phase, two steps were implemented.
The first step, generalizations of broader ideas, was made after working with emergent themes to explore how the themes were represented across cases. Finally, major findings were identified, verified, and summarized regarding the social capital, social resources, social network benefits, and career success of welfare to work participants employed after leaving STEP from 2007 to 2009.

A data analysis framework was used to examine the relationship between social capital and career success for welfare to work participants in Louisiana. Each research question represents one data item measured independently to examine the relationship between social capital and career success among welfare to work participants in Louisiana. Research objectives and associated data variables measured in the study are presented in Table 6. Methods for synthesizing data collected during the study are explained in the following section.
Table 6

Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Item</th>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RO1</td>
<td>Demographic</td>
<td>Age, Ethnicity, Marital Status, Number of Children, STEP Academic Program,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Highest Education Completed, Years in Workforce, Current Occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO2</td>
<td>Weak Ties</td>
<td>Weak Tie Relationships from Other Functions/Departments, Higher Mgmt,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Extended Kinship Networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO3</td>
<td>Strong Ties</td>
<td>Strong Tie Relationships from Other Functions/Departments, Higher Mgmt,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Extended Kinship Networks</td>
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<td>RO4</td>
<td>Social Network</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>RO5</td>
<td>Social Network</td>
<td>Access to Information, Access to Resources, Access to Career Sponsor/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO6</td>
<td>Career Success</td>
<td>Current Salary, Total Promotions, Career Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research

Validity and reliability are important in all research to ensure that studies are accurate and valid. As you may recall from Chapter III, reliability refers to the stability of findings and validity represents the truthfulness of findings. The need to demonstrate the truth value of multiple perspectives, the dependability of findings amid variability, the applicability of findings to broader contexts, and the freedom from bias in the research process are validity issues to be addressed in the research process. Respondent validation
and a personal researcher reflection journal are two techniques employed for this study to reduce threats to validity concerning the study.

Respondent validation is a process where respondents review their personal responses to verify they provided accurate and valid information to the researcher. Respondent validation, or member checking, was used to increase credibility of data collected. After each respondent reviewed their individual transcribed interview for accuracy and details, their reactions to the analyses of the transcriptions were incorporated into the findings for the study. Incorporating the findings was a strong check for validity and part of the process for error reduction in interview transcription and analysis of welfare to work data.

Notes taken in the researcher's personal journal during the taped interview were transcribed immediately after the interview. Transcribing participant interviews allowed the conversation with each STEP participant to be thoroughly documented for an understanding of the thoughts and answers provided by the welfare to work participants.

Threats to reliability can be reduced by reviewing the audio recordings and interview transcriptions multiple times for accuracy. The researcher initially reviewed transcriptions and audio recordings within 24 hours of completion guaranteed timely recall and reporting of information.

Summary

This chapter detailed the methodology section of the study. The qualitative research design method was explained and the various tools used to collect and analyze respondent data. Interview questions were outlined and mapped to research objectives for the study to ensure appropriateness. The study population and sampling techniques
were discussed. Data collection plans outline detailed processes and a timeline to facilitate efficient data collection. Implementation of a communication plan to ensure efficient processes were in place to locate and contact previous STEP participants in the Lafayette area was reviewed. Finally, validity and reliability in qualitative research studies were explained along with the researcher serving as the instrument and controlling for research bias.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

This section discusses findings for examining the relationship of social capital and career success for welfare to work program participants who were employed after leaving the STEP program in Louisiana. The purpose of the current study is to examine welfare to work participant’s social networks and determine what relationships provide access to benefits needed in pursuit of career success. Key informants identified 42 previous STEP participants for inclusion in the study. A total of 15 participants were located using Internet resources, including Facebook, for interviews. The process for locating participants and socio-demographic data are reported along with social capital measures, social network benefits, and career success measures.

Locating STEP Participants

Approval from The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board ensured the appropriateness for the subjects in this research project. After Institutional Review Board approval, the researcher conducted searches on the Internet and the social media site Facebook for the 42 previous STEP participants identified by key informants. Initially, all participants were contacted through the mail or telephone depending on the results of the Internet search. The initial 42 letters mailed yielded no responses. Follow-up telephone calls were made to participants to ensure utilization of all communication media in the search for previous STEP participants and in an effort to secure more respondents. Overall 62% (26 of the 42) participants were located through Facebook, eight met eligibility criteria for inclusion in the study.
Of the initial 42 STEP participants, 10 did not meet selection criteria, excluding them from the population for a population size of 32. The criteria used to select participants for the study included participation in the STEP program from 2007 – 2009, Lafayette Parish resident while attending the STEP program, and gainful employment after leaving the STEP program. Fifteen in-person interviews were completed with previous STEP participants yielding a 46.87% response rate. Seventeen of the 32 STEP participants refused to participate in the study or could not be located by searches.

Because the researcher was aware of the challenges of locating participants from a highly mobile population such as the welfare to work group under study, all possible media were accessed to mediate these challenges, i.e. phone, mail, Internet, and Facebook. With over 845 million active users as of December 2011, of which 425 million have used Facebook mobile, products available through cellular telephones, Facebook may be the most comprehensive online Rolodex of individuals in the world available at no cost (Facebook, 2012). Cellular telephones allow individuals with no computer or Internet connectivity at home to access high speed Internet and social media sites, like Facebook, at the push of a button, truly redefining access boundaries for disadvantaged and high mobile populations.

STEP Participant Socio-Economic Status

Data collected for the first research objective created a demographic profile of participants in the study Caucasian. All 15 participants in the study were females; 13 were African American and two were White. The age distribution of the sample was five participants in their 20s, eight in their 30s, and two over 40. With regard to marital status, 10 out of 15 participants reported being single, three were divorced, one married
and one currently separated. In addition, 13 out of 15 (87%) participants reported having fewer than five children, while the remaining two participants reported seven and eight children, respectively. While not counted in the total number of children, one participant cared for her youngest sister in addition to her seven children. Similarly, another participant reported her ailing mother lived with and financially relied on her for additional expenses not covered by disability payments.

STEP program requirements are that all participants enroll in non-subsidized employment or attend school and choose an academic program of study. When asked to identify the academic program studied while in STEP, 14 out of the 15 (97%) respondents attended a post-secondary institution for up to two years, and four participants earned Associate’s degrees. Only one respondent who completed the STEP program did not complete high school or the GED program. STEP participants may be assigned work activities by OFS case workers and STEP program directors as part of the program to include the completion of academic and career preparation activities in the STEP assessment lab, completing pregnancy classes through the welfare office, and unsubsidized work in organizations that provide hands on training and observation hours for participants. All participants in the study completed academic and career preparation activities, a required program component while in STEP. In addition, seven of the 15 participants completed parenting classes offered by the welfare program, and three participants reported completing unsubsidized work activities at various organizations. One participant completed a sales certification program with a lifetime membership offered by STEP in conjunction with the National Retail Foundation.
The remaining demographic questions provided the researcher with information regarding participant academic program selection and workforce performance. Participants studied a variety of academic programs while in STEP including six Office Systems Technology/Medical Office Assistants, five Nursing Professions (LPN, CNA, & PCT), one from Information Technology, Early Childhood Education, Tourism & Travel, and GED each.

When asked about current occupation, six of the 15 participants currently worked in medical related fields, including two LPNs, CNAs, and private patient care providers. Another four participants worked in customer service. Participants were asked about the amount of time spent in the workforce since leaving the STEP program. The average time in the workforce since leaving STEP for all 15 participants is almost four years (3.933). All STEP participants worked at least two years since leaving the program, and four of the 15 report employment for five or more years. Participants with five or more years in the workforce since STEP received subsidized employment during their last semester of school, giving them an additional three to six months to successfully transition into employment.

Weak Ties and Career Success

Research objective two evaluated the relationship between STEP respondent’s weak tie relationships and career success outcomes. A social tie represents a personal or professional relationship that produces benefits for both parties. Weak ties are social resources in an individual’s social network that may be known professionally instead of personally and provides access to information and social resources not otherwise available. STEP participants access weak ties relationships in social networks for
information and resources needed in the workforce that is unavailable from their family and close friends. Social networks with many weak ties are described as rich with information and resources and support a successful career.

Overall, five participants identified as having weak ties in their social network reported earnings above the federal poverty level, $23,050 income. The other 10 respondents ranged from zero to four weak ties, with an average of 1.6 weak ties. The average number of relationships participants reported with weak ties was 4.8, with individuals ranging from zero to thirteen weak ties. For analysis purposes, participants were separated into three groups based on the number of weak ties reported during the interview, and identified as Weak Tie Group A (WT-A), Weak Tie Group B (WT-B), and Weak Tie Group C (WT-C) for reporting purposes only.

The first group of individuals, Group WT-A, reported the most weak tie relationships in the study. Overall, within the sample of 15 STEP participants, four reported at least four weak tie relationships in their social network, while the other 11 participants reported three or fewer weak tie relationships. The participant reporting 13 weak ties, the highest number of weak ties, reported the largest social network among all participants with a network size of 15. When discussing weak ties in the workplace, the participant reporting 13 weak ties recounted several interactions with individuals from other departments and functions from introductions to employees, supervisors and directors throughout the organization. Her salary ranked as the highest salary of all 15 respondents and she had the greatest number of promotions reported by STEP participants in the study. Likewise, another two of the four individuals in Group WT-A
with the highest number of weak ties also earned salaries above federal poverty level and received promotions while in the workforce.

As displayed in Table 7 below, two of the four participants in Group WT-A with the highest number of weak ties reported they received promotions, while the remaining two participants received none. Similarly, two of the four Group WT-A participants were satisfied with their careers while the remaining two participants expressed a lack of satisfaction and wanted to explore alternative career opportunities. Each of the participants discussed above referenced the use of weak ties in their social networks to inquire about different positions and promotions in their organization.

Table 7

_Weak Tie Group A (WT-A)_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Other Functions/Depts</th>
<th>Higher Level Mgmt</th>
<th>Extended Kinship</th>
<th>Total Weak Ties</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Total Promotions</th>
<th>Career Satisfaction</th>
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<td>26</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2= Yes 2= No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Salaries reported as bold & italicized are ABOVE the 2012 Federal Poverty Level For a family with 1 adult and 2 children (citation)

After considering the first group of individuals with at least four weak ties, Group WT-A, the remaining 11 participants reported less than four weak ties and varied in
career success measures reported; most earned salaries below the federal poverty level, received no promotions, and were not satisfied with their current careers. Of the participants with fewer than three weak ties, two participants still maintained salaries above the federal poverty level. When asked about weak ties, one participant in the WT-A cohort stated, “The people in the department made sure I knew how to do my job and had what I needed. I was so lost at first cause I had never worked before. And Ms. A, who was my boss, really made sure I stayed on top of things and that I was comfortable. That really helped.”

The next group of STEP participants, Group WT-B, each had two or three weak tie relationships in their social networks. Within this group, five individuals reported two or three weak tie relationships as seen in Table 8. Only one of the five participants with two or three weak ties earned a salary above the federal poverty level and one promotion while in the workforce. Overall, three individuals in the group of participants with two or three weak ties were promoted during their careers. Social networks with fewer than three weak ties indicate a small homogenous group with little or no access to different types of information not regularly accessed by the participant. Diverse information sources provide a variety of information that attributes to career success.
Table 8

*Weak Tie Group B (WT-B)*

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<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Other Functions/ Depts</th>
<th>Higher Level Mgmt</th>
<th>Extended Kinship</th>
<th>Total Weak Ties</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Total Promotions</th>
<th>Career Satisfaction</th>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Salaries reported as bold & italicized are ABOVE the 2012 Federal Poverty Level For a family with 1 adult and 2 children (cite)

The final Group, WT-C, has participants with one or less social resources. In the study, six participants reported one or no weak tie relationships in their social network.

Table 9 shows that only one of the six individuals with one or no weak ties earned wages above the federal poverty level and one received promotions while working. One participant in the WT-C cohort had eight children of which six were removed from the home while in the STEP program. She discussed how she struggled with forming relationships and trusting people after she went to court to keep her children. She said, “I basically didn’t trust anyone. When people are nice and asking you questions, they are usually trying to find out your business”.
Table 9

**Weak Tie Group C (WT-C)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Other Functions/Depts</th>
<th>Higher Level Mgmt</th>
<th>Extended Kinship</th>
<th>Total Weak Ties</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Total Promotions</th>
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</table>

Salaries reported as bold & italicized are ABOVE the 2012 Federal Poverty Level For a family with 1 adult and 2 children

Welfare to work research asserts that participant access to strong social networks is essential for career success. Single mothers often rely on family support for many reasons. Most young mothers have access to family and friends for additional childcare, transportation, and monetary needs, but weak ties provide support on the job needed for career success. In the interviews, it became apparent that participants did not see the benefit of forming relationships in the workforce. Three participants in the WT-C cohort commented they go to work to do their job and not socialize with co-workers in the organization. Many limited workplace interactions because of a desire to avoid
distractions. Relationships were seen as burdensome, and participants do not value nor understand that peer relationships can improve their workforce performance or increase career success.

In summary, participants with four or more weak ties experienced greater career success with higher salaries above the federal poverty level, more promotions, and career satisfaction, than participants with fewer than four weak ties reported. Adversely, participants with fewer than four weak ties reported less career success, salaries below the federal poverty level, received fewer promotions and were less satisfied with their careers. Participants with larger social networks were financially more successful in the study and participants with smaller networks realized less career success. The next section will discuss the classification of social resources based on the origin of the relationship.

Weak Ties Classification

In addition to assessing the social networks of STEP participants, research objectives two and three classified weak and strong ties as different types of social resources. In the data analysis phase, research objectives two and three were combined since both measured weak or strong ties and conflated them as social resources. Several questions were used by the researcher to generate the initials of social resources and the nature of the participant’s social resource relationship. The tables above, Tables 7, 8, and 9, reduced interview data codes and categorized the strong and weak ties identified by participants in the interview process as contacts from other functions or departments in the organization (work associations such as secretaries, co-workers), contacts with managers from higher levels in the organization (higher status, higher authority work
associations), or extended kinship networks (kin and fictive kin associations).

Participants who did not understand benefits of peer to peer networking when asked about weak ties previously, valued relationships with higher management.

Career success can come from a diversified group of weak ties that evolve from relationships throughout all parts of the organization (Seibert et al., 2001). During the interviews respondents were asked to classify social resources in their network according to their function. Participants in the study identified a combined 38 weak ties as social resources from other functions or departments in the hiring organization or higher level of management, and the remaining two weak ties were relationships from an extended kinship network. The participant reporting the most weak ties had eight relationships with individuals from other functions and departments in the organization, ranked highest in salary and had the largest number of promotions among participants in the study.

Career success outcomes were far better for three of the four participants in the cohort with the highest number of weak ties (four or more). They formed relationships with individuals in other departments or functions and all earned salaries above the federal poverty level. Likewise, four of the six participants in the study that formed weak ties relationships with higher management also were more successful garnering promotions and three of the six had salaries above the federal poverty level. Conversely, six of the 15 participants reported one or less weak ties from any of the categories, which implicates no relationships and little or no access to information in the organization. Overall, 11 of the 15 participants reported salaries below the federal poverty level and receive fewer promotions over their career.
Strong Ties and Career Success

Research objective three evaluated the relationship between strong ties for welfare to work participants and their career success. Strong ties are emotionally intense, frequent, and involve multiple types of relationships, such as those with family members, friends, advisors, and coworkers (Granovetter, 1973). Strong ties symbolize close relationships essential to provide access to privileged information and resources not offered or available through weak ties.

Previous literature on minority groups and impoverished populations suggests that minority groups possess stronger family bonds and better support systems than are found in predominately Caucasian settings and higher socioeconomic statuses (Parish et al., 1991). Findings above do not verify that claim, because 13 of the 15 STEP participants had 6 or fewer strong ties—essentially family members or close relatives who could provide support. Given that 13 of the participants were black and two were Caucasian, indicating that the previous studies have not considered other aspects of social interaction besides race, like poverty. Participants were separated into three groups according to the number of strong tie relationships they possess, Strong Tie Group A (ST-A), Strong Tie Group B (ST-B), and Strong Tie Group C (ST-C). Participants were listed in descending order according to the number of weak tie relationships present in their social network. The first group, Group ST-A, consists of the STEP participants with six or more strong tie relationships, the highest in the study. Group ST-B has participants with three to four strong ties, and Group ST-C reported two or less strong tie relationships in the study.

First, Group ST-A has participants that reported the most strong tie relationships and has four of the 15 STEP participants who formed relationships with six or more
strong ties. Two of the four participants in this group are above the federal poverty level of income and received promotions while on the job. The remaining two individuals were both paid salaries that kept them in poverty. One of the two STEP participants that received salaries below the federal poverty level reported one promotion, but the other was not satisfied in their career. When asked about resources family members provided, the participant with the most strong ties reported stated, “I don’t know how I would have made it without them. Being a nurse and working at night, I always needed a babysitter ‘cause there is no childcare after five o’clock around here. My mom and sister would watch my kids for me to go to work. Then my car would break sometimes, so my brother would drop me off and try to fix my car by the time I got off. On top of all this, I still had to borrow money for groceries or gas because I don’t’ get food stamps no more but don’t make enough to cover bills, other expenses, groceries, gas, field trips, the list goes on. Thank God we as a family stick together.”
Table 10

*Strong Tie Group A (ST-A)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Other Functions/Depts</th>
<th>Higher Level Mgmt</th>
<th>Extended Kinship</th>
<th>Total Strong Ties</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Total Promotions</th>
<th>Career Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>3= Yes 1= No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Salaries reported as bold & italicized are ABOVE the 2012 Federal Poverty Level For a family with 1 adult and 2 children

Next, Group ST-B consists of four of the 15 participants that recounted relationships with three or four strong ties in their social networks. Table 11 below displays two respondents with three or four ties had annual salaries above the federal poverty level and only one of these two reported a promotion. The remaining two participants with three to four ties had career success outcomes with salaries below the federal poverty level but one of these respondents received three promotions while in the workforce. A closer look reveals that one of respondents reporting below poverty level wages earns $16,640, received no promotions, and was satisfied with her career as a Certified Nursing Assistant. The last respondents in Group ST-B with three or four strong ties reported an annual salary of $15,600; she received three promotions
throughout her career but was not satisfied with her current occupation as a Front Desk Clerk at a local hotel. Three participants identified in the ST-B cohort reported strong ties from higher management. Each commented on how their supervisors were mentors and essential reasons for their career success. Participant six stated, “My supervisor has acted as a mentor since we met. He’s been helping me even after I lost my job. He is still trying to find me a job in the community upper management even gave her professional clothes for work. She was so nice and sweet I knew she was sincere when she gave me the bag of clothes and shoes. She told me that God was getting me ready for new and better places and a new wardrobe would help. I cried and cried because nobody ever did that for me. And then, I’m white and she’s black, so it really taught me that love has no color or religion. She is still my boss and we are still close. she is like the mother I always wanted.”
Table 11

**Strong Tie Group B (ST-B)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Other Functions/ Depts</th>
<th>Higher Level Mgmt</th>
<th>Extended Kinship</th>
<th>Total Strong Ties</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Total Promotions</th>
<th>Career Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$15,600</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$23,920</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$16,640</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$26,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2= Yes, 2= No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Salaries reported as bold & italicized are ABOVE the 2012 Federal Poverty Level. For a family with 1 adult and 2 children.

The final group of participants, Group ST-C, possessed the least number of strong ties relationships; where seven out of 15 respondents possessed fewer than three strong ties, and only one participant had no strong social ties. Only two of the seven participants with fewer than four strong ties grossed annual salaries higher than the poverty level, one of which was the individual with the highest salary and most promotions received since leaving the STEP program. This person also had the most weak tie relationships and largest social network in the study.
Table 12

*Strong Tie Group C (ST-C)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Other Functions/ Depts</th>
<th>Higher Level Mgmt</th>
<th>Extended Kinship</th>
<th>Total Strong Ties</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Total Promotions</th>
<th>Career Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$45,760</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$16,910</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$16,640</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$16,120</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$18,720</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$15,080</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$22,880</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6= Yes 1= No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Salaries reported as bold & italicized are ABOVE the 2012 Federal Poverty Level For a family with 1 adult and 2 children

The remaining individuals with fewer than three strong ties experienced less career success illuminated by income below the poverty level and fewer promotions. Four of the seven participants in ST-C mentioned difficulty in maintaining a job with a support system. One participant stated, “I don’t have no help from nobody and it’s hard raising five kids with no help. My family in Texas and I left from there cause everybody had their own problems. The only person I can call is my uncle, and every once in a while he can send me some money to help out ;but that’s it, and it hurts, but what am I to do”.

*Strong Tie Classification*
As seen above, STEP participants classified 40 strong ties that were social resources derived from an *extended kinship network* with only 12 strong ties derived from *other functions or departments* and *higher levels of management* in the organization. Consequently, more social resources were classified as *extended kinship networks* from strong ties than from *other departments* and *higher management*.

Further investigation revealed that some of the STEP participants with the largest social networks that ranked highest in career success measures also reported having strong ties from *other functions or departments* and *higher management*. This indicates a unique close-knit relationship with others in the workplace, capable of producing social benefits that induce career success.

Collectively, the four individuals with strong ties from *other functions or departments* and *higher management* were paid higher salaries and received more promotions over their entire career than their counterparts with no strong ties in these areas. The four also had weak ties reported from these same functions, while other STEP participants possessed no strong or weak ties in *other functions or departments* or *higher management*. STEP participants who created relationships in the workforce earned higher salaries and received more promotions in the transition from welfare to work. One participant was offered an Entrepreneurship Apprenticeship after her supervisor recommended her for the position. She explained, “I didn’t even know this program existed until my supervisor mentioned it to me. I was involved in community analysis and research and some fundraising so I got a chance to meet a lot of people to help my career”.
The final category of social resources was extended kinship networks. Extended kinship networks were reported by 14 of 15 STEP participants in the study, 42 social resources were listed under this classification, the largest of the three classifications as seen below in Figure 2.

The majority of participants with the exception of two in the study possessed at least one or more strong ties from extended kinship networks as referenced in Figure 2. Only three of the 15 participants in this study possessed strong ties that were classified from higher management, one of which had a salary above the federal poverty level. Finally, four participants possessed strong ties from other functions or departments, all earning salaries above the federal poverty level and achieving promotions during their careers.

![Figure 2. Total Social Resources Classification](image)

Overall, 13 out of 15 participants reported at least one social resource from extended kinship network, all varied in career success measures reported. The majority of the STEP participants listed social resources that provided additional support needed to
maintain a career but were not always on the job. Members of the extended kinship network were identified as strong ties who can provide access to redundant or no new information relevant for career success. The main types of support provided by social resources from an extended kinship network will be discussed in the next section.

In summary, the totals as reflected in Figure 2 show that a total of 42 social resources were classified as extended kinship networks. Twenty-eight social resources were classified from other functions or departments and the remaining 23 were from higher management. Combined, more social resources were available to participants from within the organization, either from other functions or departments or higher management than from extended kinship networks.

Social Network Structure and Career Success

Research objectives two, three, and four examined the relationship between social capital, network structure, strong and weak ties, and career success for welfare to work participants. The overall goal of the welfare to work programs is to elevate individuals out of poverty and into careers where they can achieve self-sufficiency and do not need assistance from governmental agencies. The federal poverty guidelines are published annually and used by federal and state agencies to determine eligibility for programs that include Head Start, the Food Stamp Program, the National School Lunch Program, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, and the Children’s Health Insurance Program. Some theorists and organizations do not consider the Federal Poverty Level an accurate poverty assessment tool because it underestimates basic expenses and ignores income fluctuations across the U.S., yet it is still utilized by most federally funded programs for benefit determination. Participants reported an average number of three
children and average family size of four. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services published the 2012 federal poverty level for a family of four equaling to $23,050. The federal poverty level was used in this study to determine if participant salaries increased their household incomes above the federal poverty level after completion of the STEP program.

This study examined the relationship between social capital variables and career success. Social capital was measured by assessing total social network size and total strong and weak ties for each STEP participant. Strong ties are intimate relationships that include frequent and multiple interactions. Weak ties are infrequent, and usually restricted to context—from the job, from church, from wherever, not family. Participant salaries, promotions, and career satisfaction measures were used to assess career success for all participants. Social capital measures reported by each participant, as displayed in the preceding tables, demonstrate social network structure, strong and weak ties, and career success measures. Salaries are reported as being above or below the federal poverty level. Even participants above the poverty level undermine their career success because of other factors such as lack of support and social resources as revealed in the STEP participant interview transcripts.

A social resource can be a strong or weak tie, and the term describes the types of benefits provided to individuals in the social network. A social resource is a relationship that provides access to information and resources not available to the individual him or herself. A strong tie characterizes a close, intimate relationship with recurring interaction. On the other hand, a weak tie represents an informal relationship with sporadic or little interaction. All STEP participants reported having at least one social
resource in their social network but still varied significantly in career success outcomes. Participants have been grouped according to the total social network sized determined in the study. The first group of STEP participants have a total social network size of 10 or greater and the final group consists of participants with fewer than 10 social resources.

Table 13

*Social Network Group A (SN-A)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th># of Weak Ties</th>
<th># of Strong Ties</th>
<th>Social Network Structure (Weak + Strong Ties)</th>
<th>Annual Salary</th>
<th>Total Promotions</th>
<th>Satisfied with Career</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td><strong>45,760</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td><strong>36,400</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td><strong>32,000</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19,760</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2= Yes 2= No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Salaries reported as bold & italicized are ABOVE the 2012 Federal Poverty Level For a family with 1 adult and 2 children.

The first group of participants has social networks that range from 10 to 15 social resources. The participant with the largest social network and highest number of weak ties reported by any of the 15 STEP participants was 15 social resources, thirteen weak ties and two strong ties. This was the only participant reporting more than ten weak ties in the study. Based on the social network size and career success measures reported, the
second largest social network reported in the study was 13, with five weak ties and eight strong ties, salary above the federal poverty level. The participant with the third largest social network reported 12 social resources, has a salary above the federal poverty level, which seems to be the cut-off point for doing well. The final participant in this group has a social network size of 10 but experienced less career success than other participants with the largest networks, earning a salary below the federal poverty level, receiving no promotions or satisfaction in their current career. The final group consists of the other eleven participants (73%) that reported a social network structure with less than 10 social ties in their social network.

Table 14

*Social Network Group B (SN-B)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th># of Weak Ties</th>
<th># of Strong Ties</th>
<th>Social Network Structure (Weak + Strong Ties)</th>
<th>Annual Salary</th>
<th>Total Promotions</th>
<th>Satisfied with Career</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15,600</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16,640</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23,920</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16,640</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16,910</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16,640</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 14 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th># of Weak Ties</th>
<th># of Strong Ties</th>
<th>Social Network Structure (Weak + Strong Ties)</th>
<th>Annual Salary</th>
<th>Total Promotions</th>
<th>Satisfied with Career</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18,720</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22,880</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16,120</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15,080</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8= Yes 3= No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Salaries reported as bold & italicized are ABOVE the 2012 Federal Poverty Level For a family with 1 adult and 2 children.

The social networks of the 15 STEP participants consist of people they know intimately or professionally, and are described as strong or weak ties that produce some benefit that supports of career success. In this study, four of the 15 STEP participants reported social networks with 10 or more strong and weak ties combined, the largest social networks identified in this study. Further analysis revealed that three of the 15 STEP participants with the largest social networks earned salaries above the federal poverty level, and one reported an income of $19,760 which is below the federal poverty level of $23,050.

A closer look at the four participants with the largest social networks included evaluation of all career success measures. The largest social network among STEP
participants with 15 strong and weak ties. She was an Engineering Aide Specialist, confirmed an annual salary of $45,760, had received four promotions, and overall was satisfied with her current career. The second participant combined 13 strong and weak ties, and a salary above the federal poverty level works as a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), earning $36,400 annually, has not received promotions, but overall was satisfied with her career. Ranking third in largest social network was the participant 12 strong and weak ties, a paralegal, reported an annual $32,000 salary which is above the federal poverty level, received one promotion, but was not satisfied with her overall career. The final STEP participant with the largest social network had 10 strong and weak ties, a customer service representative reported making $19,760 annually, did not receive any promotions, and was not satisfied overall with her career in a call center scheduled to close in the first quarter of 2012. While it is essential to identify participants with large social networks and successful careers, some participants with smaller social networks reported positive career outcomes as well.

Despite possessing fewer than 10 social resources, two participants with realized positive career outcomes that included salaries above the federal poverty level, promotions, and career satisfaction, possessed. One of the two participants with less than 10 social resources is a clerk in the District Attorney’s office, possessed two strong and four weak ties in her social network, grossed $23,920 annually, and was satisfied with her career even though she had received no promotions. The remaining participant with fewer than 10 social resources reported only three strong ties in her social network, an annual salary of $26,000, no promotions and overall was satisfied in her career as a Manager at a local Bar & Grill.
In general, participants with the largest social networks realized more career success than participants with smaller social networks. The three STEP participants with the largest social networks (weak and strong ties combined) earned salaries above the federal poverty level, two of three reported they received promotions and were satisfied with their careers. A majority of the participants with smaller social networks reported salaries below the federal poverty level, fewer promotions, and less career satisfaction in the study.

Social Network Benefits

Research objective five identified social network benefits derived from social resources named in research objectives two, three, and four. Based on social capital and career success theories, the following social network benefits were measured in research objective five: access to information, access to resources, and access to career sponsorship. Participants were asked to “describe some of the things the people you have previously mentioned provided to assist with helping you on the job when employed after the STEP Program? Did you have people who provided you with information about the organization? Did you have people who provided you with resources needed on the job? Has anyone in the organization ever served as a mentor/ career sponsor throughout your career post STEP”?

Once categorized as strong or weak ties, social resources were classified as people from other functions or departments in the organization, managers at higher levels in organization, or an extended kinship network. During the interviews, the researcher determined the social network benefits provided to STEP participants. During the interviews, participants were questioned about people in other departments who helped
with tasks and managers or directors higher in the organization making recommendations or introducing the participant at meetings, or family members who helped with childcare or transportation. Table 15 below detailed the social network benefits by participant for research objective five.
Table 15

*Social Network Benefits by Participant*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Network Benefits</th>
<th>Career Success Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorship / Mentor</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Social Network Benefits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>$45,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>$36,400</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>$18,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>$16,910</td>
</tr>
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<td>$16,640</td>
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<td>$16,120</td>
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<td>$15,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Salaries reported as bold & italicized are ABOVE the 2012 Federal Poverty Level for a family with 1 adult and 2 children.

After the data displayed above was reviewed, access to resources emerged as the most reported social network benefit. 91 various social resources reported by STEP participants provided access to other resources needed in order to maintain a career. A closer look at resources accessed by STEP participants in Figure 3 revealed that...
childcare, transportation, and monetary support were the main resources participants accessed through social resources.

![Access to Resources](image)

**Figure 3. Total Participants Needing Additional Resources**

Social resources provided access to childcare for 10 out of the 15 participants in the study. Participants needed additional childcare during nontraditional hours for evening or weekend work shifts. While participants are provided with child care subsidies, most child care facilities are not open during the evenings and on weekends, so participants seek assistance for their extended kinship network.

Likewise, six of the 15 participants accessed social resources for transportation, another necessity when entering the workforce. After leaving the STEP program, these respondents did not own a vehicle and were in need of transportation during hours when most public transportation is unavailable. Once again social resources were accessed for transportation, an important and sometimes overlooked component of workforce entrance needed for career success.
Finally, seven of the 15 STEP participants relied on social resources for additional monetary support. Three of the seven participants accessed multiple social resources for the same resource, monetary support. Most of these resources were accessed for both personal and professional information. Childcare was especially important when participants worked at night and on weekends; likewise transportation was also necessary to enter and maintain a place in the workforce. Most of the participants still needed monetary support after completing the programs, even though employed for more than 12 months.

In general, STEP participants do not access to resources that are fundamentally necessary for career success. Additional resources like childcare, transportation, and additional monetary are essential needs that must be addressed before STEP participants even enter the workplace. A mother working as a CNA cannot attend work if she has no babysitter, no transportation, and her 16 hour shift starts at seven o’clock in the evening. Given these circumstances it is understandable that access to additional resources was the highest reported benefit by STEP participants.

Access to Information

Several interview questions assessed the types of information provided by each social resource. Question two asked participants to identify who has acted to help your career by speaking on your behalf, providing you with information, career opportunities, advice or psychological support or with whom you have regularly spoken regarding difficulties at work, alternative job opportunities or long term career goals. As displayed in Table 15, 13 of the 15 STEP participants identified access to information through 51 social resources, both career and personal information. Even though most respondents
accessed additional resources from their *extended kinship network*, this cohort also provided access to information sources for participants as well. In particular, one participant accessed six social resources for information, the most in the sample, from four members of her *extended kinship network* and two were from other functions or departments in the organization. However, only one participant did not have any social resources with access to the information measured by question two.

Similarly, question three asked participants about the people that provided information and advice to enhance workplace effectiveness and address job-related problems. Ten out of 15 participants listed 15 social resources that provided job-related information and advice. Overall, seven of the 15 social resources were from *other departments or functions*, six of the 15 resources were from *higher levels of management*, and one was from the extended kinship network.

Likewise, question six elicited information about social resources that provided organizational information to STEP participants in the workplace. Altogether, seven out of 15 participants access information through social resources in *other departments and functions*, eight of the 15 participants utilized *higher management* in the organization, and three of the 15 respondents accessed *extended kinship networks* for information.

Altogether, social resources identified in interview questions two, three, four, and five, provided access to career and personal information utilized by welfare to work participants in their careers. In addition, questions also named social resources that provided access to resources utilized by welfare to work participants in the quest for
career success and self-sufficiency. Finally, social resources that served as career sponsors or mentors for participants were identified.

Social Network Benefits and Career Success

Research objective six determined if social network benefits derived from social resources produced career success that was measured by (a) current salary, (b) promotions over entire career and (c) career satisfaction. Interview question six assessed the social network benefits participants utilized through social resources and identified in research objective five, access to information, access to resources, and a career sponsorship. In a similar study where social capital and career success were assessed, Theorists have concluded that access to social network benefits; information, resources, and career sponsorship, mediated better career success outcomes for participants. Interview questions seven, eight, nine, and ten elicited participant career success measures for comparison with corresponding social network benefits and are displayed in Table 15 above. The researcher referenced the same data display used for research objective five since the same variables were measured in the analysis.

As a summary of research objective five, participants reported 51 social resources in their social networks that have been accessed for career and personal information or advice. In addition, participants accessed 91 additional social network benefits from access to resources available in the participant’s social networks. Lastly, six out of 15 (40%) participants had a career sponsor or mentor.

In the next step in the analysis process, the relationship between participant’s social network benefits and career success measures was examined. The researcher reviewed the data reduction table from research objective five and determined that six
participants had 10 or more social network benefits accessed through social resources of which three participants accessed more than 20 social network benefits. As stated earlier, participants with access to more social network benefits were theoretically more successful across the study’s three career success measures: salary, promotions, and career satisfaction. The career success measures were evaluated along with the total social network benefits accessed for each participant. Four of the six participants that possessed more than 10 social network benefits accessed through social resources have salaries that were above the federal poverty level. Three participants reported five promotions in this cohort as well. Career sponsorship was reported by three of the six (50%) participants with more than 10 social network benefits. The remaining nine participants accessed less than 10 social network benefits through their social resources. Only one participant with less than 10 social network benefits accessed through social resources reported a salary above the federal poverty level; the other nine participants with less than 10 social network benefits accessed all reported annual salaries below the federal poverty level. After the social network benefits participants accessed through social resources were identified, the researcher examined career success measures to gain deeper insight on the types of social network benefits support career success.

Research objective five also provided a detailed analysis of the resources utilized by participants through their social resources. Three of the 15 participants reported accessing more than 10 additional resources available through their social networks. One participant accessed additional resources that included childcare and monetary support from 13 members of her social network. All three participants that accessed more than 10 additional resources in their social networks reported annual salaries above the federal
poverty level. While salaries for the 11 participants with less than 10 social network benefits was below the federal poverty level, four participants received at least one promotion over their entire career and seven of the 12 reported being currently satisfied with their overall careers.

The last social network benefit analyzed was career sponsorship. Career sponsorship or mentoring activities proved to be valuable resources at all stages of career development. In this study, six out of 15 (40%) participants had at least one career mentor. Managers higher in the organization served as mentors for four out of the six participants. In addition, one participant’s mentor was from another function or department and one participant reported having a mentor in their extended kinship network. The career success measures were assessed to evaluate the relationship between career sponsorship and career success; six participants that reported have a career sponsor or mentor.

Next, the researcher reviewed career success measures for participants with a career sponsor or mentor and verified that four participants with a career sponsor or mentor had salaries above the federal poverty level. On the other hand, two participants with a career sponsor or mentor reported annual salaries below the federal poverty level. The researcher utilized all three career success measures, salaries, promotions over entire career, and career satisfaction, throughout the study that examined social capital and career success measures.

Considering the entire population, five out of the 15 participants have incomes above the federal poverty level. Figure 4 depicts participant salary data along with the federal poverty level for comparison.
The participant with the highest annual salary earned $45,760 and was an Engineering Aide Specialist. An LPN reported the second highest income of $36,400 annually. The third highest salary belonged to a Paralegal that earned an annual income of $32,000. As the manager of local bar & grill, another participant earned $26,000. Employed at the District Attorney’s office as a clerk, the final participant had an annual salary of $23,920. Three of the five participants with salaries above the federal poverty level reported receiving at least one promotion over their entire career and four of the five participants with salaries above the federal poverty level are satisfied with their careers. Participant promotions are reported in Figure 5.
Figure 5. Promotions by Participant.

On the other hand, individuals with salaries below the federal poverty level realized about the same number of promotions over their entire career and four of the ten were not satisfied in the current careers. The third career success measure was overall career satisfaction. As detailed in Figure 6, nine participants were satisfied while six were not satisfied with their overall careers since leaving the STEP program.

Figure 6. Participant Career Satisfaction.

The final interview question asked participants to discuss their future plans, career goals, or anything else the participant wanted to share about STEP. The researcher identified the major themes after this question which are reduced and displayed in Table 16 below.

Table 16
Summary of Other Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Themes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small Business Ownership</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returning to School</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References to God/ Religious Groups</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher identified six participants interested in small business ownership. Similarly, six participants discussed a desire to attain additional education, and five participants referenced God or religious affiliations as an additional source of social capital and an integral part of their career success thus far.

The researcher noted that one third of the sample population (five out of the 15 participants) discussed the desire to attain additional education on small business management skills needed to successfully open a small business one day. Three participants desired to go back to school for Cosmetology and own their own beauty salons one day. Fields like cosmetology prepare participants to do the work, but not to maintain the business itself. Basic skills like opening a checking account and inventory management are never introduced. When asked about her future one participant commented, “For one, I am going back to school so I can get my license to do hair. And then I want to- um- work until I get enough money to open up a shelter home for people and that's always been my dream to do that.” Another participant wanted to open a “restaurant with a walk up window and big patio in the back.” Finally, one participant wanted to start an entertainment management company for local artists in her community.
A fair amount of human resources are being wasted due to lack of business acumen and experience.

In addition, eight of the fifteen (53%) participants mentioned going back to school to attain more education and training. The researcher noted that four of the eight participants that wanted to go back to school were in nursing fields, two of the participants were CNAs that wanted to pursue their LPN license, the next tier above their current level in nursing and two were LPNs that desired to become Registered Nurses. One LPN replied, “Four months ago, I started thinking about going get my RN. It’s like now since I'm settled like its not enough all of a sudden, I want more.” The nursing fields are practical and allow participants to build upon skills so that they can easily add education here, or continued training there and not get stuck in a deadend. The nursing fields have done a good job of providing pathways to further advancement and more education as needed. The participant that completed the Information Technology & Networking program desired to continue progressing up the career ladder but was at a “brick wall” because she needs a Bachelor’s degree in Engineering for any position at a level higher in the organization and explained, “I wanted to go back to school; I can't go back and attain another degree other than what I have, because right now I have no one to watch my son: I would have to take night classes. My job will reimburse for being at school but that means I take time off and I lose money. So if I'm losing money, and I can't afford a sitter, you don't go to school to get more education. And the fun part with everything is that now I don't qualify for any assistance whatsoever.” One participant was taking additional classes for her Associates degree in Accounting Technology Systems. Likewise, another participant decided to return to school in January of 2012 to
pursue her passion in Cosmetology. Finally, one participant confidently reported that she wanted to return to school to get her GED so that she can attend school for Cosmetology as well. The mother of five realizes she cannot provide for her children with jobs at McDonald’s and Pizza Hut.

The last emerging theme was reference to God and a personal faith by five out of the 15 participants (33%) as other avenues for social capital. One participant explained, “And having people tell me when I started I don't know how you are going to make it. Got my nursing license the first time I tried, never had to go back and retest or anything, is a big success to me. So many people told me you can't do it, I don't know how you will do it. When I started nursing school I had 11 kids in the house. My seven and my momma's four. So that was a lot of kids, a lot of everybody doing school work going back and forth they were like how are you going to do it, how can you do it. And I was like I can do it. As long as I have my God in my corner I will make it. And I refuse to give up. There were a lot of sacrifices I had to make but I would rather make them at that time then have to sacrifice and struggle for the rest of my life”. One participant also said, “with everything from wrecking my car, to the surgeries, to working both of these jobs and being in school all this stuff happened at the same time and I was raising my son. And um you just do it you just do it. I remember sitting up at SLCC writing papers and doing homework for LTC and then in preparation for coming to work the next day here. Doing reports and projects that my boss assigned me. So, how did I do it, by the grace of God. (laughing) God is good and I tell people everyday God carries me cause there is no other way. And then to hold the GPA that I had to have the attendance that I had, that's out of control. Its true when you think of all those things and I had obstacles and people
make excuses and I hate somebody who I'm not gonna say has a silver spoon in their mouth but does have a way and you didn't face everything that I faced, you know, you had a support network - I didn't”. One participant told the story of how her faith in God helped her to endure losing parental rights to six of her eight children when she first started the STEP program. “Oh yes, I wasn't fine at first it took a toll on me at first but you know when you at the point when you feel like nobody is there to help. You can't get nobody to help and when you do get them to help it's always this or that or they don't have this they don't have that. That's when I got closer to God, nobody else could make it better. And I had a car it would always break. And there were making it seem like I wasn't trying to make visits with my kids. It was just a lot for me and I work with these people and from me I guess pretty much seeing that when I went to court the judge was like well I don't see how you are going to go to work, and go to school, and you not married and you have this amount of children. How are you going be able to provide for them? How are you going to be able to spend time with them? It was just a whole bunch of nonsense that didn't make sense to me cause I was like it doesn't matter if I am married or not, I am going to school to better myself to where I don't have to work as much but you are not making an exception for that. You are just looking at me like a single parent with all these kids. I mean and you can't do it, yeah that's the impression I was getting. So he pretty much terminated my rights cause I was single, going to school, and I was working and was not having enough time of the day to be with them. (laughing) But with God I can anything and ain’t nothing he gonna stop loving me for. He always got me, you know”.
Additionally, religious communities, churches, or organizations also provided additional emotional support as well. One participant had tremendous support from members of her church family and stated, “They were there, they were there. My God and my church family were there more than real family could be but… They helped me to find out who God was, they showed me a better way for my kids and me with Jesus Christ”.

In conclusion, Chapter IV detailed the researcher’s process for locating participants for the study and conducting interviews. All six research objectives were analyzed using the data reduction and coding techniques. Data were then displayed in tables and charts for further analysis, and finally, the researcher verified the data was accurately displayed and reported findings for each of the six research objectives. In addition, the researcher discussed new themes that emerged for other interview questions during the coding and data analysis processes.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section discusses the summary, conclusions, and recommendations from this study that examined the relationship between social capital on career success for welfare to work program participants, employed after leaving the STEP program in Louisiana. The objectives of this study were accomplished using an ex-post facto qualitative research design. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with former welfare to work participants who participated in the STEP program in Lafayette Parish from 2007-2009 and have entered the workforce since leaving the program. The first objective determined demographic characteristics of the former welfare to work participants that met inclusion criteria for the study. The second, third, and fourth objectives examined the relationship between social capital measures, strong and weak ties and the total social network size, with career success measures for each participant. Objective five identified social network benefits derived from social resources named by participants in the preceding research objectives, access to information, access to resources, and career sponsorship. Finally, objective six, examined the relationship between identified social network benefits and participant career success measures, current salary, number of promotions over entire career, and overall career satisfaction. Semi-structured interviews were administered to former welfare to work participants that were in the STEP program in Lafayette Parish from 2007 to 2009 who have gained employment.

An in-depth literature review of recent and seminal research was conducted to establish the theoretical foundations for the research study. The literature review focused on primary theoretical concepts: 1) social capital theory, 2) social resource theory, 3)
career success, and 4) welfare to work programs. Interview questions were modified
from various research studies on the theoretical concepts.

The qualitative data provided during interviews formed the foundation for
conclusions from examining the relationship between social network structure a) strong
ties and b) weak ties, and career success as perceived by former welfare to work
participants. The findings were consistent with Granovetter’s (1973) weak ties theory
and conferred by the research of Seibert et al. (2001) that social network structure,
including weak ties, provides access to social resources that ultimately lead to career
success for some welfare to work participants.

Weak Ties and Career Success

Research objective two assessed the relationship between weak ties, categorized
as social resources from other departments or higher levels of management in the
organization or an extended kinship network, and career success for welfare to work
participants. The data analysis and findings in Chapter IV indicated that more
participants possess a greater number of weak ties from other departments and functions
within their organization and higher levels of management in the organization than from
extended kinship networks. Only one participant possessed more than five weak ties in
her social network and consequently reported the highest salary and number of
promotions among participants in the study and detailed how her weak ties were assets
that helped her succeed and move up the ladder quickly in her organization. To another
point, theoretical literature has demonstrated that weak ties lead to individuals of
relatively higher status in the organization. This study confirmed the literature since the
most successful participants possessed the most weak ties and access to individuals higher in organizational management in their social networks.

Former welfare participants benefit from the formation and maintenance of social relationships during welfare to work programs to develop additional skills necessary for career success. The transition from welfare to self-sufficiency may be a daunting task for individuals entering the workforce with few or no social resources. Weak tie relationships provide access to essential information and resources for welfare to work participants. Equipping individuals with social skills will increase their marketability and overall career success outcomes.

Conclusion: Weak tie relationships increase career success outcomes for welfare to work participants.

Recommendation: Welfare to work programs should provide additional educational learning opportunities that discuss social capital development (i.e. networking).

Further examination of participant weak tie relationships in Chapter Four revealed that participants with superiors willing to serve as a career sponsor or mentor realized more career success in terms of having higher ranking salaries and more promotions received in this study. With only one person possessing more than five weak ties in the study, it became evident that welfare to work participants viewed weak tie relationships as a distraction in the workforce. Based on this information, the following conclusion and recommendation were drawn:

Career sponsorships/mentoring opportunities provided by weak ties in higher management provide a unique one on one relationship for participants to interact with
superiors. These relationships are capable of producing information and resources needed in the pursuit of self-sufficiency. Social capital development opportunities are

**Conclusion**: *STEP participants who accessed a career sponsor/mentor when entering the workforce earned higher salaries and received more promotions than participants with no career sponsor/mentor.*

**Recommendation**: *Welfare to work programs may consider organizing networking events with local business leaders and professionals as well as career sponsorships and mentoring programs to initiate weak tie development among participants.*

**Strong Ties and Career Success**

Research objective three assessed the relationship between strong ties, categorized as social resources, and career success for welfare to work participants. Seibert et al. (2001) cited strong ties more than weak ties provided access to information and career sponsorship among college and MBA graduates, now professionals in organizations. This study found otherwise. Weak tie relationships accounted for more access to information and career sponsorship for welfare to work participants than strong tie relationships. This was expected given that the strong ties of welfare to work participants are mostly family members or people from within the same homogenous network nestled in a community of poverty (Parish et al. 1991; Tienda & Glass, 1985). While the daughter whose father earned a MBA can call a close friend and get her a job at a law firm over the summer, another daughter whose father lives in the community of poverty may call a close friend to get her a job as a cashier at the local grocery store. Strong ties within a community of poverty produce resources from the
same community or neighborhood. Unfortunately, the strong ties relationships rarely have access to social resources outside the community capable of producing information, or career sponsor benefits. On the other hand, strong tie relationships from extended kinship networks provide additional resources that are essential for workforce entrance after welfare. All 15 participants in the study discussed the need for or accessed at least one social resource for transportation, childcare, and additional monetary support when entering the workforce. The largest segment of welfare participant’s social resources was strong tie relationships from an extended kinship networks.

Unlike weak ties which are integral source of information and resources access by welfare to work participants on the job, strong ties represent closer relationships categorized as extended kinship networks. Social capital theory purports that an individual’s occupational status depends chiefly on his education, which, in turn, depends on his family background. Basically, the theory suggested that access to resources through strong and weak ties in social networks provided the essential transition from family background and educational statuses to socioeconomic status achievement.

**Conclusion:** Strong tie relationships provide access to social network benefits necessary for workforce entrance and career success among welfare to work participants.

**Recommendation:** Welfare to work practitioners and administrators may consider organizing support groups for participants to develop extended kinship networks with each other while in the program to increase access to support and resources needed in the transition from welfare to self-sufficiency.
Social Network Structure & Career Success

Social network structure measured the total network size for each participant. Research indicated that the larger a person’s social network, the more resources are available to be utilized by members of the network. Likewise, social networks with both strong and weak ties produce a variety of resources that support the attainment of career success. Qualitative results of the study revealed that participants with larger social networks are more successful than participants with smaller social networks available. In addition, participants with larger social networks reported larger annual salaries, more promotions and overall career satisfaction among participants in the study. On the other hand, participants with smaller social networks reported annual salaries below the federal poverty level, reported fewer promotions and less career satisfaction than participants with larger social networks.

As discussed above, strong and weak tie relationships provide access to social network benefits needed in transition from welfare. Welfare to work programs must prepare participants for successful entrance into the workforce. In addition to academic courses, participants need social capital development opportunities. Participants can benefit from peer to peer networking and from interacting with individuals in the workforce and higher management.

Conclusion: A diversified social network, containing strong and weak ties, is essential to achieving career success for welfare to work participants.

Recommendation: Welfare to work practitioners and administrators may consider providing education and a forum for participant social capital development during and after welfare to work program participation.
Social Network Benefits and Career Success

Research objective six assessed the relationship between social network benefits and career success for welfare to work participants. Participants with access to all types of social network benefits such as information, resources, and career sponsorship, overall had higher salaries than their counterparts with fewer social network benefits. Once again, this validated the previous social capital theory’s of Granovetter (1973), Lin et al. (1981) and Seibert et al. (2001) which found that individuals with access to more resources through their social networks realize more career success. Participants with access to more information resources reported higher salaries and more promotions than those with fewer information resources available in their social network. Additionally, participants accessed both personal and career information from social resources within the organization and an extended kinship network. Participants that reported having access to the more than 10 resources including childcare, transportation, and monetary support, had the highest salaries, number of promotions and more career satisfaction than participants with less than 10 social resources. Two participants with less than 10 social ties reported salaries below the federal poverty level, no promotions, and were split on overall career satisfaction. The 11 remaining participants with access to resources through less than 10 social ties reported incomes below the federal poverty level, fewer promotions, and less career satisfaction than participants with more social ties. Lin et al. (1981) concluded that individuals with access to information and resources in their social network were more likely to be successful. The findings of this study were conclusive.

Strong and weak tie relationships are needed for successful workforce entrance and sustainment. An all inclusive network will provide participants leaving welfare with
access to information and career sponsorships from weak tie relationships and leverage additional resources like transportation, childcare, and additional monetary support from strong tie relationships.

**Conclusion:** Participants with access to the most comprehensive group of social network benefits through social resources were more successful than participants with fewer social network benefits after leaving welfare.

**Recommendation:** Welfare to work practitioners and administrators may consider developing a career sponsorship/mentor program where welfare to work participants develop and maintain a social relationship and provide a solid foundation and understanding for facilitating similar relationships in the workforce.

**Small Business Development**

The data analysis and findings in Chapter Four concluded that almost half of all STEP participants expressed interest in starting their own small business. Several academic programs at technical and community colleges prepare students for careers as entrepreneurs. Beauticians, electricians, and day care workers are prepared for careers where they will be in charge of managing and maintaining a small business.

Basic business planning, financing, and marketing courses can be provided, as well as opportunities to job shadow current professionals in the participant’s area of interest. States and regional welfare to work program administrators may consider adding a small business development course or general business administration as an academic program of study or component of the welfare to work programs across the U.S. in partnership with organizations like Small Business Development Centers, other economic development organizations, and Workforce Investment Boards.
Entrepreneurship training is always needed and relevant in today’s global economy. Small business ownership training naturally supports many of the curricula in the technical college system that target populations like the welfare to work program who need skills to enter the workforce immediately, sometimes as a small business owner.

**Conclusion:** Welfare to work program participants desire additional small business development education and training.

**Recommendation:** Local STEP programs may consider small business ownership seminars in partnership with Small Business Development Centers.

**Education and Career Pathways**

In addition, six participants also expressed interest in returning to school to obtain additional education in various fields. There is clear evidence that links higher education attainment with higher earnings. A high school diploma is no longer sufficient to obtain a career with sufficient wages for a single parent family with children. Globalization has reduced time and space as we have known it, increasing the urgency and speed at which Americans, including the working poor, must keep up. Career pathways that extend into professions affording self-sufficiency are essential for the working poor.

Career pathways should be created so that welfare to work participants can obtain additional certifications, associates and/or bachelor’s degrees if they desire to do so. For example, a Patient Care Technician should be able to attain her Certification as a Nursing Assistant and then her Licensed Practical Nurse license and finally her Registered Nurses license if she desires to, and the participants in this study desire to attain additional education. Despite the current economic conditions in America, there are still industries like healthcare and technology that have a high demand for various types of workers.
Once again, it is crucial for policy makers to address government work supports for the working poor, including welfare to work participants working below the federal poverty level. Additional work supports can provide resources that assist participants while obtaining education and skills training and reduce financial stress until participants are self-sufficient. Partnerships with universities and business are avenues for program and process development for welfare to work participants that desire additional education. Seeking out relationships with these entities is beneficial for the future development of workforce policy and initiatives. Policy makers must also continue to provide financial aid funding streams so that higher education is attainable for welfare to work participants.

Conclusion: A coordinated effort between government, education, and business is needed to address the creation of quality education and skills training programs.

Recommendation: Government and community leaders must identify the local and regional workforce demands and align them with education and skills training to meet these needs.

References to God or Religious Affiliations

Finally, participants referenced God or their religious affiliation as an additional source of social capital, providing guidance and various types of support. Many of the most successful participants in the study referenced a relationship with God as a source of guidance, strength, and emotional support, essentially a social resource. While welfare to work programs cannot require participants to have a personal relationship God or any religious affiliation, they can develop partnerships with local religious institutions to provide support to participants who desire to receive it. In addition to receiving education or career skills, welfare to work programs should also empower participants to
work on their inner self, improving their self esteem and self worth. This goal can be accomplished by partnering with religious institutions willing to provide assistance all of types, spiritual, emotional, and financial in some cases.

**Conclusion:** Religious organizations serve as an additional source of social capital for welfare participants during the transition to self-sufficiency.

**Recommendation:** Welfare to work program practitioners and administrators may consider developing partnerships with religious organizations to gain access to additional resources and social capital for participants during and after welfare to work.

**Diversification of Delivery**

Previous welfare research purports that most welfare recipients do not have access to a home computer of the Internet. An overwhelming majority of the individuals contacted for inclusion in this study were located using Facebook. Overall, eight of the 15 study participants that met inclusion criteria for the study were located on Facebook. An additional 10 participants were initially contacted on Facebook but did not meet inclusion criteria. All 15 participants interviewed successfully utilized web based training programs (Work Keys) while in STEP.

Rising e-learning trends and programs delivered without geographical and spatial constraints are intimations of what education and learning processes will look like in the future. The flexibility afforded by e-learning is especially beneficial to single mothers who may work all day, take care of the children and home in the evening, and will essentially continue on to work a third shift and complete school work the end of the evening. While online programs appear to count for a relatively small proportion of the degrees granted today, more than half of the traditional business schools offer online
programs and courses that could accommodate greater demand for online education (Zammuto, 2008). The most successful online programs are tied to specific high demand jobs and tailored so that the state of the art work skills can be learned in flexible, adaptable ways (Gatta, 2008).

Technology, in particular online learning, equalizes access to education so that family demands, geographic location, work schedules, and transportation inequities no longer served as barriers to acquiring educational credentials and developing skills for individuals transitioning from welfare to work (Gatta, 2008).

**Conclusion:** Welfare to work participants are capable of accessing and utilizing technological resources for education and training purposes.

**Recommendation:** Welfare to work programs should adapt new technologies to organize and deliver training will help workforce development systems respond to the needs of many workers with different educational needs.

**Significance of Findings**

The findings from this study make several contributions to the current literature. This study on the relationship between social capital and career success for welfare to work participants contributed to existing knowledge in the areas under study; welfare to work programs, social capital, and career success. The additions to the fields under study provide both theoretical and methodological implications for welfare to work programs across the U.S. The research produced findings that are theoretically based and can be implemented by welfare to work administrators and practitioners. Results of this study on the relationship between social capital and career success for welfare to work participants may influence state welfare to work administrators and policymakers to
reexamine current program components and consider revising them to create viable solutions for attaining self-sufficiency among program participants. And even more specifically, decision makers can offer programs better equipped to help participants achieve career success and self-sufficiency not only in Louisiana but across the U.S.

Results and recommendations provide solutions to increase the percentage of welfare to work participants capable of retaining employment for at least four quarters at leaving their respective program. In addition, the results of this study can assist practitioners in creating programs and activities that provide social capital development and networking skills in addition to improving their overall communication and employability skills.

Recommendations for Further Work

Based on the analysis and findings of this study, the following recommendations for further research are proposed:

1. Longitudinal study of the relationship between social capital and career success for welfare to work participants.

2. Mixed methods study examining the relationship between social capital and career success among welfare to work participants.

3. Comparative analysis study examining female and male outcomes.

4. Studies measuring the effectiveness of social capital and career success initiatives among welfare to work participants.

5. Return on investment (ROI) analysis conducted on welfare to work programs implementing social capital and career success initiatives to evaluate program and participant performance.
6. Extend the current study to examine the relationship between social capital and career success for students living in poverty completing education at community colleges and universities.

Implications for Practice & Policy

In 2007, 4.2 million families were living below the federal poverty level despite having at least one member in the labor force for at least half the year. The U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics define the working poor as individuals who spent at least 27 weeks in the labor force (working or looking for work), but whose incomes still fell below the official poverty level. This definition does not include a large segment of the workforce whose income is above the poverty line but are still not financially self sufficient like many welfare to work participants. The working poor are people who have been on welfare for less than two years (and may have previously alternated between welfare and work), and also people who are near or below the poverty level but do not receive welfare benefits.

While employment is critical, it is not enough for former welfare participants and their families to escape hardships. Current government policy does not provide a workforce system that allows the working poor to work full time and escape poverty. Gatta & McCabe, 2005) further elaborated that the economics of working in poverty are based on relatively simple facts- -many jobs, including many newly created jobs do not pay a living wage, and these jobs often do not offer upward mobility into high paying jobs. These wages are hardly ever enough to cover the cost of child care, health insurance, food, transportation, and housing just to name a few of the necessities for individuals transitioning from welfare to work and then on to self-sufficiency. To ensure
that there are jobs of adequate quality in terms of wages, advancement, and skill development, federal, state, and local governments must develop policies and programs to raise the education and skill levels of the working poor including welfare to work participants.

Recommendations for Practice

Practitioners may consider adding program elements that provide welfare to work participants with education on networking and social integration once on the job. Many former welfare to work participants commented on the lack of socialization skills they possessed when first hired and did not understand the benefits of getting to know other colleagues on the job. In addition, practitioners may strengthen the weak ties of participants by hosting networking events with government officials, business leaders, and other professionals. Practitioners may also consider developing a mentoring program among past welfare to work participants as an additional outlet for emotional and career support after the program. Mentors from the community can also be utilized as social resources for welfare to work participants.

Upgrading the skills of the working poor will not be an easy task but is vital to the success of our nation due to the increased competition for jobs. As a country, more emphasis will need to be placed on the skills needed to fill the new middle class. They will also have to cultivate more diversified soft skills sets to compete globally. The new jobs in the global marketplace will include possessing excellent social and communication skills. Acquiring skills like these mentioned above will give the welfare to work participants and other individuals classified as the working poor an edge over the field.
Recommendations for Policy Makers

The majority of governments are attempting to lower the financial pressure for public education expenditures by looking for alternative financing to support the expansion of education. The U.S. will have to upgrade the education of all Americans by providing workforce development opportunities that develop the skills necessary to compete for jobs in the new global marketplace. It is incumbent upon the government to provide opportunities for individuals to acquire new skills to meet the new demands of the global workforce. Government entities can achieve this by continuously funding education, work supports, and other services for welfare to work participants with salaries below the federal poverty level. In recent economic times, higher education has undergone drastic budget cuts and in some cases had to completely eliminate programs and research activities that did not demonstrate their value. Finnish higher education has created a cultural understanding of higher education institutions and their importance for competition with other nations. The U.S. government should place the same importance on our education system taking into consideration how rapidly globalization, technology, and other factors are closing the knowledge and skills gap that exist between us and other countries. U.S. Department of Education report explained that policy makers and educators need to do more to build America’s capacity to compete and innovate by investing in critical skills sets and basic research.

Government programs providing work supports are also in need of reform. It is recommended that policy makers consider consolidating all of these programs under one clearinghouse. Determining eligibility for all services at a central point will prove beneficial to the applicants who may eligible for additional services that they were
unaware of. Increasing access to government sponsored work supports will ensure that the welfare to work participants earning below the federal poverty level are obtaining resources needed to be economically viable and self-sufficient.

Policy makers must create uniformed eligibility requirements for all programs increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the entire government work support system. Government work supports should continue to provide services to individuals who are in need after employment is obtained. Premature termination of work supports can drastically affect the budget of the household of a working poor family. Benefit eligibility should expand to higher income levels so that workers can receive assistance at least until their earnings are sufficient to meet basic needs. Small increases in assets should not offset the assistance provided through government work supports. Extending work supports to all low- to moderate-income workers who need assistance, while better meeting the needs of the poorest working families, regardless of whether they are connected to the welfare system is imperative to addressing the needs of the working poor. In addition, extended benefits over the short run may ultimately decrease dependence on state assistance and benefits over the long run.

Workforce development for welfare to work participants, with salaries below the federal poverty level, moving from welfare to working poor is an ongoing process of cultivating a viable, skillfully trained workforce that can meet the current and future needs of business both private and public. While this may seem but a mere task for local communities to address on a local level, it is an issue that will affect us nationally and globally. Workforce development is essential to also address current and future demands of businesses and our economy as a whole. To proactively address this issue, workforce
development is essential for the working poor at levels of government; federal, state, and local. Across industry lines and country boundaries, workforce development and training are vital to attain competitive advantage. Future understandings of work and learning depend on understanding complex systems, such as organizations, and the interrelationships among complex systems—including countries, organizations, labor unions, and groups of people.

The overall philosophy of workforce development is holistic. There are key players (policy makers) who must work together to ensure they address key factors affecting workforce development and the needs of the working poor. The key players include government, workforce development entities, both public and private sectors of business and the individuals who are need of education and skills training. There are many factors to consider when thinking of workforce development for the working poor. These include globalization, technology, new economy, political change, and demographic shifts. A proactive approach is necessary in order to ensure that tomorrow’s workforce will be able to meet the competency and education demands of an ever changing business environment.

Finally, workforce development’s mission should be the sustainment of the U.S. economy through the lifelong learning process incorporating government, business, and the workforce. With the increasing number of baby boomers retiring and fewer college graduates entering the job market, individuals, businesses and government must be creative in finding ways to maintain a competent workforce that can address these gaps. The working poor, including the welfare to work participants with salaries below the
federal poverty level, is a workforce segment that can be developed and trained to assist in addressing these gaps.
#1: Who are the STEP Participants?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marital Status:</td>
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<td>Number of Children:</td>
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</table>

Highest Education: 
Current Occupation: 

#2 to help your career by speaking on your behalf, providing you with information, career opportunities, advice or psychological support or with whom you have regularly spoken regarding difficulties at work, alternative job opportunities or long term career goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initials</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Time Known</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Current Status</th>
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Relationship: 2 = Especially Close; 1 = Less Close; 0 = Distant

#3: People from whom you have sought information and advice to
enhance workplace effectiveness at current or previous organizations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initials</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Time Known</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Current Status</th>
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#4: People providing support on and off the job to help maintain employment and meet obligations

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<th>Initials</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Time Known</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Current Status</th>
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Relationship: 2= Especially Close; 1= Less Close; 0= Distant

#5: Adult relatives or extended family member involved in providing a support network.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initials</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Time Known</th>
<th>Type of Assistance</th>
<th>Paid/Unpaid</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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Relationship: 2 = Especially Close; 1 = Less Close; 0 = Distant

#6: Social Resource Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initials</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Sponsorship</th>
<th>Other</th>
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Totals

#7: What is career success for welfare to work participants after leaving STEP program?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID#</th>
<th>Employer Initials &amp; Dates</th>
<th>Current/Previous Salary</th>
<th># Promotions w/Org</th>
<th>Are you satisfied with your current career after leaving STEP?</th>
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#11 Would you like to share any other information about STEP and career success?

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</table>
#12 Can you recommend someone else who was in the STEP program with you who may want to participate or that you may still have contact with?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Phone:</th>
<th>Email:</th>
<th>Address:</th>
<th>Other: (e.g. place of employment)</th>
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APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Who are the Lafayette Parish welfare to work participants and what are their stories?
   a. What year were you born?
   b. What is your ethnicity?
   c. What is your marital status?
   d. How many children do you have?
   e. What is your highest education level?
   f. What academic program did you study while in STEP?
   g. What work activities did you participate in while in STEP?
   h. How many (total) years have you been in the workforce?
   i. How many (total) organizations have you been employed by?
   j. What is your current occupation?

2. Identify who has acted to help your career by speaking on your behalf, providing you with information, career opportunities, advice or psychological support or with whom you have regularly spoken regarding difficulties at work, alternative job opportunities or long term career goals.

3. Tell me about the people from whom you have sought information and advice to enhance your work effectiveness at your current organization, the people who provide you with important information or with whom you regularly discuss job-related problems or seek advice on important job-related decisions?
4. When first hired after the STEP Program, did you have people on and off the job providing support to help you maintain steady employment and meet all obligations? For example, people in other departments who helped with tasks, managers or directors higher in the organization making recommendations or introducing you at meetings, or family members who helped with childcare or transportation?

5. Tell me about any adult relatives or extended family members that are involved in providing a support network (childcare, transportation, monetary support) for your family so that you can maintain a career?

6. Describe some of the things the people you have previously mentioned provided to assist with helping you on the job when employed after the STEP Program?
   a. Did you have people who provided you with information about the organization?
   b. Did you have people who provided you with resources needed on the job?
   c. Has anyone in the organization ever served as a mentor/career sponsor throughout your career post STEP?

7. How do you define career success, as a former welfare to work participant, after leaving STEP?

8. What is your current annual salary.

9. Thinking about your entire career, how many promotions have you received over your entire career?
10. How satisfied are you with your career after leaving the STEP Program? If so, why? If not, why not?

11. Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding the STEP program and your career success?

12. Tell me as many people as you can remember who were in the STEP program at the same time with you.
## APPENDIX C

### PARTICIPANT DATA SUMMARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Born</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Highest Education</th>
<th>STEP Academic Program</th>
<th>Current Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>0-2 years Technical/College Training</td>
<td>Medical Office Assistant</td>
<td>Overnight Stocker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Technical/College Training</td>
<td>Patient Care Technician</td>
<td>CNA Field Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Technical/College Training</td>
<td>LPN</td>
<td>Patient Caregiver-Direct Support Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Technical/College Training</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>Customer Service-Clerical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Technical/College Training</td>
<td>Office Systems Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Technical/College Training</td>
<td>Patient Care Technician</td>
<td>CNA Engineering Aide Specialist I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Associates Degree</td>
<td>Office Systems Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>High School Diploma/ GED</td>
<td>Medical Office Assistant</td>
<td>Student</td>
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<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>Technical/College Training</td>
<td>Office Systems Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Highest Education</td>
<td>STEP Academic Program</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>0-2 years Technical/College Training</td>
<td>Medical Office Assistant</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>0-2 years Technical/College Training</td>
<td>Early Child Care</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>11th or below GED</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Associates Degree</td>
<td>LPN</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>0-2 years Technical/College Training</td>
<td>Travel &amp; Tourism</td>
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</table>
I hereby request to inspect the Infopac reports LABI06P1 through LABI06P4, LABI08P1 and LABI08P2, which lists cash assistance including regular, non-regular and initial payments. I understand that it is unlawful to use the contents of these reports for political or commercial purposes, or for any other purpose not directly connected with the administration of public assistance.

FITAP Recipients-2007

Name (Printed)

Signature

Street Address

City

State

Zip Code
I hereby request to inspect the Infopac reports LABI06P1 through LABI06P4, LABI08P1 and LABI08P2, which lists cash assistance including regular, non-regular and initial payments. I understand that it is unlawful to use the contents of these reports for political or commercial purposes, or for any other purpose not directly connected with the administration of public assistance.

FITAP Recipients-2008

Name (Printed) Dione Davis Green

Signature

Address 219 Richard Road

City Prairieville

State LA

Zip Code 70769
OFS 39
Rev. 06/98
Prior Issue Obsolete

Louisiana Department of Social Services
Office of Family Support

Request to Inspect Registers of Assistance Payments

04/05/2011
Date

I hereby request to inspect the Infopac reports LABI06P1 through LABI06P4, LABI08P1 and LABI08P2, which lists cash assistance including regular, non-regular and initial payments. I understand that it is unlawful to use the contents of these reports for political or commercial purposes, or for any other purpose not directly connected with the administration of public assistance.

FITAP Recipients-2009

Dione Davis-Green
Name (Printed)

Signature

219 Richard Road
Street Address

Baton Rouge, LA 70807
Quincy State Zip Code
APPENDIX E

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone: 601.266.6820 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/irb

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
- Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 11111502
PROJECT TITLE: Examining the Relationship Between Social Capital and Career Success Among Welfare to Work Participants
PROJECT TYPE: Dissertation
RESEARCHER/S: Dionne Davis-Green
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Science & Technology
DEPARTMENT: Economic & Workforce Development
FUNDING AGENCY: N/A
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval
PERIOD OF PROJECT APPROVAL: 12/15/2011 to 12/14/2012

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chair
REFERENCES


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