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## Examining the Types of Capital Benefits Afforded to Low-Income Individuals by Adult Financial Literacy Programs

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**EXAMINING THE TYPES OF CAPITAL BENEFITS AFFORDED  
TO LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS BY ADULT FINANCIAL  
LITERACY PROGRAMS**

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science  
Social Science

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by  
Tyler Love  
August 2021

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper explores the capital benefits derived from financial literacy programs and used as a means of poverty alleviation. Specifically, this paper focuses on cultural, social, and human capital. Examining financial literacy through the lens of capital allows one to explore how financial literacy is achieved through capital development. Unfortunately, access to this capital is limited and controlled by our social institutions. In conducting nine semi-structured interviews with coaches and participants of two separate financial literacy programs, findings show that participants do derive all three forms of capital. However, social capital and the fictive kinship relationships that were developed as a result of participating in the financial literacy programs were most emphasized. The implications of this focus on social capital is discussed.

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## INTRODUCTION

Debt and poverty are largely a fundamental part of American society. Living outside of one's means has become a status symbol, and purchasing expensive items on credit has become the accepted norm. Those who cannot afford goods and services outright are taking out loans to make purchases at an increasing level (Tatham, 2019). This is true for anything from purchasing a home to financing a college education. Increases in financialization have allowed corporations to gain more profits, even as the net worth of households has gone down (Martí, 2020).

Consequently, norms of excess and borrowing can have detrimental effects on low-income individuals with limited financial knowledge and resources. The cultural goals attached to materialism, paired with a lack of institutionalized means to obtain such goals, strain those of lower socioeconomic status (Merton, 1938). There have been calls to increase financial literacy courses offered through the public education system to address these issues. For example, in a recent CNBC article Michelle Fox (2021, para. 1) states, "Many money problems Americans face could have been avoided if financial literacy was taught earlier in school." This sentiment presented by Fox has echoed across multiple major news networks. Indeed, higher financial literacy rates have correlated with greater economic outcomes (Bumcrot et al., 2011; Hilgert et al., 2003; Mitchell & Lasardi, 2011; Stango & Zinman, 2009). However, more work is needed to understand the benefits of adult financial literacy programs used as a means of poverty intervention.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Financial literacy can be defined as “the ability to use knowledge and skills to manage financial resources effectively for a lifetime of financial well-being,” and possession of this ability is necessary for one to successfully navigate a capitalistic society (U.S. Treasury Department, 2008, para. 38). Unfortunately, many in the United States lack such knowledge. If properly utilized, financial literacy can be an effective means of addressing poverty. Educating people on good financial habits and strategies enables them to make better financial decisions and ultimately leads to better economic outcomes. However, lack of financial literacy can potentially be used as a scapegoat by those who do not recognize structural barriers that keep low-income individuals below the poverty line (Hamilton & Darity, 2017). Ideologies that ignore the institutional factors that keep people in poverty are not only incomplete; they also contribute to the vicious cycles of poverty in the United States (Rank, 2011).

A greater understanding of the actual utility of financial literacy programs is necessary if we hope to effectively use them as a means of poverty alleviation. Identifying the exact benefits associated with financial literacy programs could help to better replicate positive results while also highlighting the limitations of such an approach. Additionally, examining the capital benefits of financial literacy programs also provides a deeper understanding of organizations and social institutions that contribute to inequalities. Past studies have documented the accumulation and utilization of various

forms of capital in families and schools (Lareau, 2002; Cox, 2017), but more work is needed on how various forms of capital operate in adult financial literacy programs.

To reach a greater understanding of financial literacy programs, I conducted a qualitative study that examined the perceived benefits of adult financial literacy programs from the perspective of both the instructors and the students. Specifically, this empirical investigation sought to discover whether those perceived benefits could be understood as social, cultural, or human capital gains. Narrowing down and categorizing the benefits in this way, I attempted to illustrate precisely what low-income individuals take away from their experiences in financial literacy courses and the limitations of the courses. I hope that the findings of this study can also illuminate the stories of low-income individuals fighting to make ends meet. The wisdom that results from their own lived experiences can provide greater insight into what can be realistically expected from taking a financial literacy course. The use of qualitative interviews, which give participants the ability to elaborate on their experiences (Weiss 1994), was the appropriate methodology for exploring this topic.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

This study seeks to answer the following research questions: What types of capital benefits do financial literacy courses afford low-income individuals? Specifically, do low-income individuals gain human, cultural, or social capital through financial literacy programs?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this literature review, I will define and provide evidence on the state of poverty in the United States. Then, I will define financial literacy and describe previous attempts to address the issue of poverty using financial literacy programs. Lastly, I will describe various forms of capital (social, cultural, and human capital), past empirical investigations that have examined these concepts, and how individuals might gain such capital through financial literacy programs.

### **Poverty in the US**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2020), the poverty threshold for a single person is an income of \$13,011 a year. For comparison, that threshold goes up to an income of \$20,598 a year for a family of four with two children under the age of 18. The Census Bureau also indicated that approximately 34 million people were living in poverty in 2019. Though at the time, this was the fifth annual decline in the national poverty rate with about 4.2 million fewer individuals living in poverty than the year before (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically impacted the financial standing of millions of Americans (Parker et al., 2020). With a poverty rate that is already higher than comparable nations (Rank, 2011) and massive numbers of people filing for unemployment because of the pandemic (Kochhar, 2020), the United States will likely be facing growing rates of poverty in the coming years. Helping Americans find effective means of poverty alleviation will become increasingly crucial. Currently, the prevailing policy instruments designed to address poverty include Social Security, refundable tax

credits, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), housing subsidies, and school lunch (Wolfe & Blair, 2019). According to Wolfe and Blair (2019) of the Economic Policy Institute, “government assistance programs are directly responsible for keeping tens of millions of people out of poverty” (para. 5). Financial literacy programs may not address structural inequalities like the current prevailing policy instruments, but they could prove to be a valuable component of addressing poverty in America.

### **Financial Literacy and Financial Education**

Financial literacy can be defined as “the ability to use knowledge and skills to manage financial resources effectively for a lifetime of financial well-being” (U.S Treasury Department, 2008, para. 28). Research shows that financial literacy enables people to achieve salutary financial outcomes. Hilgert et al. (2003) found that people with more financial knowledge are more likely to engage in several positive financial practices such as budgeting, paying bills on time, and maintaining an emergency fund. Numerous other studies have found positive correlations between financial literacy, retirement, and wealth accumulation (Mitchell & Lusardi, 2011; Stango & Zinman, 2009). In a study examining the geography of financial literacy, Bumcrot et al. (2011) found that states with more financially literate people tend to have lower poverty rates and that states with fewer financially literate people tend to have higher poverty rates. Lastly, Sibley (2007) found that financially illiterate people are likely to be more intimidated by the complexities of the financial system leading to self-exclusion. A lack of understanding of

the financial system can also lead to people making inappropriate financial decisions like signing with a predatory lender (Sibley, 2007). Although higher financial literacy rates correlate to greater economic outcomes, only twenty-one states require that high school students take a financial literacy course (Council for Economic Education, 2020). More work is needed to understand the exact benefits low-income adults gain from the experience of taking financial literacy courses.

Though financial literacy is a popular topic, very little literature identifies the current primary sources of financial information for low-income individuals in the United States. However, according to a CNBC and Acorns survey conducted in 2019, 75 percent of Americans report declining financial advice, choosing to manage their finances independently as opposed to consulting with a financial advisor (Dickler, 2019). Theoretically, this trend would put individuals with greater levels of human, social, and cultural capital at an advantage when managing their finances.

A distinction between financial literacy and financial education, or financial literacy programs, must be made to provide further context to the research. Though financial literacy is correlated with greater life outcomes, connecting financial education to greater levels of financial literacy is much more difficult. As Hastings et al. (2013) reported in the *Annual Review of Economics*, “The evidence is more limited and not as encouraging as one might expect” (pp. 359). Hastings et al. (2013) report that most data either finds no link between financial education and financial literacy or results in contradictory findings, saying, “Altogether, there remains substantial disagreement over

the efficacy of financial education” (p. 361). However, a meta-analysis of 126 impact evaluation studies performed by Kaiser and Menkhoff (2017) found that financial education significantly impacted economic behavior and literacy. The authors reported that financial education was much less effective for lower-income individuals pointing to the structural barriers associated with financial literacy programs (Kaiser & Menkhoff, 2017). This finding enforces the conclusion that financial literacy programs alone will not lead to greater economic outcomes. Instead, financial literacy programs’ true utility must be assessed to identify exact benefits derived and supplement greater institutional changes to address poverty.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

### **Human Capital**

Becker (1964) originally referred to human capital as “activities that influence future monetary and psychic income by increasing resources in people” (p. 11). Becker (2002) later defined human capital as “the knowledge, information, ideas, skills, and health of individuals” (p. 3). I believe that in order to have a good working definition of human capital that effectively encompasses the whole of Becker’s ideas, it is necessary to synthesize these two definitions. In that effort, I propose to define human capital as the stock of knowledge, information, ideas, and skills that result in monetary gain for individuals. Considering that the definition of financial literacy is the knowledge and skills to manage financial resources, the direct financial knowledge derived from taking a financial literacy course would fall under the category of human capital.

Several studies (Mielitz et al., 2018; Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014) approach financial literacy using the human capital framework. Mielitz et al. (2018) investigated how a financial literacy program could increase financial knowledge for individuals participating in a work-release program. For the study, the authors operationalized human capital as education, age, and use of financial tools in order to measure which characteristics were associated with greater increases in financial knowledge and they make inferences as to why (Mielitz et al., 2018). The authors found that there were significant gains in financial knowledge as a result of the inmates participating in the financial literacy program (Mielitz et al., 2018). However, the authors also determined that both black participants and participants with lower education had less financial knowledge than non-black participants and participants with more education even after exposure to the financial literacy program suggesting another confounding variable (Mielitz et al., 2018).

Lusardi and Mitchell (2014) provide an overview of the existing theoretical research in an effort to frame financial knowledge as a human capital investment. Further, in assessing survey data and examining the impact financial literacy has on economic decision making, the authors demonstrated that low rates of financial knowledge are pervasive and that providing tools to help address low financial literacy rates would be very difficult (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014).

Indeed, viewing financial literacy through the lens of human capital can be helpful for many reasons. For one, the accumulation of human capital benefits the

individual and can also benefit their children. This helps address the cyclical nature of poverty. Chin and Phillips's (2004) study on child-rearing practices points out that differences in the quality and quantity of summer activities that a child participates in are not a result of a difference in the parents' desire to help their child cultivate skills and talents. Instead, it results from differences in resources, including "the human capital to know how to best assess and improve children's skills" (Chin & Phillips, 2004). There is also evidence to suggest that a community can benefit from the accumulation of human capital. Smith-Greenway (2017) found that there is a greater likelihood of child survival in African communities where more women are literate. More empirical work is needed on potential ways people can gain human capital, such as completing financial literacy courses.

### **Cultural Capital**

Bourdieu (1986) originally defined cultural capital as the stock of a person's knowledge of cultural signals such as attitudes, preferences, tastes, and styles that permit or limit access to certain social groups. Like human capital, cultural capital refers to one's knowledge that theoretically gives people advantages in society. However, cultural capital is specific to cultural elements. According to Lareau (2015), cultural capital can also be extended to cover knowledge of conducting oneself in institutions and the possession of a sense of entitlement. Additionally, when discussing the theoretical concept of cultural capital, it is important to note its recursive nature. The possession of

cultural capital enables one to successfully navigate through society, and such success results in the accumulation of more cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986).

In an ethnographic study, Lareau (2015) found that middle-class young adults succeeded when getting their needs met in the case of a problem related to an institution. Conversely, working-class young adults were more easily frustrated by bureaucracies and less knowledgeable of the institution as a whole (Lareau, 2015). Lareau (2015) indicated that this points to the necessity of a “cultural guide” or “guides”—teachers, coaches, relatives, or friends—who helped decode institutional rules of the game, gave advice, and intervened at crucial moments” for working-class individuals (p. 3). Lareau (2015) shows that knowing how to navigate institutions is an essential element of cultural capital. Given that cultural capital helps achieve upward social mobility, more work is needed to see the extent to which financial literacy courses provide individuals with increased cultural knowledge. Learning cultural tastes, behaviors, styles, and abilities to navigate institutions could prove valuable for lower-income individuals and might be obtained through financial literacy courses. Other empirical investigations have demonstrated the importance of cultural capital. Garcia et al., (2016), using data from the 2012 Programme of International Student Assessment, also found that cultural capital at both the individual and school level is positively associated with student’s financial literacy. That is, students with families of higher levels of cultural capital have a positive influence on the financial literacy of the child (Garcia et al., 2016).

## **Social Capital**

According to Golash-Boza (2015), social capital refers to “relationships and networks that offer social and other benefits” (p. 237). This definition considers Coleman’s contributions to social capital. Coleman (1988) stated, “Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors-whether persons or corporate actors-within the structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible” (p. 98). In focusing on the latter part of the contribution, we see that social capital is used to assist individuals in reaching a particular goal that otherwise would not be achievable. With this in mind, and for this study’s purposes, I propose defining social capital as a person’s relationships and networks that result in economic benefits.

Social capital could potentially be gained by low-income individuals when taking financial literacy courses. Such social capital could come from relationships that an individual develops with other people taking the financial literacy course or a type of mentorship that arises between the teacher and the student. Cox (2017) illustrates how students can, because of the structure of an organization, develop both horizontal and vertical social ties that then connect students to a range of hierarchical positions, all of which have different benefits for different situations. Cox (2017) concludes that students can “cash in” these connections for resources. Learning whether or not low-income

individuals develop these relationships that they can “cash in” due to taking financial literacy courses could be another valuable piece of information in assessing financial literacy courses.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

### **Data Collection Strategy**

This study took place in January and February of 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. I recruited participants from two organizations. For the sake of anonymity, I will refer to the organizations as “Organization-One” and “Organization-Two.” Both Organizations offer financial literacy programs that usually take place via in-person sessions. However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, all sessions were conducted virtually. These specific financial literacy programs are available to anyone who would like to apply.

Organization-One is an independently governed nonprofit organization that seeks to enhance the quality of life of people living in a rural county in the southeast region of the United States. The director for Organization-One shared that the financial literacy program is very new and only has two clients currently. However, clients go through a preliminary interview process with both the director and the financial literacy coach to ensure that the client is a good fit for the program. The director indicated that the interview process is simply to assess whether or not the participant is serious about participating in the program, whether he or she has the time availability to participate,

and if he or she will work well with the financial literacy coach. Though the goal for the program is to provide a holistic approach to financial literacy that includes savings incentives, cohorts of clients learning together, and individual counseling, funding limitations only allow Organization-One to provide financial literacy coaching. The current program does not have a specified duration and will continue and consists of weekly meetings with the financial literacy coach in which the participants discuss their expenses, financial skills, and budget for the following week. The county that Organization-One serves is not densely populated, with the Census Bureau reporting approximately 127,000 inhabitants as of 2019. The county is primarily White, with nearly 90 percent of residents identifying as such. The county's poverty rate is higher than the national average at almost 17 percent.

Organization-Two is an independent religious nonprofit organization located in a separate rural county in the southeast region of the United States that serves to empower families to move beyond government assistance and “fulfill their God-given potential.” On their website, Organization-Two touts over 120 clients and \$180,000 of annual savings for the federal government as a result of assisting clients with getting off of government assistance. According to a data sheet provided to potential donors, between 40 and 60 percent of graduates are debt-free upon completion of the program. Additionally, the data-sheet indicates that just over 90 percent of graduates have some savings by the end of the program, with over 55 percent having three to six months of living expenses saved. Retention rates of the program were not provided because, according to an impact specialist, the program is constantly adapting, and the retention

rates change with each iteration of the program. The program starts with an 8-week induction process in which Organization-Two provides financial literacy courses and assesses whether or not the client would be a good fit for the program. This means that the client meets all of the requirements for the program, including having access to reliable transportation, having a job, not using recreational drugs, and the capacity for reliable attendance to program meetings. Once the client passes the screening process, the program lasts for two years. In that time, the participant meets with financial literacy coaches twice a month, attends financial literacy courses, and has access to mentors and mental health professionals. The coaching typically consists of participants meeting with their coaches for thirty minutes to an hour, twice a month, discussing financial skills, planning a budget, and /editing the budget. After the two-years the client has the ability to graduate from the program. The hope is that the client will be debt free, off of government assistance, and have three to six months of living expenses saved upon graduating from the program. The clients are then encouraged to participate in a “give-back” assignment in which they give back to the organization in some way. For example, some participants attend meetings and speak with potential clients to share their experiences as a give-back. The county that Organization-Two serves is also not densely populated with approximately 80,000 inhabitants and is primarily White, with nearly 90 percent of the population identifying as such. The poverty rate in this county is also higher than the national average at about 15 percent.

The participants in this study were chosen via a convenience sample. Weiss (1994) recommended starting with individuals the researcher currently knows and asking

for referrals to obtain a convenience sample. Through a mutual contact, I was connected with the directors of each program, and I reached out to them for help in finding willing financial literacy coaches and participants for both organizations. I contacted twelve potential subjects, but ultimately, I was only able to interview nine subjects.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with a total of nine participants. The directors of each program connected me with seven financial literacy coaches and two participants for the financial literacy programs. I was hoping to be connected with an even number of participants and coaches but, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, connecting with low-income individuals proved to be much more difficult than anticipated. Interviews took place via video chat on Zoom, with the participants' cameras turned off and any identifying information removed. Interviewees were offered a \$25 gift card as an incentive for participating in the study, though most of the interviewed financial coaches declined the gift card. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes to an hour and a half. I utilized an iterative research approach in which I made memos after each interview and assessed whether I needed to make edits to my interview protocols to home in on topics of relevance. The protocols that I used to guide the interviews with the financial literacy coaches can be found in Appendix A. The interview protocol for the financial literacy program participants can be found in Appendix B. The goal of these protocols was to develop a rapport and comfort with the participant firstly. Then, once rapport was established, further questions prompted the participants to share their lived experiences and takeaways from the financial literacy programs. While these questions centered around the capital benefits obtained, they were general enough to avoid leading

the participant. The University's Institutional Review Board approved the study in January of 2021.

### **Data Analysis Strategy**

After I conducted my interviews, I ran the audio recordings through the Otter.ai automated transcription service. This process helped create a general outline for the transcript and separate the speakers. However, the automatic transcriptions were not wholly accurate and needed to be combed through and verified line by line while also listening to the recording to ensure accuracy. Though this process was time-consuming, it allowed me to develop a great deal of familiarity with the transcripts, thus providing insights and connections that might have been missed otherwise. After all transcripts had been transcribed and verified, I once again combed through them to do a preliminary coding round by identifying reoccurring themes. I was then able to assign the codes that occurred the most to the "Readiness for Financial Education," "Cultural Capital," "Social Capital," and "Human Capital" categories. For Cultural Capital, I was able to identify two themes for the findings: communication and navigating institutions. For Social Capital, I was able to identify the themes of organization connections, participant connections, and fictive kinship. Then, for Human Capital, I was able to identify the themes of tracking expenses, budgeting, and saving. Lastly, I assigned pseudonyms to protect the privacy of my subjects and wrote my findings using quotes from my interviewees to demonstrate significant themes.

## Positionality Statement

As other qualitative researchers have noted (Bourke 2014; Holmes 2020), it is advantageous to reflect on how one’s social characteristics affect the research process. My approach to this research is highly informed by my own background as a low-income individual. I grew up in a working-class family and experienced first-hand the struggles stemming from financial hardship. My experiences helped me to develop interview questions, assess interview data, and draw conclusions about the findings. In conducting this research, my background is not seen as a hindrance. Rather, it allows for more familiarity with the topics discussed, and thus, more informed takeaways.

## FINDINGS

<b>Name</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Word Count</b>
<b>Betty</b>	White	Female	Two	Participant	30	4663
<b>Tessa</b>	White	Female	Two	Participant	28	4768
<b>Walter</b>	White	Male	One	Coach	37	5589
<b>Jake</b>	White	Male	Two	Coach	53	9894
<b>Bob</b>	White	Male	Two	Coach	1:30	14257
<b>Randy</b>	White	Male	One	Coach	46	7337
<b>Sandy</b>	White	Female	Two	Coach	52	8101
<b>Kelly</b>	White	Female	Two	Coach	45	7691
<b>Terri</b>	White	Male	Two	Coach	1:01	7735

Table 1 provides a summary of the interviewees’ demographic information (i.e., race and gender) and general interview data. In my analysis of the interviews, I confirmed

that, from the perspectives of both coach and participants, participants derive human, cultural, and social capital from financial literacy programs. My analysis revealed similar themes from coaches and participants. The following are the most prevalent benefits of the financial literacy program separated by form of capital. There were also two additional themes that emerged during the data analysis process.

### **Readiness for the Financial Literacy Program**

Before participants were allowed access to the benefits of the financial literacy programs, they needed to prove their “readiness” for such a program. Each interviewee mentioned the intake process that was designed to assess their ability to participate, commit to the duration, and commit to the program’s rigor. Coach Terri, a retired banker, turned volunteer financial literacy coach, described the philosophy behind the intake process:

You know, it's not a giveaway. You've got to earn your way through. They do a really expensive screening to make sure that the program makes sense for you and you're willing to commit to it. Yes, it's one of the most solid designs, and I think they learned from experience, too. I'm sure over the years, they've restructured a pretty good program.

Coaches reported the need for practical requirements to be met before clients were accepted into the program. Because of limited funding and the structure of the program itself, participants needed to have a job and a reliable form of transportation. This ensured that the participants could generate an income to manage throughout the program and attend sessions. Aside from the practical requirements, the induction process at each organization lasted a few weeks and was designed to assess whether or not applicants

could reliably show up for coaching sessions and see whether they could take the program seriously. Coach Jake, a retired salesman from the Midwest, elaborates on what the intake process is like:

You can't just join as a participant or as a client. You have to go through a vetting process. It includes a lot of Q&A, a lot of background checking. They have to do an essay that they articulate why they want to be part of this and what they want to do with their lives. So, they have an ownership component to their [Organization-Two's] approach that I think sets the client up for more success. Frankly, we have some people out there that aren't yet serious, that maybe needs some maturity or will never get there. But they spend the resources on people that they believe are really leaning in and willing to help themselves. But need expertise from a mentor or a financial coach or the other functions that exist for them for sure.

The inductive approach to the study allowed me to ask coaches what they thought set their clients apart from the applicants that didn't make it into the program. Most of them indicated that they felt their clients had reached a level of maturity that allowed them to be successful in the program. There was this understanding by all of the coaches that whether or not someone was ready for the program wasn't a quality that clients inherently had. Instead, it was a quality that the client had developed through their life experiences and that anyone was capable of developing. I asked Coach Jake what he thought set his client apart, and he provided a very thoughtful response:

Tyler: What really sets your client apart from someone who wasn't yet ready for a program like this?

Coach Jake: I think she demonstrated a pretty, pretty well-established maturity. She's not that old, but yet she's experienced a lot, and she didn't let that experience turn her negative or defensive so much as she has learned from those experiences. And I think she was able to go through that process [intake process] with both feet on the ground and really answer questions in an authentic way...I was getting feedback about her, that she just had a lot of maturity and resiliency and, frankly,

a very good attitude, you know? It wasn't an "Everybody's against me"[attitude]. She came into it with an open mind.

To the coaches, the deciding factor on whether or not the client was ready for the program was if the participant was far enough along in their personal journey to handle the kind of accountability necessary to be successful in the program. Both the coaches and the participants expressed that the programs were somewhat uncomfortable. For the program to work as intended, the participants had to give up a lot of privacy. Tessa, a graduate from Organization-Two in her late twenties, described the level of vulnerability necessary to participate in the program:

Yes, you have to be very vulnerable in [Organization-Two], and they tell you that from the get-go. Like the first night, they tell you, "We're going to get up in your business." If you don't want that, then you don't want to be in [Organization-Two] because they do get up in your business." But it's not just that, just like you have to be vulnerable, too, because there's people that don't make it through [Organization-Two] because they don't want to be vulnerable, you know? I was like at my wit's end, and I was like I don't have anything left to do. You know, it's like my cards are on the table, I have to do something I have to better myself I don't know how. You know these people want to help me so.

Those who participated in the programs were willing to allow the organizations access to private information in exchange for financial knowledge.

## **Human Capital**

Human capital was the least emphasized form of capital of the financial literacy programs. Generally speaking, this is what comes to mind when the concept of financial literacy is discussed. Indeed, all of the practical skills necessary to become financially

literate fall under this category. The forms of human capital that were most emphasized were tracking expenses, budgeting, and saving

### ***Tracking Expenses***

Each of my subjects highlighted the importance of identifying where money is going. Tracking expenses was seen by all of the subjects interviewed as the foundation of becoming financially literate. Coach Terri described his philosophy on financial literacy coaching and the importance of tracking expenses:

You know, that's really the starting point for everybody, just keep track of "Hey, money comes in, and money goes out. Do you have any clue what's happening?" Even if you only make 15 bucks an hour, it's pretty eye-opening once you start breaking it down where the money goes.

Each coach seemed to take a different approach to track expenses, but the idea was the same. How much money does the participant have coming in, and where do they spend the money? Some coaches have their participants save all of their receipts to answer these questions, which sometimes proves to be difficult. Coach Bob expressed his frustrations with a particular client saying:

So, you know, I've had had one client. If we can just get her to save her receipts, she's at least going to have an idea where her money's going.

Coach Bob believed that the participant's inability to track her expenses was the biggest hurdle this participant faced in becoming financially literate. This is because without understanding where money is currently being spent, participants cannot start building their budget and plan for the future. Another coach, Randy, illustrates this philosophy stating:

And so, keeping track of the daily spending, you're able to do that. And more importantly, that information transfers over to a more accurate and reliable budget. So that's kind of where we start with that is those behaviors and habits and why they are there?

By becoming aware of current spending habits at the beginning of the program, coaches can encourage their participants to become more aware of their spending habits. This awareness is seen as necessary in acknowledging and breaking poor spending habits and using a budget to reinforce positive spending habits.

### ***Budgeting***

Budgeting was also another major form of human capital emphasized in the interviews. In total, all nine interviewees spoke of the importance of utilizing budgeting. The word “budget” was mentioned 136 times throughout the nine interviews. Each coach I spoke with emphasized the transformative nature of simply knowing how to budget and sticking to said budget. Coach Terri illustrated the transformation as a change from living solely in the present to planning for the future, saying:

Well, certainly, the budgeting is foundational. Just make a budget. Part of making a budget is realistically assessing your situation, your circumstances, and it makes you look out to the future to a lot of folks. You know, they just live in the present or the past as opposed to planning or thinking ahead. So what needs budgeting helps, and I emphasize that "thinking ahead", not just needed this month, but next month, or, hey, we got tax returns coming in, there's a plan, we need to that, you know, future goals in terms of "hey where do you want to live in the future?", your transportation needs, where you think out ahead, and then you can start planning financially towards achieving some of those goals. So that's thinking, budget planning, future budgeting is really important.

The participants that I spoke with reiterated the importance of budgeting in becoming financially literate. One participant, Tessa, even pointed to budgeting as the

entire reason she sought help from the nonprofit in the first place. She described an interaction with a church leader where she was desperate for some help, saying:

Please help me with a budget. How can I? I want to learn how to do this because I just feel so desperate, and I can't pay my bills. I need to know how to do this. How do adult people do this? I need to know.

Another participant Betty, a recent graduate of Organization-Two who will become a counselor for the organization, explained the difference that budgeting had on her mindset. Instead of beating herself up for financial mistakes, she was able to plan ahead and avoid mistakes. She said:

I think the consistency of the budgeting, like every single month you sit down, and you look where you are with your finances. And so, you have a plan. You know where your money is going. You've already decided where it's going to go. So instead of looking back and going, "Oh, gosh, I shouldn't have." No, you already planned ahead. You know? I think that is; you have a plan. Having a plan is huge.

The budgeting structure provided to Betty gave her a sense of security that she wouldn't have otherwise had. That sense of security helped free up Betty's mental bandwidth allowing her to make even more informed financial decisions.

One interesting point to note about budgeting is that two of the coaches specifically mentioned a "light bulb" moment, meaning when the participants realize the power of what they're learning and get excited about budgeting. Coaches report this excitement as being affirming and satisfying. Coach Sandy, a retired schoolteacher, describes the lightbulb moment:

But my favorite thing is just, you know, kind of seeing when she has a light. It's kind of like teaching. Yeah, your girlfriend will tell you that. When you see the light bulb go off, you know, and it's like, "Oh, what else can we do to help her?" And whatever, you know, that is definitely the best part.

Other coaches mention a similar moment without using the term “light bulb” but describe the satisfaction of their participants understanding that rather than being a tool to tell them what they can’t do, creating a budget allows them to plan for the things they can do.

### *Saving*

A part of the budgeting process that was also emphasized was setting aside a certain amount of income for savings. The primary goal here was to generate an emergency fund that participants could rely on if anything were to happen to their primary source of income. This emergency savings account could also serve as a buffer for any unexpected expenses that could derail the participants’ progress. Coaches had different goals for their participants, with some encouraging two different emergency savings accounts to handle both loss of income and unexpected expenses, respectively. However, the overall idea was that participants would set forth a goal for their emergency savings, usually around three months of living expenses. The program itself also reinforced this concept as Organization-Two offered to match every dollar the participants could save. I asked Betty about her experience with the matched savings program:

Yes, they did match my savings, so if you save \$200 a month. You actually set a goal with your financial coach, so my goal was \$200 a month. That's what I said I could afford. So, if I saved up to \$200 a month, they matched it \$200.

Realizing that this likely resulted in many expenses for the organization, I asked Coach Bob about the price tag on the matched savings program. He explained further how to savings matching worked, saying:

That's where a lot of our funding goes to matching their savings. So, it's really, you know, if a client makes their budget, they get seventy-five dollars to go into their rewards account, but up to two hundred dollars a month [Organization-Two] matches everything they save.

Coach Bob also told me how Organization-Two could afford this type of benefit. He explained that along with the director of the program being very good at raising funds from donors because of her proven method, the organization also runs a thrift store where the proceeds directly fund the benefits for the financial literacy program. Towards the end of the two-year program, clients are required to have saved up at least six months of emergency savings before graduating from the program. I spoke with coaches at Organization-One about offering these types of incentives, and they recognized the need for similar benefits in their program. However, because of a lack of funding, Organization-One cannot offer benefits on an equivalent scale at this time.

### **Cultural Capital**

Cultural capital was the form of capital in the interviews. In total, cultural capital in various forms was mentioned cumulatively 391 times throughout all nine interviews. The forms of capital discussed spanned the gamut from learning to navigate social institutions to deciding when to spend their money. However, three forms of cultural

capital stood out. These included effective communication, navigating institutions, and attitudes towards specific financial tools like credit cards.

### ***Communication***

Each coach I spoke with reported that their participants became much better communicators due to participating in the financial literacy programs. More specifically, coaches felt that their clients became more comfortable with and better communicated about money. Coaches were very aware that their clients came from backgrounds in which it was either impolite to talk about money or in which the family didn't know enough to talk about money. This sentiment was reiterated by both of the participants I interviewed. Tessa explained her fears of discussing finances:

Tyler: Yeah, I gotcha. Do you think that [Organization-Two] helped you become a better communicator?

Tessa: Definitely, definitely, because, at first, I was kind of scared to tell people about my financial problems. I felt like I will be judged and that sort of thing. But then [Organizational-Two] really showed me that it was okay to, like, ask for help. So yes.

Betty, who identified herself as coming from a middle-class family, explained that her family never discussed finances. She believed that this is why she never became financially literate herself. I asked her specifically about her parents' ability to communicate about finances. When asked about her parents' roles in teaching financial skills, Betty indicated that her parents did not teach her these skills and she had "no idea" whether they had a budgeting plan. When asked whether the topic just never came up, Betty said:

Well, no. In fact, I probably hear about it more now that... My mom did the bills. And apparently, she has kept records of everything they have ever paid. But I never knew what was going on. It's just like, "Oh, mom's doing the bills." And we never talked about it; we never talked about budgeting ever.

This preference for avoiding the topic of finances was understood by each coach whose clients had parents. For the clients who did not have parents, coaches were quick to communicate that the lack of discussing finances was most likely because there were no parents there to discuss the topic in the first place.

Betty did discuss one bit of financial information that her parents passed along to her, and it was that credit cards were bad. She explained:

I knew we were supposed to not spend a lot of money, and credit cards were bad, but that's about the extent of it. And credit cards really aren't bad. It's what you do with credit cards. Oh, that's something I learned. I learned how to play the system with credit cards. So, if you get certain cards, they'll give you cashback on. So, if you're disciplined and you have a plan, you can use your credit card to make money.

Individuals have a hard time becoming financially independent when parents do not speak with their children about finances. Further, when parents are not financially savvy, their attitudes towards financial tools can negatively cloud their children's judgment on tools that could otherwise prove helpful. This is because low-income parents often use directives instead of reasoning in child rearing (Lareau, 2002). Low-income parents teach their children to simply follow orders instead of encouraging them to ask questions and find answers on their own, resulting in their children simply following their parents' example (Lareau, 2002). Luckily, Betty learned more about credit cards and learned more about navigating the institution itself or "play the system," which leads into the next section.

## *Navigating Institutions*

In line with the topic of communicating finances, coaches found that they could help their clients navigate social institutions more efficiently, which relates to Lareau's (2015) conceptualization of cultural capital. Coaches felt as though clients were able to communicate their needs better and advocate for themselves instead of feeling victimized by the institution. Coach Jake provided a great example about when his client panicked because she felt that her energy provider was ripping her off:

There is a situation where she had huge electric bills, and she's just, "They're out to get me. I don't understand why that's happening." But long story short, during part of COVID, she was doing hair in her apartment... So, I started helping her dig through it... Well, she wasn't thinking about what was different. What was different she's doing hair in the house because of lockdown. She's got to make money... And so she wasn't even thinking that "Well, I'm going to be paying a huge electric bill because I've moved my work from work to the house." And once we got through there, I didn't accuse her of it, and she kind of laughed it off like, "Well, OK, I see it." ...It's realizing that approaching the problem on a more of a detective level versus an emotional level usually results in something she can work with.

This interaction exemplifies Lareau's (2015) concept of cultural guides. Coach Jake was able to act as a cultural guide for his participant and show her a more appropriate and effective way of navigating social institutions. Coach Jake felt that this was a turning point for the client as she has been able to handle frustrating financial situations and deal with institutions with a lot more grace moving forward. He did not blame his client for having this emotional reaction because he understood the complexities of all of the stressful factors that already existed in his client's life. Coach Jake saw that, by not knowing an effective way of navigating the institution, his client shut down emotionally

and automatically assumed the worst because she did not have enough mental bandwidth to deal with another stressor in her life.

### ***Recursive Relationship***

It should be noted that while participants gained cultural capital through the program, a substantial amount of cultural capital was required to even participate in the program. As mentioned earlier, participants needed to write an essay that articulated why they want to participate in the program and what they would like to do with their lives. This would immediately disqualify working class individuals with limited reading and writing skills. Essentially, the vetting process ensured that only the certain participants from the community would qualify.

### **Social Capital**

Social capital was the most discussed form of capital that clients derived from financial literacy programs. Taking a more macro look at the study as a whole, each benefit that the participants derived from the financial literacy program can fall under the social capital category. That is, participants make personal connections that result in economic benefits. The nonprofits seemed to understand the importance of making connections and even structured their approach so that participants could maximize these connections.

### *Organization Connections*

After being accepted into the program, participants in Organization-Two would be partnered with multiple coaches. Each participant is assigned a financial literacy coach, a mentor, a mental health professional, and more. These coaches would all work together with the client to address everyday problems and develop a game plan for the client to become financially independent. The client could call upon any of these coaches for individual help with problems should they arise and learn to depend on these coaches. The relationships often went further than professional, and, in a lot of cases, clients and coaches became real-world friends. Coach Kelly, a school counselor, said about her participant:

I would say we're friends. Yeah. And, you know, one thing they encourage at [Organization-Two] is, even after the two years are up with [Organization-Two], they really want you to continue on your friendship.

Clients were then able to use their coaches as personal resources to help their economic goals. For instance, one coach mentioned that he helped his client apply for an outside scholarship for which he sat on the board of directors. He stressed that he didn't rig the selection process at all. Instead, he knew what the board would be looking for in the application, so he could coach his participant in a way that maximized her chances of being selected for the scholarship. She was then selected for the scholarship and was able to further her education due to the funding.

### ***Participant Connections***

The other way clients derived social capital from the financial literacy programs was to collaborate with other clients going through the same program. The programs featured a sort of cohort in which clients would attend the same classes and “graduate” from the program simultaneously. Clients were encouraged to use their classmates as resources to hold each other accountable for financial goals. As a result, clients reported developing deep connections with other participants. Betty talked about her relationships with other clients in her cohort, saying:

And those ladies I love dearly, I mean, we're totally different people, totally different backgrounds. But I would go to bat for each other, I feel like.

Clients could also use these connections to further their financial well-being by getting tips on things like the best credit cards to use or news about an opening for a new and better-paying job. Clients reported that collaborating with peers who are going through similar situations helped with the program’s efficacy.

### ***Fictive Kinship***

Another theme present in the data was the idea of the nonprofit organizations filling the role of the parent. Several coaches emphasized the holistic nature of the financial literacy programs and the effectiveness of the approach. Coach Bob was utterly sold on Organization-Two’s program and explained to me the holistic nature:

What I see from the [Organization-Two] program is, it's like a holistic approach, and the financial coaching and literacy piece of it is an important piece...But there's also, you know, career coaching... life coaching, there's health coaching...

You know, we could teach them financial stuff all day long, but if their life's a mess, it doesn't matter. Right? So, you have to address it all. It's really what it comes down to... It's like, you know, I watch a client, you know, learn budgeting and maybe doing really good. And I can tell if there's things on the emotional side or the mental health side or things that aren't going well. But that's where the mentor comes in. You know, the executive director really got this down. I mean, she figured it out. She's got the [holistic] formula.

These organizations didn't just stop at connecting them with coaches who could inform them. Rather, these organizations came across as more of an accountability machine involved in all aspects of the participants' lives that grew with the induction of more participants. Participant Tessa became part of this accountability structure by offering to speak to potential participants as part of her give-back. She came to speak with participants and warned them that the organization that they would "get up in their business." Organizations had access to banking information for the participants and held them accountable for all of their purchases. In return, the organizations offered savings incentives. For every dollar that the participants were able to save, the organization would match that amount. The organizations would also offer other benefits on a case-by-case basis. For instance, though one organization required the participants to have a form of transportation, if a participant's car broke down during the program, the organization would give the participant a vehicle donated to the organization. In other cases, the organizations would cover the cost of surprise bills not to derail the participant's financial progress. Hearing this reminded me of my financial journey. When I first decided to pursue higher education, the only thing I owned was the clothes on my back. I had gone through about a year of couch surfing before my grandmother offered me some much-needed help. With her support, I was able to get a job, enroll in school, and eventually

graduate from college. My grandmother allowed me to use her car until I could afford my own and even covered surprise bills to not derail my progress. In sharing a little of my story with Coach Sandy, she also made the connection that I did, saying:

Well, we hope that I mean, literally [Organization-Two] is, is a lot of these girls' grandmother (referencing my story). You know, we're the leg up for these girls because you needed that place to stay, a car, like you needed these things. My girl Jamie just got a car from [Organization-Two]. I know her car was falling apart. She had no heat with three kids. No heat. So, she literally this week, just got a new, well, new to her, car. Yeah. And at no cost.

Upon reflection on this conversation, I saw the need to edit my interview protocol again and start asking questions geared towards the holistic support provided by the organizations. I began to ask coaches and participants if they believed that the nonprofits were filling the role of the client's parent. Because the clients did not have a safety net provided by their parents, did the nonprofits provide that stability necessary for the client to get up on their feet? The response from all of them was a wholehearted yes. Then there were times where coaches would answer the questions without even having to be asked. Coach Walter from Organization-One described his relationship with his participants as if they were his children, saying:

When they have a decision to make a financial decision, big or small, they reach out to you. And that's a good feeling. I mean, I almost feel like they're my children. And I'm helping them, you know, with the basics. And it's not rocket science. But unfortunately, these folks have never been taught anything. And there's people out there that take advantage of them.

Coaches feel that this holistic approach was the necessary foundation for their client's progress. The safety net benefits were also essential to maintain that progress in

the face of life challenges. In providing holistic support, coaches started to feel like they were taking on the participants' parents' role. This is a support that would typically come from a financially literate family. Further, clients reported learning things about financial literacy that they feel more financially literate people learn innately from their family. These findings relate to a concept called "fictive kinship" that will be expanded upon in the discussion section.

## **DISCUSSION**

Participants derived capital benefits from the adult financial literacy programs. This distinction of identifying benefits as capital is vital for understanding the true utility of financial literacy. When examining financial literacy as capital, it is clear that the issue of financial literacy is more complex than people with lower socioeconomic status needing to improve their budgeting skills. Instead, this knowledge is capital, access to which is limited and controlled by our social institutions. People raised in households with low levels of capital associated with financial literacy have a hard time acquiring that capital. This is because financial literacy isn't readily taught in all states in the public education system, and in many cases, parents lack fundamental financial knowledge.

In addition to uncovering ways financial literacy courses promote capital, this study also found that these nonprofit organizations provided crucial fictive kinship support. Interviews showed that these low-income individuals and their families lack forms of dominant capital valued by middle- and upper-class individuals. However, these nonprofits serve to allow clients to develop this dominant capital, the acquisition of

which has the potential for greater economic outcomes. This is something that a financially literate family would be able to do for their children. Middle- and upper-class parents typically take an active role in teaching their children the importance of money and how to handle it correctly as they get older, reflecting the child rearing strategy called concerted cultivation (Lareau, 2002). They also provide forms of support by doing things like matching their child's savings, buying them a car, and paying bills for them (Stanley & Danko, 2010). The nonprofits fill that role because the low-income individuals enrolled in the financial literacy programs do not have this family support or capital. The literature available on fictive kinship and the findings of this study suggests that fictive kinship connections are necessary for a low-income individual to gain capital and improve their financial situation (Magnarella & Turkdogan, 1973; Kempler, 1982).

Jenny White (2000), a social anthropologist, devised this term “fictive kinship” saying, “This ‘fictive’ kinship draws in resources, whether they be labor, goods, food, money, information or services from unrelated outsiders, and is crucial for the economic survival of the urban poor” (p. 135). This was the most significant takeaway from the entire study because it encompassed the capital benefits as well. Without the support of the “fictive kin” provided by the nonprofit organizations, participants would continue to struggle improving their financial wellbeing.

This idea is supported in the literature with the study of the concept of the “compadrazgo” in Latin America (Kempler, 1982). The concept of compadrazgo originates from the religious belief system and is a baptismal sponsorship in which

parents seek to establish relationships with wealthier families (Kempler, 1982). As the parents of less privileged children realize their limitations in providing support for upward social mobility, they seek out these connections to establish a possible outlet for their children to scale the socioeconomic ladder (Kempler, 1982).

Similar fictive kinship relationships exist in other cultures, like the concept of “kivrelük” in Turkey (Magnarella & Turkdogan, 1973). Like the concept of *compadrazgo*, the practice of *kiverlik* serves to provide an outlet for upward social mobility by establishing relationships with wealthier families (Magnarella & Turkdogan, 1973). A more recent example of fictive kinship by Alexakos et al. (2011) explored how fictive kinship relationships amongst high school students of color aided in success in physics class. The authors discovered that fictive kinship relationships helped the students to cope and persevere through the challenge of taking a physics class despite their initial negative expectations of the course (Alexakos et al., 2011). The literature shows that fictive kinship relationships heavily impact the life outcomes of those who engage in them. The fact that low-income individuals have used fictive kinship relationships as an outlet for upward social mobility in a wide variety of cultural contexts gives credence to the idea that financial literacy programs also serve as an outlet for fictive kinship. Thus, this study provides an important contribution to understanding additional ways people can obtain and benefit from fictive kinships.

It is also important to consider the ranking of the forms of capital discussed most often in the interviews. In reference to financial literacy programs, one would assume that

the most prominent form of capital derived from the program would be human capital. This is because human capital represents the practical skills covered by financial literacy programs. However, I found that human capital was mentioned the least throughout the interviews. Social capital was the most prominent form of capital mentioned throughout the interviews with cultural capital following closely behind. This seemed to result from the intensive nature of the financial literacy programs and the need for so much social scaffolding in order for the participants to learn financial skills. If this is indeed the case, then it would cast some serious doubt on the effectiveness of teaching financial literacy in high school classrooms. If limiting social factors are not being accounted for in such courses, as they are in the adult financial literacy courses offered by the nonprofit organizations, then the financial literacy courses offered in high schools would be mostly ineffective for low-income students. Perhaps implementing some sort of mentorship program in order to address social factors and supplement the financial literacy courses would be more effective.

This research leads to notable applied implications. Considering the findings of the prominence of social capital and the development of fictive kinships, financial literacy organizations should focus more on providing scaffolding support for participants. This is consistent with the findings of Kaiser and Menkhoff (2017) that suggest financial literacy information alone is not enough to lead to greater economic outcomes. That is, organizations should focus on providing incentives like matching savings and helping participants to build financially beneficial relationships with mentors. Such measures would better address the barriers which have limited the

effectiveness of financial literacy programs in the past. Organizations could also encourage more cooperation among clients of the financial literacy programs in order to provide another network of accountability. This could translate into organization sponsored team building exercises amongst participants of the program. Though human capital benefits are likely still beneficial, interviews showed more emphasis on social capital benefits suggesting that focus on these types of benefits could be more helpful.

In addition to providing important practical and applied implications, this study also makes an important contribution to the literature on form of capital. Scholars have documented mechanisms in which cultural and social capital are obtained (Lareau, 2002; Cox, 2017). This study shows that financial literacy programs are another mechanism for gaining these forms of capital. Additionally, because this study found that participants had to have a substantial amount of cultural capital before they could participate in the financial literacy programs, this study highlights the recursive nature of capital and documents other ways inequalities are reproduced.

Though this study provides important insights regarding financial literacy programs, it did have limitations. Unfortunately, this study is not representative because of the small sample size and limited response rate of financial literacy program clients. It cannot be generalized to everyone participating in the adult financial literacy programs mentioned. Though I made an effort to interview equal numbers of coaches and clients, scheduling conflicts and challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult for me to interview more than two program participants. Though coaches and

participants articulated similar themes, there were far fewer participants in this study, perhaps skewing the findings towards a consensus. Also, the study was conducted in a specific region of the country with unique demographic factors. Therefore, the study may not be generalizable to other areas of the country. Subcultural norms regarding financial matters and social connections might differ in other areas.

Future research should examine the fictive kinship relationship between participants and coaches of the program in greater detail. Ethnographic work could provide a clearer picture of these relationships and what goes on during the financial literacy coaching sessions and classes. Further, recruiting nonprofits to distribute surveys could help to yield a larger and more representative sample size. Additionally, a content analysis of organizations' websites and instructional materials would likely illuminate themes in these programs.

## **CONCLUSION**

There is a stigma attached to low-income individuals that assumes that they can easily change their financial status by learning how to use their money. However, the dynamic of financial literacy is much more complex. Financial literacy results from a culmination of different forms of capital, such as cultural, social, and human capital. By looking at financial literacy through the capital lens, it becomes clear that access to financial literacy is limited and controlled by our institutions. Suppose an individual's family does not provide him or her with enough capital to be financially independent. In that case, an outside entity must provide support for the individual to develop enough

capital. This phenomenon can be easily referred to as fictive kinship. In this study, I interviewed both coaches and participants of financial literacy programs to assess whether or not capital was derived. This study identified specific examples of cultural, social, and human capital derived from financial literacy programs. The support provided by these organizations proved to be in line with the concept of fictive kinship.

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## APPENDIX A

### Interview Protocol for Financial Literacy Coaches

- Can you tell me about your background and what got you interested in this line of work?
- How long have you been working as a financial coach?
- What is your goal when you go to work every day?
- How effective do you think that financial coaching is for your clients?
- What is your favorite part about working as a financial coach?
- What do you wish that more people knew about your line of work?
- What is your typical client like?
- What practical financial skills do you emphasize for your clients during coaching sessions?
- What are some of the financial skills you have been surprised to learn that your clients do not know?
- Are there any financial skills that your clients have learned from you and identified as “life-changing”?
- Do you typically see your clients go on to further their education as a result of the coaching program?

- What do you think is the most important financial skill or skills that your clients should learn?
- What are some cultural skills that your participants take away from the program?
- What are some cultural clues that you are surprised to find that your clients don't already know?
- What are some examples of how your program helps individuals navigate through social institutions like banks, educational institutions, and government programs?
- Do you believe that your clients become more effective communicators as a result of working with you? If so, how?
- Do you see yourself as a friend and mentor to your clients, or would you say that the relationship is much more professional?
- Have you ever helped your clients apply for a loan, apply for government aid, or apply for school?
- Would you ever recommend one of your clients for a job position if you felt that they were capable? Why or why not?
- Do your clients ever interact with each other, or are these coaching sessions purely individual?
- What are some examples of personal relationships that your participants have developed due to the coaching program that has led to greater life outcomes?

## **APPENDIX B**

### Interview Protocol for Financial Literacy Program Participants

- Can you tell me about your background and how you got connected with \*name of nonprofit\*?
- How long have you been working with \*name of nonprofit\*?
- What is your goal in participating in the financial literacy program?
- How effective do you think the financial literacy program is?
- What is your favorite part about participating in the financial literacy program?
- What do you wish that more people knew financial literacy?
- What is your coach like?
- What practical financial skills does your coach emphasize during coaching sessions?
- What are some of the financial skills that you have been surprised to learn?
- Are there any financial skills that you learned from your coach and identified as “life-changing”?
- Have you wanted to continue your education as a result of participating in the financial literacy program? If so, why?
- What do you think is the most important financial skill or skills that you have learned?

- What are some cultural skills that you have taken away from the program?
- What are some cultural cues that you are surprised to find that you didn't already know?
- What are some examples of how the financial literacy program has helped you to navigate through social institutions like banks, educational institutions, and government programs?
- Do you believe that you have become a more effective communicator as a result of participating in the program? If so, how?
- Do you see your coach as a friend or mentor, or would you say that you have a much more professional relationship?
- Has your coach ever helped you apply for a loan, apply for government aid, or apply for school?
- Would you ever ask your coach to recommend you for a job? Why or why not?
- Do you ever interact with each other participants with the program, or are these coaching sessions purely individual?
- What are some examples of personal relationships that you have developed as a result of the coaching program that has led to greater life outcomes?