Becoming Jamie

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I would like to dedicate this research manuscript to my number one Education role model, Jamie Teeple, for sharing his life story with me and for inspiring me in every possible way.

I would also like to dedicate this to the strongest warrior I have had the pleasure of calling my advisor, Dr. Russell, over the last four years. Without her, this life-changing experience would not have been possible.

Thank you both for the time, passion, and dedication you put into teaching and mentoring students. You both have truly impacted my life in drastic ways and there are no words to truly express my appreciation for you.

PROLOGUE

Jamie E. Teeple. *Who is he exactly?* He is the son of Karen and Jim Teeple, a brother to Jennifer Teeple, a husband to Kristen (Brown), and an educator and philosopher in the Educational Studies department at both Denison University in Granville, Ohio as well as at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio

> *"I remember asking my teacher when I was **eight** [...] **Ms. Hesselbart** [...] '**what's the highest [level of education] you can go**?' [...] and she was like, 'well, uh, people get **Ph.Ds**' and she explained to me what that was and **from that moment, I wanted to get it. At that moment**." -Jamie*

I first encountered Jamie when I took his education class--The U.S. Education System--during the Fall 2018 semester of my senior year. He presented himself in a manner that was not so high-profile, but also in a way that was not discrete. There was everything to know about him and his life; I didn't really know much about his family and their history or the way in which how he grew up in different environments influenced his character and perspectives.

Since I have known Jamie (August 2018 to the present--May 2019), he has always carried himself in the highest manner. There was never a day I saw him where he wasn't wearing an immensely bright smile on his face. No matter what the situation was, Jamie always seemed to maintain compassion, infectious energy, and a positive outlook. You can easily tell that he has a strong passion for learning and being an educator, without a doubt. I have always enjoyed his classes in alliance with hearing his personal anecdotes about various and random experiences. Considering that Jamie probably had a hefty load as a professor, I was hesitant to propose this research idea to him; I wasn't sure

how he would react 1) to a lengthy one-on-one session with a student, 2) being asked about his personal life, 3) if the tasks would be overwhelming for him (in addition to other things he might have to take care of), and 4) if he would even have time. However, no matter who the other candidates I thought consciously about were, I still felt a strong desire to discover who Jamie is.

I have chosen to depict Jamie's life story in a chronological order, as I felt that this was the most suitable way to provide detailed insight into his life. Proceeding the methodology, Jamie's story is divided into three(3) main sections. I look at Jamie's early life (childhood-preteen), middle life (teen/high school), and later/current life (college-present); included are also some of Jamie's own words for emphasis on experiences. In his early life, I explore themes such as: values, family roots, teaching lessons, and identity. The Middle Life section mainly focuses on Jamie's relationships with his peers and his family dynamics, at the time. And, lastly, the Later Life division extensively examines three(3) of Jamie's most significant objects and how they shaped his identity; it also dissects other parts of his later life to cohesively investigate how Jamie understands himself as demonstrating resilience.

Following the last section, I provide my own analysis of how I interpret Jamie as acquiring and preserving resilience from many of his life experiences. However, before reaching the storied accounts and following the methodology section, I briefly set up three(3) most important events in Jamie's life, represented by three(3) objects of significance to him. These three(3) objects have acquired meaning in the latter part of

Jamie's life, and so I wanted to introduce them prematurely, but save the more gratifying details for that section.

METHODOLOGY

The most important piece of this manuscript is understanding resilience. But how will I be determining how Jamie demonstrates resilience? First, it is key to identify what the term *resilience/resilient* means in this context. For the purpose of this project, I consider Maria Konnikova's working definition (adapted from Norman Garmezy) of resilience, which can be identified as "succeeding, even excelling, despite incredibly difficult circumstances" (Konnikova, 2016, p. 2). Konnikova (2016) points out that '[i]t's only when you're faced with obstacles, stress, and other environmental threats [chronic or acute] that resilience, or lack of it, emerges: Do you succumb or do you surmont?" (p. 3). Resilience is important to study for a handful of reasons. Resilience, in a way, serves as a protector; it is thought to provide us with techniques for protection against overwhelming situations, it can guide and balance our lives in times of distress, and it can also be a form of protection against the progression of mental health challenges.

Resilience is observed through storytelling, also known as *life stories*. Atkinson (1998) maintains that "[a] life story is the essence of what has happened to a person. It can cover the time from birth to the present or before and beyond" (p. 8). Atkinson distinguishes the difference between a life story and an oral history, as the two are often intertwined; "An oral history mostly focuses on the community or what someone remembers about a specific event, issue, time, or place" (p. 8), whereas a life story can take many different forms, shapes, or styles, and "always brings order and meaning to

the life being told, for both the teller and the listener. It is a way to better understand the past and the present and a way to leave personal legacy for the future" (p. 8).

Life stories matter for the reason that they significantly connect us to our roots; our lived experiences make us who we are and they allow us to grow our networks with individuals whom we share similar experiences with. Life stories come shaped in the form of reflections, and when we reflect on past times of our lives, we may begin to acquire certain values and lessons. Life stories also put into perspective for us how our experiences constantly influence our evolving understanding of life.

After much contemplation, I decided to ask my Education Professor--Jamie E. Teeple--if he would like to participate in my semester long research project. I informed him that I was engaging in a Communication class--Virtuous Resilience--which required us to take on the role of researchers, exploring the concept of resilience in one's life. The project would consist of: four(4) in-depth interviews (approximately an hour and a half to two hours) over the course of the semester, small tasks to be completed by the interviewee prior to each interview, and the ability to reveal aspects of the interviewee's life that they may not have given much thought to. Honored, excited, and without hesitation, Jamie agreed. I was actually quite shocked; I wasn't expecting Jamie to say yes to disclosing his personal life to a student. But, I was also very thrilled because he was always a person of interest to me.

Prior to each interview, I prepared a list of questions that I wanted to ask Jamie in order to gain more insight into his experiences. With his consent, I audio recorded each session, as well as took diligent notes for easier reference when producing this

manuscript. Concluding each interview, I briefly communicated to Jamie what our following interview would observe.

In preparation for the first interview, I asked Jamie to choose three(3) objects of the utmost significance to him and think about the story he wants to tell about them, and I did the same. The questions I prepared served to gain more insight into how the objects played a role in Jamie's character, his emotions at the time, and people involved. To begin the interview, I shared my three(3) objects with Jamie in hopes of providing a sense of comfort and setting the tone for the interviews to come; I felt that this would make our conversation more meaningful. After Jamie shared the experiences behind his objects, I asked more specific questions about each in order to paint a vivid picture for myself of the exact moment(s). At the conclusion of our interview, I briefly described to Jamie what our next interview would look like and presented to him my progress of the second task (creating a timeline).

For the second interview, I asked Jamie what his timeline process was and how long it took him. I, then, asked to see his timeline out of curiosity, and to my surprise, his timeline consisted of his religious beliefs. During this interview, we discussed how religion played a role in Jamie's life. My intention for this interview was to help Jamie recognize parts of his life that maybe he didn't see as having much impact on him before the interview; I considered how various aspects of his life have played a role onto other, more significant pieces of his life. I wanted to reach as deep as I could into certain areas of what Jamie had already shared with me--previously or in this session--without crossing boundaries. I sought to do this by insisting that he did not have to answer a

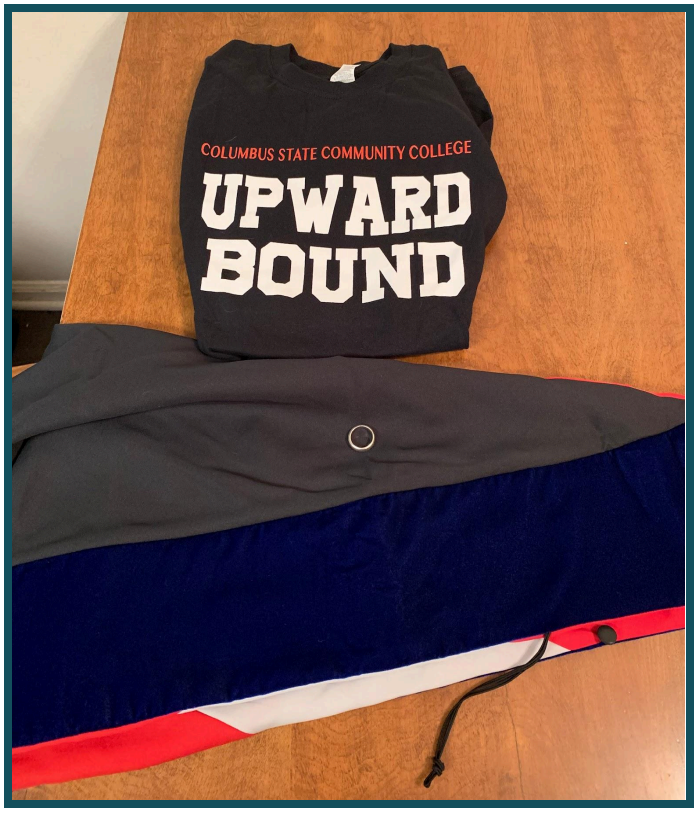
particular question if it was too personal. I tied in what we talked about in this session to some things that might've overlapped with our previous conversation--like guardedness and how religion shaped his character (past and present). Concluding this interview, I shared my timeline with Jamie, explaining the challenges and successes I had creating it. I expressed to him that I wanted mine to look like a gameboard, since I couldn't depict my life in a straight line or with hills and valleys. Once sharing my timeline and recognizing our commonalities, I gave him a brief overview of our next session, which consisted of going in-depth about his life. As a researcher and his student, I wanted to protect the privacy of my interviewee, so I asked him to think of topics he may not feel comfortable talking about.

Initiating the third, in-depth interview, I invited Jamie to share with me any topics that were off-limits to talk about. In a very sincere manner, Jamie said that there was nothing he wasn't uncomfortable talking about, but that he would navigate it as we proceeded. Once confirming topics, I informed him that many of the questions may ask him to reflect on discussions we've had previously for the purpose of investigating further. With that, I asked him questions which probed a wide range of topics such as: birth and family origins, cultural setting and traditions, social factors, education, love and work, historical events and periods, retirement, inner life and spiritual awareness, major life themes, and vision of the future. Out of all the interviews up to this point, I felt that this was the strongest one. Not only did we have a breakthrough, but there was much to share and become aware about; it seemed to me that in this specific interview, Jamie was less guarded than when we interviewed the first time.

For our final interview, I directed this meeting in a way that would provide me clarity on everything Jamie had shared with me previously. Before meeting, I reviewed my notes and audio recordings (to ensure I interpreted correctly); from this, I constructed a list of questions that would reach the specificity I was anticipating. Even during the interview, I asked Jamie follow up questions that came to mind for his said experiences, making sure I had all of the correct information. Once I felt that I had a clear understanding of Jamie's life story, I thanked him for being willing to participate in my research and share very personal information about himself. However, I recognized that I never asked Jamie how he saw himself as resilient, or what resilience even is, so I proposed this idea to him in an email, ensuing the interview.

Each part of Jamie's life story is important. I didn't want to have to omit a lot of it for the reason that everything he shared with me played some role in establishing his character; this is why I chose to recount it in a chronological order. It's easier to tell a story beginning to end, even with pieces missing, than to tell a story that jumps around. While there were some very chronic themes throughout Jamie's life story, I didn't feel that conveying his high points vs low points or turning points in life would suffice. I want my representation of Jamie to be clear to my reader, so that they understand him as I got to know him. Within each of these themes, you will notice other themes. I analyzed those themes within the main themes in order to present my rendition of how Jamie acquired and preserves resilience.

Significant Life Experiences



The most impactful events in Jamie's life are represented by: his Upward Bound program shirt, his wedding ring, and his Doctorate sash. Upward Bound is a volunteer project, which aims to provide college opportunities of success to impoverished youth. Jamie's marriage is a huge part of his life, as Jamie and his wife are one unit and each of their personal decisions affects them as a team. Lastly, Jamie has pursued education for the majority of his life, so receiving his Doctorate sash from his dissertation mentor was the final step to achieving his life-long goal of learning.

STORIED ACCOUNTS

Early Life

Jamie was born on May 4th, 1986 to Karen and Jim Teeple of the working-class in Sylvania, Ohio. When asked if he was ever told anything unusual about his birth, Jamie didn't recall anything *unusual*, however, he did reveal that he was a planned pregnancy and a natural birth (no epidural); his younger sister, Jennifer, was born 2 years and some months later (Jamie estimates it at 8 months) with Karen on medication

for birthing pains. Both Jamie and his sister are believed to be half Polish, a quarter Hungarian, an eighth (Pennsylvania) Dutch, and an eighth French. Jim worked as a maintenance man, completing all types of tasks; he has some background in community college, but did not graduate. Karen worked as a secretary for a hefty duration of Jamie's lifetime before she went back to school (discussed more in the "Later-Current Life" section) in her latter years to obtain a degree. Struggling in the working class, Jamie's parents were residing with his grandparents at the time of his birth trying to make things work. Jaime expressed to me that he never met his biological grandfather (on his father's side), but that this grandfather was an abusive alcoholic and his paternal grandmother divorced from her then-husband and remarried Jamie's step-grandfather who carried the last name of Teeple (Jamie's current last name). Jamie described his maternal grandfather as *"a **father-figure**"* who was:

> *a very **intellectual** person, even though he was a **laborer**, so **stereotypes don't apply to him**. He's very **curious about the world**. I kind of **wish he would've become like a, a teacher or something**. He was very good at it. But you know, being **second generation Polish**, that… that really **wasn't in the cards** for him. […] **his family** just really wanted him to have a stable job, so it **wasn't about**, like, **aspirations**. It was just about… **paying for life's necessities**.*

When asked about his earliest memory, Jamie responded:

> *I'm not sure how old I was. I, I was walking, so I was probably about **two** or **three**. And I remember **picking up a rock and throwing it at a car**…on a walk with my friends, and uh, family. And uh I just remember… I don't know. I, I, I guess it's reasonable that that was memorable, but yeah that was one of my earlier memories.*

Then, Jamie recollected another memory from his early years about a family German Shepherd:

> *There was a **German Shepherd** in my family who'd **always watch out for me**, who'd **guard** my, uh, my, my, **my cradle** and stuff. So yeah, like, **our family** has a **very long relationship with dogs**. So, I thought that was kind of cool.*

In 1991, Jamie attended Kindergarten at Christ the King School in Sylvania, Ohio. He then attended first and second grade at a public school in Lyons, Ohio. Moving back into Sylvania, Ohio, Jamie continued third, fourth, and fifth grade at Sylvan Elementary School--third grade being the most pivotal year for Jamie. This was the year where he discovered his dream in life:

> *I remember asking my teacher when I was **eight**… her name was, uh, **Ms. Hesselbart**. Ms. Hesselbart. She was my **favorite teacher of all time**. And, uh, I asked her one time like '**what's the highest [level of education] you can go**?' I was just curious like… I was thinking about fourth grade… as we do, like fourth grade, that's crazy! […] And she was like, 'well, uh, people get **PhDs**' and she explained to me what that was and **from that moment, I wanted to get it. At that moment**.*

Transferring to McCord Junior High School, Jamie completed grades sixth through eighth.

While receiving an education at school, Jamie and Jennifer were unaware that they were also simultaneously receiving an education in their own home. Jamie admitted that not enough credit was given to his mother at the time, whom he claims has been a major part of his success:

> *She'll never be known by Education books, you know. Likely. But she's one of the **greatest educators that I know**. Because… like, her **pedagogy's brilliant**. And no one*

> *taught her, she's a **natural teacher**— because she would like **feign ignorance** as, as a **method for teaching** my sister and I. [...] She'd be in the kitchen… and she didn't have to, like, like she could've just been there as like a placeholder mother, making sure we don't kill ourselves. And, uh, but instead she'd be like, out of the blue, she'd be like 'how do I make this peanut butter and jelly sandwich? I've forgotten how to do this.' And so we'd be like, 'we'll teach you!' So she'd **throw us little problems**… obviously she knew how to do these, but she'd throw little problems to my sister and I and **we would solve them for her**. We'd teach her how to do it. **So for years and years and years, she would feign.***

Jamie brought up a brilliant point about this technique that his mother used on her children:

> ***Feigning ignorance** is a **tactic** for teaching **young** people. […] It **developed confidence in us, optimism**. […] This whole time, I've had an educator in my corner.*

What Jamie shared about his religious standpoint at this early stage in life was quite astonishing.

> *My grandfather was a **Roman Catholic**, and um, **Polish Catholic**, and so I would, I would **go to church** with him a lot. And so he, he **pushed Catholicism**, but whenever I would see, him he would **tell me stories**, um, from the **Bible** and stuff. So I **traced back** my, my **own acquiescence** to Catholicism. I like kind of let… I let it… you know, **wash over me** as, like, an **elementary school student**, in 1996.*

Careful not to offend, Jamie expressed to me that what he was about to say was solely his story and that it was not intended to sway or critique my beliefs. Vividly remembering this moment, Jamie recollected:

> When I was **13**, I remember **waking up** and just… how do I say this? Just knowing **something was up with religion**. Just **feeling deeply** that something was **wrong** with, um, simply

> **giving into a belief system without thinking about it critically**. And I would argue that when I was 13, I **lost** the kind of **overt belief in religion**. It just went **out the window**.

Middle Life

Eager to expand on his education, Jamie arrived at Sylvania Southview High School for ninth through twelfth grade. He was a member of his high school's running team, where he established new friendships with all white males. Interestingly, Jamie explained his friendships as ***"two social lives"***: his (all white men) high school running team that didn't meet outside of practice, and then his day-to-day friendships. During much of Jamie's middle life (teen years), he noted his everyday friends as being a diverse group. Most of his friends were women, especially those of color, and some of the men he befriended were also of color. He landed a spot in the Top 20 of his high school; the group consisted mostly of (Asian) women--Jamie was one of three men--all of whom stuck together during their years at SSHS.

When Jamie was about 14 or 15, Karen and Jim divorced, resulting in a new life for Jamie, Karen, and Jennifer. It was around this same age that Jamie and his family (mom and sister) started to finally settle into their housing situation and uprooting constantly had ceased. After graduating from high school, in 2004, Jamie was admitted to McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, Canada on a scholarship.

Late-Current Life

As an incoming undergrad to McGill, Jamie was considering a position in law, even taking some political science courses. After his first year, he says that he quickly fell out of that. Unfortunately, for Jamie, he received some heartbreaking news from his

family while he was away. At just 19, Jamie encountered his first experience with death. His dear grandpa, who embodied a father-figure in his life, had passed away from health challenges with COPD. Jamie was rushed back to the states to see him for what would be the last time.

This encounter with second-hand death was a major milestone in his life now. He was relieved that his grandfather wasn't suffering anymore because he was sick for so long, but he also spent the next few days grieving. He described their relationship as being "*so **pure***" and "*living an **honest relationship**.*" Although it was a sudden and traumatic event in Jamie's life at the time, he proudly said that there was no holding back on anything between them--his grandfather provided a lot of insight and told Jamie to be well. When thinking back on this memory, Jamie shared with me that he came to a realization about life at the time:

> ***How will life be like when this person dies?... Where will you be at?***

He went on to explain that:

> *they **would not want you worrying about them**. You have to have a **clear head response** to that... **grieving** to the point where you're **not doing well causes** you **harm**... and **they wouldn't** want that.*

Jamie was granted a renewable scholarship, which he lost, unfortunately, after his first year when he got a 3.48. Even though this was an eye-opening event, Jamie reflected on it, claiming that:

> *Sometimes, things **need** to happen. And they might be **horrible**, but **ironically**, they can be moments for*

> ***epiphany***. *[…]* ***Struggle*** *can be… not just something that* ***helps*** *you, but it could* ***almost be necessary***.

Inspired by Jamie, Karen decided to attend college when Jamie entered his third year of undergrad--something Jamie described as "*an* ***incredible*** *story*." Extremely proud of his mother, Jamie exclaimed that she received a Bachelor's degree in public health not too long ago--

> *she did an* ***incredible*** *job…in her career there. I think she has something like* ***five*** *or* ***six publications*** *now as an* ***undergraduate***. *And now, um, she's working, um…it's actually kind of a* ***difficult story for her***. *She did find a job in Public Health, but they weren't very good to her, and, uh, they* ***fired her quite quickly***. *So she* ***went through all this schooling*** *and then they're like, 'oh, you're not the right choice,' and they let her go. And then she actually* ***went back to the same hospital that she'd been working at for thirty years.*** *And that's where she is* ***currently****…I would say, too, she's had to* ***contend with ageism*** *throughout the process. You know, these employers not wanting to hire somebody in their sixties. So it's been* ***brutal***.

At this time, Jamie considered himself to be a "*New Atheist*," which he explains as "**not believing** in religion. It's actually being **critical of religion**. So for a while, I was quite critical. And I'd **get into a lot of arguments** with my friends about it… and I didn't see any value in religious institutions." Once Jamie hits his mid 20s, he began to move away from that position because "it wasn't **fruitful**." From this, he moved into Pluralism, stating that he was "**very open** to what **other belief systems** could do for society. So even in **my own family's religious background**—Roman Catholicism—there is a **deep humanitarian strain** in it."

In 2008, Jamie received his Bachelor of Arts degree, with concentrations in Philosophy, Sociology, and Linguistics from McGill University in Montreal. Following undergrad, he, then, attended the University of Toledo in Ohio--focusing on Educational Theory--to begin his Master's program (2011). After three(3) years, his Master's education ceded in 2013. Right after completing his Master's, Jamie went straight into his Ph.D. at the Ohio State University.

One of Jamie's biggest accomplishments was attending grad school at The Ohio State University to obtain his Doctorate. He graduated in 2018 with a Ph.D. in Educational Studies with a focus in the Philosophy of Education. Although it was a turbulent journey, receiving his sash (draped by his dissertation advisor, Bryan) upon graduation was a proud reminder for Jamie that he persevered through the grueling moments and achieved his goal.



Jamie and his sister, Jennifer, at his Doctorate graduation



Jamie and his dissertation advisor, Bryan

Declaring it as the nearest (proximal and sentimental) thing to him, Jamie tells me the story of the significance behind his wedding ring. In 2010, he and his wife--Kristen--were both working at KAPLAN Test Prep; he was teaching 11th and 12th grade, she was working in the office. They became friends before dating and adopted Tuggboat (Olde English Bulldog) about three(3) months into dating. Jamie expressed to me that Tuggboat has become such an immense part of their lives--even non-human pets in general. Coming from a family that was heavily dog-oriented, Jamie mentioned that he would not lead a life without a dog. In his and Kristen's relationship, Tuggboat affects a lot of their decisions. In fact, being there for Tuggboat was significant for Jamie because Tuggboat helps him think through his own humanity. When they adopted him, he was too big, depressed, isolated, and had bad anxiety, so both Jamie and Kristen knew that they were the right ones to care for him.





Jamie's family dog, Bella (L);
Jamie and Kristen's beloved child, Tuggboat (R)

A few short years later, they prepared to wed. Married in August of 2013 in Manitoulin Island, Canada, Jamie and Kristen, went swimming in Lake Huron three(3) days after their wedding where Jamie's wedding ring

slipped off. Anxiously and frantically attempting to recover the valuable possession, they returned to the mainland and came across a small jewelry store in the town of Tobermory. Jamie described this store as selling *"artisanal good and necklaces and stuff like that*." Recalling that moment, he recounted feeling off that his wife had her wedding ring and he didn't, so he enthusiastically told her that they needed to stop in the shop because he needed a wedding ring. After exploring the shop for nearly thirty(30) minutes, Jamie and his wife felt hopeless. Nothing but (mostly) jewelry for women. But at the very last minute, the hopelessness dissolved as Jamie discovered a glass cabinet displaying a hint of something silver. Taken aback by the sight of a men's ring, they took it out and…

> *it was like a **reverse Cinderella** moment . . . it was one of the **only men's rings**, and it just went **THUNK**! right on my hand.*

He explains that as a softer kind of silver, which can easily be scuffed, the ring's indentations are like *"an **encapsulation** of our **history**."* They have been married for nearly six(6) years, and having had the ring for the same amount of time, Jamie joked that the second ring was the one for him:

> *It's a nice **symbol** of our **marriage**, and it's just a, a great thing to have.*



Jamie and his family at his and Kristen's wedding (2013)

Another significant milestone in Jamie's latter years is represented by his Upward Bound t-shirt. Ever since 2011, Jamie has attempted to consider ways he could volunteer and become involved with direct action regarding compensatory justice for communities. Assessing the physical qualities which he occupies, Jamie critically explains that his privilege as a white, heterosexual male has ultimately shielded him from all forms of injustices. In other words, *"there's this* ***bubble effect****"* where white people are safeguarded from the experiences that people of darker complexions encounter within their communities; he describes this as growing up in a bubble-specific state of being.

For Jamie, substitute teaching at Toledo public schools between 2008 and 2011 was a different experience than he was used to, but it also had a positive impact on his character. While he received the opportunity to work with children unlike him and children that he didn't necessarily grow up around, most pivotally, he also saw first-hand the existence of de facto segregation due to the social construct of white supremacy. He left the community in 2013, shortly making a return four(4) years later.

In the summer of 2017, Jamie applied for an open position with the program called The Upward Bound Summer Enrichment Institute at Columbus State Community College run by federal trio programs--a program Jamie insightfully explained to me that was part of Johnson's 1965 War on Poverty Act, which helps impoverished youth reach gates to college opportunities. Specifically, he mentioned that the aim of Upward Bound is to "*[bring] the **educational opportunity** to the **least well-off's** door*." Once admitted as a tutor, Jamie helped marginalized students prep for the ACT. In this way, he felt that he was giving back.

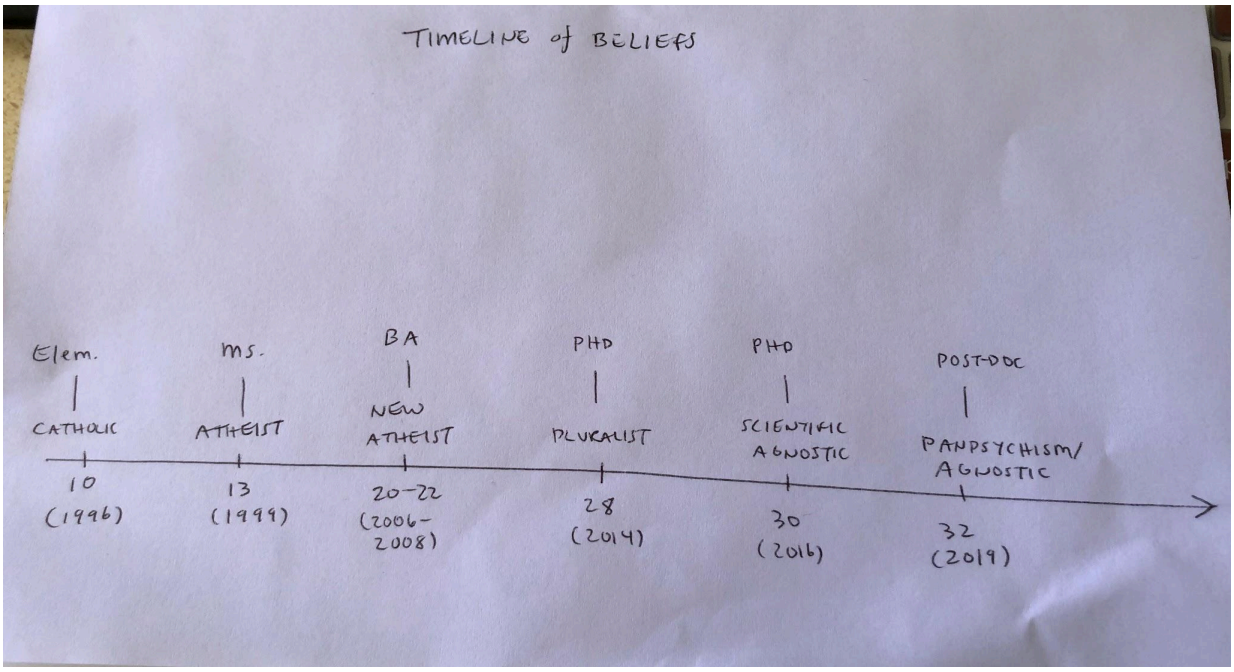
However, there was always a constant fear instilled in him where he would wonder if he would be enough to change a young, black student's life. Much of this fear stemmed from the role that race played in historical contexts. He didn't see himself as having a race (*"**racial blindness**"*) until college, but since then, he has always checked his privilege when working in communities of color.

For a while, Jamie battled two competing ideas: on one hand, you have someone with knowledge stepping in to help educate, and on the other, there's the necessary evil of bringing knowledge as power (as a privileged positionality) to unprivileged youth and groups in a racist society. He disclosed that while he was never harmed and never received a reverse racist slur, in the higher violence areas which he taught, classroom management was difficult. This *"white savior complex"* made it difficult for Jamie, at times, to appropriately mentor children of color...

> *In no way do I intend it, but I think sometimes it might come off that way and students… and they've never told me this, but I, I can definitely **feel** sometimes a kind of um, um **resentment toward me as a white male** [...] I wonder if*

> *it's the **act of delivering ACT knowledge** you know, like that is **very saviory**! You know, like **you don't know something that you should** and here's this **white dude** comin in going '**here are the things that you should know to be like me**!' You know, that's **ugly**!"*

Redirecting this section back to Jamie's religious beliefs today, he now identifies as an Agnostic. Technically part Atheist and part Agnostic, Jamie claims to be more of an Agnostic. He says that he's open to interpretations of life in the universe from different perspectives. And even though he still doesn't believe in the system or God, he has no idea how to explain reality.



A timeline of Jamie's religious standpoints over the years

How do I interpret Jamie as being resilient?

First, let's revisit Konnikova's definition of resilience: "succeeding, even excelling, despite incredibly difficult circumstances. [...] [i]t's only when you're faced with obstacles, stress, and other environmental threats [chronic or acute] that resilience, or

lack of it, emerges: Do you succumb or do you surmont?" (2016). It is clear to me that through his life, Jamie has had a number of unfortunate events occur--like: his grandpa passing away, losing his scholarship at McGill and having to support solely himself and his education, moving around constantly, not knowing who he could trust (fellow classmates) growing up, toxic family dynamics, and even coming from a family that struggled in the working-class.

Despite growing up in the working-class, Jamie excelled at life because of the mindset he adopted. He had significant female role models in his life that kept him grounded and humble. Specifically with the death of his grandfather, Jamie had a hard time at first coming to terms with the tragedy, but then he quickly changed his mindset and continued to succeed. Early on, Jamie learned core values that appear to have stuck with him through his present years. Through all of the unfavorable events in his life, he has managed to always stay optimistic and push through because he knows that things happen in life, and sometimes they need to happen.

EPILOGUE

Throughout my time as a student of Jamie's, I began to view him as one of my (male) role models early on in our academic relationship. Given that Jamie and I already held a professional, academic relationship prior to interviewing, I was entertained by the idea that I would finally have a chance to get to know him on a more intimate level to find out how/why he flourished into the person he is today. Throughout each of our interviews, I remember experiencing many emotions. I was surprised hearing Jamie say that he identifies as being a guarded person, or when he was talking

about his religious beliefs and the ambiguous philosophy of life. At times, I saw Jamie glowing when he talked about certain aspects of his life, which inspired me to truly be grateful for every experience I go through and to value the close relationships I have with people. I also noticed myself experiencing sadness when Jamie shared unfortunate events with me, or feeling blissful and hopeful when he revealed stories about his journey with love or even overcoming rough experiences.

Being fully present in our interviews allowed me to recognize different perspectives of what it means and what it looks like to be resilient. For instance, from the way Jamie carries himself to the attitude he presents during all (or specific) situations. Taking note of his life story presented for me the connection between resilience and personal/relational growth. Those with a strong sense of resilience seem to maintain a growth mindset, respond constructively to stimuli, and behave with attitudes of persistence rather than negativity. Specifically, in Jamie's case, he was conscious about his language choices, the people he hung around (sticking with positive influences), his goals, his thought processes (seeing every encounter as opportunities for growth and learning), and taking time for himself.

> *"I see **resilience** as being **akin to grit**, the **capacity** to **encounter** and **work through problems without giving up**"*
> *-Jamie*

In my eyes, Jamie's story of resilience corresponds most to the understanding of resilience, which Maria Konnikova (2016) provides: "succeeding, even excelling, despite incredibly difficult circumstances" (p. 2).

In mutually agreeing to interview, I had hoped that this project would allow us to have an in-depth conversation about where Jamie came from and how all of his life events have shaped him into the person he is today; it would also give me the opportunity to really listen to someone else's narratives and accurately depict the events and stories. I wished to gain a newfound respect for situations--tough or not so tough--and maybe take on Jamie's mindset for a change. I also considered the potential of acquiring a more grateful outlook on life, even if his life story differed vastly from mine. I aspired to develop a more concrete and in-touch relationship with Jamie by learning about his life story and sharing bits of my life with him as a way to make this experience more genuine. And reflecting on the process in its entirety, I believe that this research study enabled me to achieve all of these initial research goals.

Additionally, I believe that this experience enabled Jamie to understand himself better and recognize crucial points in his life that advanced his personal growth. I noticed that some questions prompted Jamie to think critical and diligently, which revealed to me that those were parts about Jamie's life that he probably didn't give much thought to before this project. Given that he shared past experiences with me, there's a chance that his reflections provided him with new understandings of the events in his life.

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