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The presence, influence, and effect of embodied, objectified, and institutionalized cultural capital on rural students' decisions to drop out of college before completing their degree was examined in this research study. Through in-depth research and analysis, the researcher sought to determine the relationship between the cultural capital of six rural young adults who pursued college immediately after high school but withdrew within their first two years of attendance.

The data confirmed that a lack of dominant cultural capital influenced the decisions of all of the participants. There were areas of influence in the embodied, objectified, and institutional levels of cultural capital. For embodied cultural capital participants' were influenced by parental expectations, low teacher expectations, and lack of community opportunities. For objectified cultural capital, personal grooming, clothing, and money were valued for the peer respect that they brought. Institutional capital was very significant because of its limited presence in each of the participants' lives; although the participants had high school diplomas, at the time of this interview none had graduated from college or returned to pursue institutional certifications.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP?
THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL CAPITAL ON THE
POST-HIGH SCHOOL ASPIRATIONS OF
SIX RURAL YOUNG ADULTS

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Graduating from college is a significant accomplishment in most families and is respected and rewarded by society. For those who complete a college degree the rewards are often great and far-reaching. However, without the degree many students may not have an opportunity to reach their maximum potential. Too often, students work low wage jobs during high school and seem to believe that once they graduate the money will “roll in” because they can work more hours or get a “better” job. It is difficult for some students to consider voluntarily signing up for additional education when the benefits are not known or have not been realized by a close relative.

Importance of Higher Education

Benefits to the Individual

The benefits of getting a college degree include higher earnings for all racial/ethnic groups and for both men and women. The income gap between high school graduates and college graduates has increased significantly over time. According to the U.S Census Bureau, over an adult's working life, high school graduates earn an average of \$1.2 million; associate's degree holders earn about \$1.6 million; and bachelor's degree holders earn about \$2.1 million (2000). The earnings benefit to the average college graduate is high enough for graduates to recoup both the cost of full tuition, fees, and earnings paid during the college years in a relatively short period. Finally, the college

experience produces a measurable benefit when compared with no postsecondary education, but the benefits of completing a bachelor's degree or higher is significantly greater "than simply attending college without completing it" (Indiana Commission for Higher Education, 2008).

Benefits to Society

The benefits of higher education for society are both monetary and non-monetary (Baum & Ma, 2007). The broader societal benefits of investment in higher education receive less attention than those for individuals; however, they are just as important. Higher levels of education correspond to lower levels of unemployment and poverty. In addition to contributing more to tax revenues than others do, adults with higher levels of education are less likely to depend on social welfare programs, which will decrease the demand on public budgets (Baum & Payea, 2005). College graduates have lower smoking rates, more positive perceptions of personal health, and lower incarceration rates than individuals who have not graduated from college (Feuerberg, 2007). Baum and Ma (2007) believe that higher levels of education are also correlated with higher levels of civic participation, including volunteer work, voting, and blood donation. Given the extent of higher education's benefits to society, gaps in access to college are matters of great significance to the country as a whole. Despite the progress we have made in improving educational opportunities, participation in higher education differs significantly by family income, parent education level, and other demographic characteristics (Baum & Ma, 2007).

Rural Education

Demographically, youth in rural areas are less likely to have college experience than youth in other demographic areas (Kiesa & Marcelo, 2009). Participation in higher education by students who live in the rural south may be impaired by place more than interest or ability. It is clear to the students that the point of a school is in large part to get kids ready for college. However, the irony is that, given the economic straits of many rural places, college education often prepares youth for jobs that are not likely to be located in their hometowns (Howley, 2008). Brown and Swanson (2003) stated because of the "low economic returns to education in depressed rural labor markets—a high school or college education is less likely to be rewarded with a decent job in America's small towns and rural areas (p. 101)." This is an uncomfortable struggle for many rural kids. For example, in a study of 351 rural Iowa youth, researchers found the prospect of leaving local communities to pursue adult job opportunities leads to increased reports of unhappiness (Elder, King & Conger, 1996).

What is Rural?

Defining rural is indeed a challenge; many of the definitions appear to be crafted for a particular program or in response to policy and location. In general, the rural south consists of sparsely populated small counties and towns that are often isolated from larger more densely populated urban and suburban areas. However, the U.S. Census Bureau defines rural based on land use and population. In 2000, the U. S. Census Bureau defined rural America as being comprised of 2,052 counties, which contain 75 percent of the nation's land, and is home to 17 percent (49 million) of the U.S. population. This re-

definition of rural classified 298 formerly rural counties (10.3 million residents) as urban and 45 urban counties (3 million people) were reclassified as rural. Therefore, the new set of rural counties contain a net of 7.3 million fewer residents than the former (1993) set based on the 1990 census (Cromartie & Bucholtz, 2008). Numbers, however, miss the essence of what it means to be rural, and seldom satisfy those on the receiving end of the definition. Rural people know that rural Pennsylvania is not like rural North Carolina, which in turn is not like rural California or Ohio.

Although the definitions for rural are many; the disparity in the numbers of students pursuing a college education exists in all of the previously defined populations. The rural south's traditional career opportunities are diminishing at unprecedented rates. Many technology based companies look for land and space as they seek to expand their manufacturing base; unfortunately, the rural south is often overlooked due to a lack of qualified human resources (Flora, Bregendahl, Fey, Chen & Friel (2004). The low numbers of individuals with higher education certificates and degrees in the rural south often prevents technology-based industries from relocating or opening new companies in the area. Because of these limitations rural youth who pursue higher education degrees often do not return home after leaving their communities without the benefit of their college-acquired expertise (Brown & Swanson, 2003). When talented youth leave for opportunities outside of their childhood community, they deprive the community and the next generation of their talent, skills, and potential economic impact. McGranahan and Beale (2002) refer to this as population loss and suggest that it occurs in large numbers

and causes everyone to suffer from the continued demise of once viable rural communities.

According to McGranahan and Beale (2002), population loss is pervasive in rural communities due primarily to the loss of traditionally stable work sources (agriculture, manufacturing, and forestry). Small rural communities have been sustained economically and culturally because for generations rural families have worked in the manufacturing and agricultural industries. However, that economic base has steeply declined (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007), and now employs fewer people annually making it difficult for young working-age individuals to rear families in the community where they were reared. Continuity of existence (work, family, community, worship) provides rural areas with a sense of safety, security, and understanding for a way of life that is shielded from the uncertainty of daily activities that may be found in urban areas. However, the evolution of rural American society has negatively influenced rural continuity of existence and yielded a population loss that continues to expand.

Interest in the Study

Personal

I attended a rural North Carolina high school, an urban Maryland high school, and an Urban Pennsylvania high school and experienced very different access challenges in each. As a rural high school ninth and tenth grader I was placed in the academically gifted (AG) classes, however I did not understand or concern myself with the significance of being in an AG class. Because I was the only minority in many of my required

classes, I resented the “honor” and preferred to be in classes with my friends who appeared to have much less work and richer social experiences.

This experience was very different in the northern high schools I attended where nearly all of the students were African American. I arrived in the Maryland high school as a second semester tenth grader where order did not exist and teaching was an anomaly. I was educated in the experiential school of chaos, crime, and violence where the primary lesson was fight back or be victimized. Although I was surrounded by African Americans, I felt completely isolated and afraid because the environment, the culture, and the experiences were all unfamiliar.

I attended a school in Pennsylvania that was considered one of the worst in the city. However, for me it proved to be a place of opportunity. I was in the “average” class with students who “had potential” but who may not have always revealed their potential. My teachers seemed to care about me as a human being and appeared to believe that given a chance I might do something positive in this world. In October of my junior year of high school, I was enrolled in the “average” classes, with other “average” students; this was perfect for me. I had teachers who seemed to be concerned about having positive and encouraging relationships with their students. They provided opportunities for cultural experiences that connected the curriculum with the world and opened my eyes by bringing life to the material. We attended plays in the city, participated in literary competitions, attended cultural events in New York, and ate in fine restaurants. In addition to the cultural exposure, we read books and plays that challenged our beliefs about a variety of cultures, social issues, and status assumptions. Our voices were a part

of the lesson; not excluded, we had something to say, and we were allowed to say it in a variety of forums including plays, poetry, theatre, public service, and creating laws.

These experiences began to open up my view of the world and helped me to realize that I could make a positive contribution to this world in an area that I had passion for and in a way that I chose.

With my guidance counselors help I applied to several colleges and was accepted into four of the five institutions. However, I was unprepared psychologically to survive in college, I felt inadequate at best, and at worst, completely isolated in an institution with 35,000 students. With a full four-year scholarship in hand, I attended the prominent well-known institution for two months in the fall after graduating from high school and withdrew.

Professional

Working in rural North Carolina I witnessed families struggle with the fact that their children would leave to attend college and rarely make home visits. Some of the most common reasons for this were jobs in the college town, opportunities to spend time with friends in other towns, or participating in campus excursions. While working in a small rural community in eastern North Carolina as a scholarship program director, I worked closely with students and their parents as they made their post high school plans. It was a very challenging time for both parent and child. Many parents from all ethnic groups within the community struggled with the idea of their children leaving the community. They often preferred that their children attend the local community college instead of a university that would take them out of their parents reach. As the parents'

struggled with the idea of losing their children, the children struggled with separating from the life they had always known and entering an unfamiliar environment. The most common fears for most students seemed to be adjusting to new people, accessing and using available resources, and adapting to a different environment (community, cultures, roommates, beliefs, church, etc.). However, for youth in rural areas the struggle seemed to be greater because for many they were the first in their family to attend college, the campus was usually quite a distance from home, and navigating the unknown world of college was often unfamiliar and lonely.

Students from rural communities may also face the struggle of feeling less than prepared for college. Several of the students that I worked with in the small rural town in North Carolina felt this way and voiced their concerns one evening after completing a college tour. During the summer of 2007, I had the opportunity to tour several North Carolina state college campuses with nearly forty rural high school rising seniors. The school was ethnically diverse with approximately one-third Caucasian, one-third Latino, and one-third African American students. The school offered students an opportunity to tour all of North Carolina's public colleges and universities the summer prior to their senior year. The tour was free for all rising seniors who attended the only high school in the county; however, only African American students chose to participate.

After touring the four most western colleges in the state, the students were concerned about being prepared to enter college. Questions regarding the admissions requirements arose from the admissions information sessions offered by the institutions. The students were concerned that they may not have been academically prepared for

admission into their preferred institution of higher learning. They were concerned because their grade point averages were quite impressive; however, the universities we visited listed a set of eligibility requirements (North Carolina State Standard Course of Study for College Preparation) and suggestions (Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB)) that enhance students' chances of being accepted into North Carolina's top colleges and universities (Department of Public Instruction, 2007). These rising seniors believed their academic success did not include the rigor recommended by the North Carolina University system. Prudence Carter (2005) writes, "Many poor parents are unfamiliar with the benefits of advanced placement and honors courses, possibly because of their own inexperience with the college admissions process" (p. 50). It is important to understand that these students were not precluded from access due to academic deficiency or lack of effort, but due to a lack of knowledge and understanding about the eligibility requirements for college and the lack of expectation from teachers in their high school.

Research Interest

Youth within rural communities are responsible for completing the same college preparatory requirements as youth in other areas. However many do not have access to, nor assistance with, navigating the road map to college. Those that have tangible assistance may not have the knowledge, financial resources, or familial support to understand how to utilize the available assistance. Lareau and Horvat (1996) explained that although students may obtain the support needed to matriculate into college or other high culture environments, there is a difference between awareness of support and

utilization of that support. The ability to effectively use the tools that one may possess is equally as important as possessing the tools.

Many students focus on the process of getting into college by taking rigorous coursework, sitting through hours of testing (IB, AP, SAT, ACT, etc.) and paying exorbitant application and admission fees, however, most neglect to prepare to complete college. According to American College Testing (ACT), one in every four students leaves college before completing sophomore year. What's more, nearly half of all freshmen will either drop out before getting their degree or transfer to another institution later in life to complete their degree (Whitbourne, 2002).

Most people, young and old, recognize the need for economic capital. Many times students who do enter college do so with the goal of “getting a good job, so they can make good money.” Although “good money” is relative, the understanding is that most students do correlate a college degree with a better job. College graduates earn much more than those without a college education do. According to the Census Bureau, over an adult's working life, high school graduates earn an average of \$1.2 million; associate's degree holders earn about \$1.6 million; and bachelor's degree holders earn about \$2.1 million (Day & Newburger, 2002). Additionally, college graduates are more prevalent in urban than rural areas, which contributes to higher earnings levels in urban locales.

Recent data from the Current Population Survey show that the urban advantage in college completion rates is growing over time. Between 1996 and 2006, the proportion of prime working-age adults (i.e., those between age 29 and 59) who had completed

college rose by roughly 14 percent in both urban and rural areas (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2007). However, because the college completion rate is higher in urban areas, the absolute size of the urban-rural gap in college completion rates rose over the 10-year period. College completion rates are higher in urban areas for all major racial and ethnic groups. Differences in college completion rates across racial and ethnic groups are large and persistent, but they do not significantly contribute to widening the urban-rural gap (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2007). Urban areas have higher concentrations of Asian Americans, who have the highest college completion rates, and Hispanics, who have the lowest college completion rates. College completion rates rose across all major racial and ethnic groups in both urban and rural areas between 1996 and 2006 (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2007). The rates for Whites grew at a similar pace in both urban and rural areas, while the rates for Blacks and Hispanics grew more rapidly in urban areas. High school completion is also an important factor in determining earnings, and again, urban areas have an advantage, but the difference is much smaller (Cromartie & Bucholtz, 2008). Between 1996 and 2006, the high school completion rate rose from 84 percent to 87 percent in rural areas, slightly narrowing the gap with urban areas where the rate increased only a single percentage point to 89 percent. Whitbourne (2002) provides a clear example of what happens to many rural students when they enter college.

Michael VanAdams was a model student in high school--president of his senior class, captain of the varsity tennis team, and a straight-A student. So when he received an academic scholarship to the University of Maine in Orono, nobody was surprised--especially not VanAdams. Having excelled both academically and

socially at his small high school in rural New Hampshire, VanAdams expected more of the same in college. He was wrong.

VanAdams did poorly on his first couple of exams and even received a failing grade on his first term paper. Instead of asking his professors or classmates for help, VanAdams began to isolate himself, spending hours alone in his dorm room where he would play video games or send e-mails to friends back home. To make matters worse, he became homesick during his first weeks of college, longing for his high school friends and sweetheart, who was attending a community college in New Hampshire.

"I did all the wrong things," says VanAdams. "Instead of seeing my first couple of failures as wake-up calls, I became depressed and immediately started passing the blame onto others. I told my parents that the professors were awful and did not like me; I told my girlfriend that the kids who went there were snobs and no fun at all. Basically, I blamed everyone but myself."

VanAdams also told himself that the University of Maine was not for him. He dropped out a couple of weeks before completing his first semester. "Frankly, I wasn't properly prepared for college," he says. "I didn't go into my freshman year with the right attitude. At age 18, I thought I had the world figured out; I thought I could ace my college classes like in high school. I could not have been more off. I was failing three classes, and I did not see the point of sticking around. (p. 26)

These personal, professional, and research interests were the catalyst for this qualitative study.

Research Problem

My personal experiences, the experiences of the students attending the college tour, and VanAdams' experiences seem to reflect what many rural youth face as they near the end of their high school career. Although rural students intuitively understand the importance of a college education for personal fulfillment, they seem to struggle with actually achieving the goal. Listening to the experiences of the youth who attended the

college tour and thinking about my own experiences left me wanting to gain insight into what causes rural youth to drop out of college.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rural Context

Demographics

Educational opportunities at the post-secondary level are available for all Americans, however, availability does not translate into pursuit, and pursuit does not equate to success. When social scientists study rural development and growth, one of the most astonishing statistics and causes of inequity is the low number of adults who attain higher education degrees (U.S. Census, 2007). Across the nation, rural populations consistently lag behind the rest of the country in the proportion of adults holding bachelor's degrees (Hebel, 2006). The gap has widened slightly in the past decade, according to the U.S Department of Agriculture. In 2000, 15.5 percent of adults living outside of metropolitan areas held bachelor's degrees, compared with 26.6 percent of adults in metropolitan areas (Hebel, 2006). According to a 2007 report by the Rural Sociological Society in 2000, the figure for rural adults aged 25 and older with less than a high school education was virtually identical to metropolitan areas (13.8% rural, 13.9% urban). The increase during the 1990s in rural adults who earned some college credentials in community or technical colleges or other postsecondary institutions was greater than among urban adults (50% versus 34%), resulting in slightly more than one-fourth of both populations completing some college (U.S. Census Data, 2007). However, according to the U.S. Census Bureau rural adults continued to lag behind urban adults in

obtaining bachelor's degrees or higher 19.5% rural, 32.8% urban (2007). I believe rural America must begin to embrace higher education quickly in order to prepare for the exodus of blue-collar jobs.

Education preparedness is not the only need in rural areas, yet it is one way to change the downward economic spiral that seems to be forthcoming. The never-ending achievement gap continues to dominate political and philosophical discussions on education. Most of the discussions focus on the differential aspects of standardized test scores and the disparity in graduation rates among and between groups (Hechinger, 2009; Ogbu, 2001; Greene, 2003; Proctor & Dalaker, 2002; U.S. Department of Education, 2000, 2001, 2002; Viadero, 2000). Systemic inequality trends that result from the marginalization of individuals within and among these groups lead to a gap in educational attainment (Mullaly, 2007). Young (2000) defines marginalization as exclusion from meaningful participation in society. Examples of marginalization include women being denied equal pay for equal work or African Americans receiving harsher punishments for the same crime committed by White Americans (Barton & Stapleton, 2007).

Rural youth are often victims of marginalization because of the limited cultural capital received from family, schools, and the larger community (Blackwell & McLaughlin, 1999). Seniors attending schools in metropolitan areas are 1.5 times more likely to have a parent with at least a bachelor's degree (Pollard & O'Hare, 1990). This problem is unlikely to change because many times the students who do not attend college remain in their community of birth, become parents, and raise families with values

similar to theirs. Those young people who do leave for college often do not return, causing population loss and diminishing the positive impact that their education could bring to the community (McGranahan & Beale, 2002). As a group, those who stay have the lowest educational aspirations of America's young people, and they tend to earn less than those who leave (Cobb, McIntire, & Pratt, 1990).

Population loss is a detriment to rural community's continuity of experience. Rural culture includes all the social interactions that draw members of rural communities together, including school, work, recreation, and religion and how these activities influence the values, beliefs, and norms of the community (Blackwell & McLaughlin, 1999). Population loss results from a variety of rural southern challenges such as historical issues like inequality, access issues such as transportation and technology, and societal issues such as economic and educational disparities.

History

Historically, issues of racism that stem from slavery and the subsequent actions that lead to the civil rights movement have plagued the rural south. Thus, the beauty and wonder of the rural south is often overshadowed by its leading role in slavery and the post-slavery "Jim Crow" era that separated and divided the Black and White races. The influences of these historical events are generally not verbalized in public arenas because it may cause dissension among community members. However, an undercurrent of inequality is felt and exhibited throughout the south and is very pronounced in rural areas. The expectations of members of rural culture are viewed through a variety of lenses. The group that one is a part of often taints perceptions of acceptable behavior.

For example, a farm owner may see nothing wrong with the accepted practice of employing Mexican labor at below market rates because of the perceived value placed on Mexicans being in America.

In addition, students often face inequities associated with race and ethnicity. For example in many rural high schools average achieving White students are assigned to Advanced Placement classes, while high achieving Black students are not assigned to the classes unless there is strong intervention from a parent (Carter, 2005). Often these practices are not challenged because it is perceived that the person in “charge” will be fair and just. However, if one is aware of the inequity, choosing to argue for ones rights may come with negative repercussions not just for the student victim, but also for the family. Therefore, the injustice is perpetuated leaving the perpetrator with a sense of power and entitlement and the victim with a sense of bitterness and powerlessness, which both internalize.

Power Structures

Rural communities are very skeptical of outsiders who move into their close-knit community, or who come in as spectators. It is very common for rural dwellers to appear nice and helpful but their help is limited to providing short, quick responses and watching very closely the reaction of the outsider (McFaul, 1989). This skepticism may be in part due to the continuity of existence and familiarity, but it is also because quick changes are not embraced. Many rural communities remain communities with a strong sense of place. In these rural communities, strong connections exist not only among the people of the community, but also between the people and “the place.” “A place” may be defined

by its landscape, climate, or geographic proximity to other “places.” However, for most communities in “rural places,” the primary defining connection is between the people and the land (Ikerd, 2003). In some rural communities, connections with the land are with lakes, forests, or mines, but for most rural communities the most important connection with the land remains a connection, directly or indirectly, with farming (Ikerd, 2003).

Rural dwellers are also concerned when an outsider, especially an official outsider, comes in to the community. They may be fearful that their accepted practices, and codes of conduct could be threatened. If we look at the rural south during and following the period of Reconstruction in the United States it is not too difficult to establish a link between the uninvited changes that the North (outsiders) forced on the livelihood of the rural south that ultimately changed an entire country’s way of living.

In addition to code of conduct changes, rural southerners are concerned about landscape changes due to development (Johnson & Zipperer, 2007). The rural south thrived for centuries on agriculture, hunting, and timber based industries that were strongly connected to the land. However, transitions into manufacturing diminished many of the land-based jobs and caused farmers to sell their land for development to outsiders.

As the rural south continues to lose manufacturing gains that had been realized during the 1970s and 1980s, it is less able to compete for jobs demanding better-educated and technologically skilled workers (Gibbs, Kusmin & Cromartie, 2007). A reluctance to change has weakened the potential for growth, because job expansion in all areas has principally been tied to service sector producing jobs that require a different set of skills

than previous industries. Although service jobs are dominating the rural landscape, they do not offer the higher wages and more comprehensive benefits typically found in manufacturing and higher quality service jobs (Gibbs, et. al., 2007).

For many rural dwellers, technology and public transportation access is a limitation to acquiring the educational skills needed to work in new industries (Gibbs, et. al., 2007). Low-population densities in rural areas impede the development of workplace supports and infrastructure. Transportation and technology are two key resources that need attention by legislatures in the rural south. Until substantial progress has been made to improve access, the quality of life that many rural Southerners long for may be fraught with despair and diminished opportunities.

Technology

Few trends influence our daily lives as profoundly as that of technology, especially computer-based technology. It has changed the way most people live and work. For individuals to benefit from technology, they must be willing and able to have access to updated software, hardware, and relevant training. While rural areas have historically been slow to gain access to and adopt new technology, recent research (Friedman, 2005, Miller, 2002) suggests that at least some parts of the technology gap are narrowing. A survey of manufacturing firms found “relatively few rural-urban differences in the use of new technology” and that “apparently, there is no longer any substantial rural disadvantage in access to information and specialized knowledge, at least insofar as technology adoption is concerned” (McGranahan & Beale, 2002).

According to Current Population Survey (2003), 42 percent of all U.S. employees had access to the internet at their workplace. However, rural workers were 43% less likely to have access to the internet (CPS, 2003). Nearly 70% households with income greater than \$150,000.00 were more likely to have access to the internet, but the percentage drops below 21 percent for workers with household incomes under \$25,000.00. Within each household income group, rural workers were less likely than urban workers were to have workplace internet access (Stenberg & Morehart, 2006).

The rate of U.S. households with at least one person who used the internet was 60% in 2003; the rate for rural households was 51 % and 62 % in urban households (Stenberg & Morehart, 2006). Households where the primary breadwinner had a college degree used the internet 81% of the time; use in urban households was 82% and rural use was very close at 76%. More astounding are the numbers for households where no adult has graduated from high school, the rate of internet use drops to 39% for all households, 40% for urban and 33% for rural households (Stenberg & Morehart, 2006). Technology continues to expand in rural areas; however, the affordability and quality of services remain issues that satellite companies are working on. With each passing season where access is marginal, the community will lag further behind their urban neighbors.

Transportation

Public transportation is available in approximately sixty percent of all rural counties nationwide, for about 1,200 systems (Stommes, Brown, & Houston, 2002). About two-thirds of rural systems operate in single counties or are city/town in scope; only about one out of four rural transit providers operate in a multi-county area. About

60 % of rural transit providers are public bodies, and roughly a third are nonprofit agencies; only five percent are private companies or tribal entities. In many smaller communities with both longer distances between built-up areas and low population densities, transit can help bridge the spatial divide between people, jobs, services, and training opportunities. In recent years, the importance of public transportation in rural areas has been demonstrated by the key role it has played in the implementation of welfare reform (Stommes, Brown, & Houston, 2002). Availability of public transportation may also increase the ability of human service agencies to serve individuals on public assistance and transport low-income residents to jobs, training opportunities, and other support services. Human service agencies often provide public transportation in rural communities for clients (elderly, mothers, children, and the disabled).

The roles of these entities vary with some agencies engaging in the purchase of vehicles and hiring of drivers, and others contracting with rural transit operators. It is difficult to measure the magnitude of these services since transportation costs are often bundled with the overall cost of providing service to the client. Public transportation enhances local rural economic growth in many ways. For example, it can increase the local customer base for a range of services, including shopping malls, medical facilities, and other transportation services. Residents interested in attending community colleges or other local educational facilities may gain access to such training opportunities with transit service. Moreover, rural locations with amenities may gain potential tourists who otherwise would not have visited such communities without transit (Federal Highway

Administration, 2001). Especially in those communities whose residents commute to adjacent metropolitan areas, transit can reduce congestion, thereby enhancing the quality of life. Rural transit could also be cost efficient. A recent study estimated average benefit/cost ratios of rural transit as approximately 3.1 to 1 -- for every additional dollar spent on transit (typically by a transit agency). Rural areas derive about 3.1 dollars in benefits (Burkhardt, Hedrick, & McGavock, 1998). Rural transit systems that significantly expanded access to employment facilities were found to have among the highest benefit/cost ratios, as were systems that fostered independent living and those that provided access to critical medical services (such as dialysis treatment). Rural transit involves improving economic efficiency and reducing inequalities in less-dense areas.

Social Context

Family

Technology and transportation challenges are infrastructure problems that can be improved upon through legislative priorities; however, social issues cannot be legislated. Issues that affect families and children, access to education and employment opportunities are not so easily changed. Rural families have for generations been identified by images that conjure up negative perceptions such as the country bumpkin, dim-witted, unsophisticated, ignorant, conservative, hicks, hillbillies and other negative images that minimize the humanness and value of rural dwellers (Chenoweth & Galliher, 2004). Herzog and Pittman (1995) stated “elementary social studies texts frequently portray rural areas in unflattering terms; children are taught that urban means, as a third-grade child recalled, ‘skyscrapers and people prancing around in fur coats,’ while rural

means 'barns and girls with pigtails'. They also noted that one North Carolina social studies text labeled the rural, mountainous western part of the state as an 'unproductive region' (Herzog & Pittman, 1995 p. 115). These stereotypical images affect the way outsiders view rural dwellers, which may also affect economic development efforts.

The values that guide rural areas are rooted in generations of sameness and steeped in pride of ownership. Many rural families have lived in the same area for three or four generations and have not traveled outside of their community, not because of lack of interest or inability but primarily because of the nature of their occupation (McFaul, 1989). Because of the historical attachments to location, unwritten value systems were formed and followed by most members of the community. Family loyalty is one of the most widely held values within the rural community, primarily because of the dependence on each member of the family for sustainability.

Many families within rural communities have limited resources due to the types of employment opportunities that are available and thus rely on each member, young, and old, to bear the burden of survival. Employment opportunities such as farming, manufacturing, textile, retail, and other low wage jobs dot the horizon of rural communities and provide limited opportunities for upward mobility due to their limited skill requirements (Whitener & McGranahan, 2003). As a result, many families depend on the contributions of all family members to make ends meet. Often children are expected to contribute to the economic bottom line of the family as soon as they reach working age and many times before working age if they rely on farming as their primary source of income. Gorham and Harrison (1990; cited in Haas, 1990) points out that in

1979, about a third of rural workers had earnings too low to lift a family of four above the poverty line. By 1987, 4 out of 10 rural workers earned an income that was below the poverty level. In 2005, those numbers continued to be disproportionately higher than urban areas with nearly 17% of all rural dwellers living in poverty (Americas Second Harvest Food Bank, 2005).

Family reliance is steeped in enabling factors that hinder many youth from leaving the community to pursue jobs that are more fruitful or for higher education (Chenoweth & Galliher, 2004). Many older parents who are nearing retirement fear losing their life's work because they can no longer maintain the land or work in industry to provide for their family. This reliance places a mental hold on a child who wants to go away to college or relocate in general. Single parent families rely on the support of their teenaged young adults to help maintain the family and fear the loss of that viable resource if the child chooses to leave the community (Price & Dunlap, 1988). Although it is not the intention of either of these family structures to deny or inhibit their child's future, the conversations surrounding the loss that will result in the family if the child chooses to leave for school or work places a heavy burden of responsibility on the shoulders of the young person. However, what future does the child have for adequate employment in communities that are losing the anchoring industries that have stabilized them for centuries?

Employment

The United States, and much of the world, has become a service economy (Friedman, 2005). Indeed, in parts of the Nation and in some social circles, it is rare to

find anyone who actually produces goods for a living. In addition, the number of service jobs is increasing. From 1991 to 1996, 88 percent of the net new jobs in the nation were created in service-producing industries (Rowley & Freshwater, 1999). Since nothing suggests an end to this trend, job seekers of the future will find most of their prospects in the service sector. The implications for the rural South and its workforce are somewhat ambiguous. Large companies like Wal-Mart, Home Depot, Lowes Home Improvement, and Target are some of the companies that provide service sector jobs at minimal wages in rural communities. The primary question revolves around jobs and wages. According to Wal-MartWatch (2005), the average pay for a sales clerk at Wal-Mart is \$8.50 per hour with 50% of those clerks earning less than \$8.50 per hour and working less than 40 hours per week. The company keeps many employees working in part-time positions to avoid paying health care and other benefits. According to a recent congressional report so many of Wal-Mart' workers lived below the poverty line, that in 2004 Wal-Mart workers qualified for \$2.5 billion in federal welfare assistance (Shuman, 2006). The U.S. government is paying as much as \$2,103 per employee for children's health care, low-income tax credits, and housing assistance. State welfare agencies are making similarly steep outlays. One in four Wal-Mart employees in Georgia has a child in the state's program for needy children (Wal-MartWatch, 2005).

Globalization means freer markets and freer flowing capital where corporations can buy where they wish, produce where they wish, and sell where they wish. Consequently, it means more choices and lower prices for the consumer. Unfortunately, it also often means lower wages for the worker and increasing vulnerability for workers,

firms, and even entire economies. Wal-Mart has capitalized on both ends of the spectrum; they have the cheap overseas manufacturing and cheap labor in America. Wal-Mart is not the only retailer that is profiting from the idea of a “Flat World” where the notion that “everyone competes with everyone else” and “the cheaper, the better” is not a mere slogan but a business practice that profits the owner.

As for the South, its rural areas have been “safe harbors for the nation’s labor-intensive and natural resource-dependent industries” (Rowley & Freshwater, 1999, p. 28 cited in Glasmeier & Leichenko, 1998). These areas and their dominant sectors are becoming more vulnerable to competition from lower cost producers in China, India, Mexico, and other global partners (Glasmeier & Leichenko, 1998). Mom and pop stores may not beat the big box chains with prices or selection, but in the service sector, they must capitalize on “service” in niche markets and in accessible locations. Shaping a workforce for the future involves many hands. Together, they provide the nurture, education, experience, and incentives that forge the workforce (as well as footing most of the bill). Unfortunately, the process is hampered in parts of the rural South by its “legacies” of poverty, under education, and racial inequality. As a result, readiness is in question.

With or without Wal-Mart, the rural South continues to lag behind the rest of the country in terms of income. In 1997, the median household income in the rural South was only 73 percent of the U.S. median household income (or \$10,000 less per year). Southern rural Blacks and Hispanics fared even worse. Furthermore, income and wealth are “inextricably linked, for it is higher income that gives a family the opportunity to own

a house, start a business, and invest in education,” unfortunately, “one in five Southern families has essentially no wealth” (MDC, 1998, p. 40). That is only part of the story. By aggregating personal income to the community level, we can begin to gauge its impact on a community’s ability to care for its own—to pay for the schools that are so critical, to finance infrastructure, to improve health, and to lower crime. Of 1,006 counties in the rural South, 44 percent (443) are persistent poverty counties and many have poverty rates as high as 40 percent (U. S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Education

Schooling

Charged with educating and training tomorrow’s workforce, local school systems play a decisive role in a region’s well-being. Sadly, researchers conclude that education and training in the rural South is at a much lower level than other areas including the urban south. One study found that teachers in the rural South were less satisfied than teachers in other regions were (Ballou & Podgursky, 1997). The sources of their dissatisfaction were salaries, resource availability, class size, teaching as a career, and the level of “problems” in the learning environment. Rural teachers receive lower pay than teachers in other areas receive and graduate from prestigious universities at lower rates than other rural teachers (Ballou & Podgursky, 1997).

On top of these deficiencies lie those that plague rural schools across the nation, such as fewer advanced classes, and teachers leading classes outside their major subject. Freshwater and Rowley suggest that some schools in the rural south are affected in more than one-way “once for being rural and again for being southern” (p. 30, 1999).

Achievement scores for students in the rural South continue to lag national, rural, and urban South averages, as do measures of adult literacy and educational attainment (Israel, 2004).

Rural southern students also suffer from cultural reproduction, which is the transmission of existing cultural values and norms from generation to generation (Bourdieu, 1984). This becomes problematic in a climate where social inequality is the foundation of the community. Often teachers perpetuate cultural reproduction in schooling environments. This happens when teachers decide which students deserve opportunities based on their personal preferences and biases. Students who have values similar to those of the teacher are likely to be rewarded with better classes, scholarship recommendations, and access to exclusive leadership and life preparation opportunities (Bourdieu, 1984).

To avoid changes in culturally accepted norms and increase obedience, schools incorporate value-rich lessons under the guise of character education, which many times may be in conflict with the families values. James Coleman's preface in Wynn and Ryan's (1993) handbook writes, "Teachers and schools, like parents and families, cannot avoid teaching values and as schools come to encompass an increasing part of most children's lives, the values transmitted by schools come to be a larger part of the cultural heritage that the younger generation receives from the older" (p. iii).

Teacher expectation falls into the category of values instilled in children. Teachers provide encouragement or discouragement depending on their perceived beliefs about a child. The level of expectation greatly influences the level of success the child

will provide. Studies of teacher expectation effects are categorized as sustaining expectation effects or self-fulfilling prophecy effects (Cooper, 1985; Cooper & Good, 1983; Good & Brophy, 2003).

Sustaining expectation effects occur when teachers expect students to continue to act or perform according to previously established patterns and may disregard contradictory evidence of change (Cooper & Good, 1983; Good & Brophy, 2003). In sustaining expectations, teachers' behavior can act to sustain student performance levels by interfering with the teachers' ability to perceive changed student behavior. In the self-fulfilling prophecy effects, an initially erroneous belief leads to fulfillment because of expectation, action, and continued verbalization to the student (Weinstein, 2002). Such expectations must alter student performance in some way (Jussim, 1989). Hence, self-fulfilling prophecies create change in student performance, whereas sustaining expectations thwart the potential for any change (Good, 1987).

The major self-fulfilling prophecy effects are known as Golem effects and Galatea effects. Golem effects are undesirable and negative effects, which are the result of low teacher expectations that impede student academic achievement. Galatea effects, on the other hand, are desirable and positive effects, which are the result of high teacher expectations that augment student academic achievement (Babad, Inbar, & Rosenthal, 1982).

Although, teacher expectations play a significant role in student achievement, parents continue to be the primary transmitter of expectations and values (Perrino, 2005). Duncan and Brooks-Gunn (1997) concluded that maternal education was linked

significantly to children's intellectual outcomes even after controlling for a variety of other SES indicators such as household income. Davis-Kean (2005) found direct effects of parental education, but not income, on European American children's standardized achievement scores; both parental education and income exerted indirect effects on parents' achievement-fostering behaviors, and subsequently children's achievement, through their effects on parents' educational expectations. Additionally, more parents are involved in their children's schools at the elementary than at the secondary school level. In part, this result occurs because teenagers often discourage their parents from coming to school. Parents of secondary students often are unsure how to help their children, and many high schools do not make parent involvement a high priority. Research also shows a link between parent involvement in high school and future student success (Engle, 1989; Hickman, 1995-1996).

Youth

To the extent that the active and passive transmission of values and knowledge from parents to children are important, we should expect a very strong correlation between parents' and their children's knowledge and aspirations. Student's educational aspirations are also influenced by the poverty that plagues their community (Lambert, 2007). Often poverty is not limited to the family but extends its reach into the educational opportunities both academically and programmatically. High-poverty rural schools spend less per pupil than high-poverty urban schools and less than most other rural schools. Moreover, remote rural schools, those that are more than 35 miles from a city and more than 10 miles from a town, have higher rates of poverty than many urban

schools (Lambert, 2007). Youth living in poverty in rural areas, like urban areas, are likely to become involved in deviant acts that become detrimental to the community. National estimates for rural areas show that illicit drug use overall is less prevalent in rural areas than in metropolitan areas, but cigarette use, particularly among youths, is higher in rural areas than in metropolitan areas (Valentine, N., Kahler, J. & Cippoletti, S., 2005). Although illicit drug use is higher in metropolitan areas than in rural areas, the introduction of methamphetamines has increased rural youth drug use. The drug is appealing to rural, working-class men, women and their youth. Many rural youth under the age of fifteen (15) have experimented with alcohol, tobacco, and/or sex. There is a myth that rural youth are sheltered from such behaviors; however, research demonstrates that this is not true. It was once thought of as an urban issue, but now teachers in rural schools report experiences and perceptions about violence similar to their urban counterparts (Ballard & McCoy, 1996). Rural culture may be characterized by prejudice, ethnocentricity, and intolerance to nonconforming ideas (Ballard & McCoy, 1996). These contrasting sets of values could very well provide an environment for violence in rural schools. Therefore rather than aspiring to enroll in college more rural youth are becoming members of gangs (Caldarella, Loosli, Merrell, & Sharpneck, 1996).

Aspirations

Educational aspirations of rural youth lag behind those of their non-rural counterparts (Arnold, Newman, Gaddy, & Dean, 2005; Cobb, McIntire & Pratt, 1989; Eider, 1963; Haas, 1992; Haller & Virkler, 1993; Hektner, 1995; Hu, 2003; Kampits, 1996; Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999; Khattri, Riley, & Kane, 1997; McCrackin &

Barcinas, 1991; Stern, 1994). Cobb and colleagues (1989) compared educational aspirations of high school students in rural, suburban, and urban areas, based on a nationally representative sample of seniors. The data revealed that rural students did not aspire to postsecondary educational opportunities as frequently as urban and suburban students did (Cobb, McIntire & Pratt, 1989). When asked what the lowest level of education they would be satisfied with, 39.2% of rural students reported that they would be satisfied with high school graduation or below, as compared with 25.7% of urban students and 26.6% of suburban students (Cobb, McIntire & Pratt, 1989).

In another study involving a nationally representative sample, Hu (2003) examined the educational aspirations and postsecondary access by students in urban, suburban, and rural schools. Using 10th graders as a baseline population, the study found that higher percentages of rural students had aspirations for high school or below (16.6% for rural, in contrast to 11.0% for urban and 10.6% for suburban students). Aspirations for 2-year college education was (33.1% for rural, in contrast to 27.1% for urban and 29.3% for suburban students). Lower percentages of rural students had aspirations for 4-year college education or beyond (50.2% for rural, in contrast to 61.9% for urban and 60.2% for suburban students). It further revealed that smaller percentages of students in rural schools were enrolled in postsecondary institutions (51.1% for rural, in contrast to 57.4% for urban and 58.8% for suburban students).

Relevant findings from other studies have further indicated that rural students place less value on academics (Ley & Beltyukova, 1996; Stern, 1994). For example, in a study of 2,355 students from 21 rural high schools in 21 states, Ley and Beltyukova

(1996) asked students to indicate the importance of 21 attributes relating to their personal goals after high school. The study found that these students placed more importance upon personal qualities (e.g., being dependable and having the ability to get along with others) and less importance upon specific areas of academic achievement (e.g., being proficient with Basic English skills and math skills). It follows, then, that lower educational aspirations and less importance placed on academics could lead to a sense that “school isn’t for me” (Haas, 1992). More specifically, they could further lead to a sense that “homework isn’t for me,” as alluded to in one survey of 210 high school seniors in seven rural Tennessee high schools (Reddick & Peach, 1993). The study found that whereas 91% of the students indicated that homework was directly related to what they were taught in class that day, only 37% felt that homework was beneficial and only 21% felt it was reasonable in terms of work required for its completion. These results imply that this “homework isn’t for me” attitude may play a role in homework behavior (e.g., how and to what extent to complete assignments).

This view was supported by the findings from one survey of the parents of 570 rural fifth graders (Reetz, 1991), in which the majority of parents reported that they were more concerned about helping children establish independent study habits than assisting them with the academic content of their homework. This line of literature suggests that, compared with urban students, rural students have lower educational aspirations, place less value on academics, and have lower academic motivation. This approach may lead students to think that homework is not for them, which, in turn, may influence their homework completion behaviors and homework management strategies. Bourdieu

(1984) introduces cultural capital as an approach to understanding how parents' attitudes towards education affect students' higher educational aspirations supporting cultural reproduction.

Higher Education

Elevating the socioeconomic status of those who remain in rural communities is a challenge that economic developers and political leaders struggle with as they strive to create economic stability within their districts. Higher education degrees and practical certificates are two ways to change socioeconomic status and attract new industries into the community. Ironically, the high school graduation rates for students in rural communities have slightly increased in the past 10 years according to the USDA (2007). Current population surveys also show a 3% increase from 1996 at 84% to 87% in 2006. However, during the same period of time rural students continued to lag behind urban students with college completion rates of 19.5% for rural students versus 32.8% for urban students (Kusmin, Gibbs & Parker, 2008), although data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2007) show that high school dropout and unemployment rates are higher in cities than in rural areas. The fact that urban high school dropout rates are higher than rural areas, but urban college completion rates are higher than rural areas, would indicate that higher percentages of individuals from urban areas who do attend college actually complete college. The median earning level, when adjusted to reflect regional cost differences, is also lower in urban centers, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2007). Moreover, college enrollment rates for both 18- to 24-

year-olds and 25- to 29-year-olds were typically lower in rural areas than in all other locales (U.S. Census, 2000).

Conceptual Framework

Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron (1973) introduced the concept of cultural capital in a work describing the educational differences among France's youth in the 1960's. They believed that academic stratification among students partially resulted from differences related to the amount of "high cultural" exposure that students were privy to in early childhood. Bourdieu and Passeron coined the term cultural capital and broadly defined it as the "instrument[s] for the appropriation of symbolic wealth socially designated as worthy of being sought and possessed" (p. 488). They were strongly influenced by several outspoken sociologists.

Bourdieu's Historical Influences

Karl Marx is historically known as a communist who penned *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) in response to the conditions of Europe's working class. His work focused on how social classes were defined by their distinctive relationships to the means of production. Marx opened *The Communist Manifesto*, one of his most seminal works, with the following quote regarding stratification of society, "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Marx & Engels, 1848). Marx focused heavily on the unfair distribution of power and resources between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat classes in Europe. Marx defined the divisive point between these two classes as those who produce and those who must sell their labor to live (Gilbert & Kahl, 1992).

Bourdieu utilized Marx's concept of stratification as a foundation to explain the concept of cultural capital as a stratifying element to maintain a class society.

In addition to Marx, Bourdieu felt a kinship with the writings of Max Weber, the German sociologist who wrote in the early 20th century about the ill effects of capitalism and the role of ideology. Weber, like Marx, was concerned with stratification, but unlike Marx who focused on the division between two extreme groups (bourgeoisie and proletariat), Weber focused on the distinct differences between class and status. Weber (1946) stated:

With some over-simplification, one might thus say that 'classes' are stratified according to their relations to the production and acquisition of goods, whereas 'status groups' are stratified according to the principles of their consumption of goods as represented by special 'styles of life' (p. 136).

Weber believed that there were gradations in each of the areas of class and status, such that class distinctions were identified by groups who were known by their economic position. While status is characterized as a style of life that one chooses to live because of being a member of the status group, class membership is defined by the economic opportunities an individual has in the labor, commodity, and credit markets that strongly influence life chances (Gilbert & Kahl, 1992). Life chances are the aspects of an individual's future possibilities that are shaped by class membership.

Unlike class that is economically driven, status is lifestyle driven and encompasses the external choices that one makes to belong to a chosen group – not the financial decisions one makes for sustainability. Status groups develop the conventions or customs of the community that include appropriate ways of dressing, of eating and of

living that are different from the ways of other groups (Gilbert & Kahl, 1992). For example, the hip-hop life style is characterized by “making money through image, trendy clothing styles, and heavy commercialization” (Smith, 2004, p. 1). Another example is the lifestyle lived by Hollywood stars such as Brittany Spears, Nicole Richie, Paris Hilton, and Lindsey Lohan who engage in a lifestyle characterized by partying, flashy skimpy clothes, and drug abuse. Both of these lifestyles yield residual goods, yet neither of them would align with the other.

In addition to “class and status”, Weber developed an understanding of "social order" which is a relatively stable system of institutions, pattern of interactions, and customs, capable of continually reproducing at least those conditions essential for its own existence (Weber, 1968). The concept refers to all of those facets of society, which remain relatively constant over time. These conditions could include property, exchange, and power relations, but also cultural forms, communication relations, and ideological systems and values. Like Marx’s class work, Bourdieu also uses Weber’s work on status groups and status cultures to explain the marginalization that persons lacking dominant cultural capital, or in Weber’s term status, experience.

Emile Durkheim’s concept of the *division of labor* that maintains society’s status quo also enlightened Bourdieu’s work by elaborating on the notion of roles and their relationship to cultural capital. Durkheim was a French born sociologist who wrote *The Division of Labour in Society* (1997), which focused on what Plato termed political and social order (Plato, 380bc). In *The Division of Labour in Society*, Durkheim explains the necessity for roles and specialization of cooperative labor intended to increase

proficiency and efficiency of output (Calhoun, Lipuma, & Postone, 1993). Durkheim's division of labor follows Plato's notion of "each must do his own work in accordance with his nature" (Plato, line 453b, p. 127) in order for society to function properly and efficiently. This concept is what Bourdieu sees as a disadvantage for many in society who are marginalized based on their perceived "class, status, or nature." Bourdieu strongly influenced by the concepts of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim focused his attention on the impact of stratification that resulted from social reproduction, specifically within schooling environments.

A Theory of Cultural Capital

A Brief History of Pierre Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu was born in France in 1930, and educated at the Ecole` normal school in Paris, France. Bourdieu's initial studies focused on anthropological work, which culminated with research in Algeria. While conducting his research, Algeria was in the midst of a war against French colonial rule. This direct exposure to power, politics, and science influenced and redirected Bourdieu's future research interests from anthropology to sociology. Bourdieu was influenced by structuralism, which propelled him to develop a "general theory of culture" (Calhoun, Lipuma & Postone, 1993). After much critical analysis, Bourdieu abandoned his previous objective and decided to develop a "theory of cultural practice" (Calhoun, et al., 1993). A significant part of Bourdieu's continued research focused on the concept of "capital," or "resources" which involved the capacity to exercise control over one's future and that of others.

Cultural Capital Introduced

Pierre Bourdieu defined cultural capital differently over time. The first work that mentioned cultural capital was an article titled “Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction” (1973). Later, in “The School as a Conservative Force: Scholastic and Cultural Inequalities” (Bourdieu, 1974, p. 32) he denies that a “national cultural capital” exists. In *The Inheritors: French Students and their Relations to Culture* (1979), Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron stated that cultural capital consisted of informal academic standards, which were also a class attribute of the dominant class. In *Reproduction* (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), they further defined cultural capital as the mechanism that maintains academic standards based on the dominant class standards. Finally in *Distinction* (1984) cultural capital is defined in the form that will be used in this text; as an indicator and a basis of class position, cultural attitudes, preferences, and behaviors that are conceptualized as “tastes,” which are being mobilized for social selection (Bourdieu, 1984). In this definition, taste varies with cultural and economic capital including occupational differences influenced by level of education, income, and preferences.

Bourdieu researched 3 distinct types of capital including social, cultural, and economic (1984). The focus of this research is cultural capital and its relationship to college success among rural students. The power associated with dominant cultural capital influences the lives of individuals by legitimating the claim that specific cultural norms and practices are superior to others (Lareau, 1987). Lamont and Lareau (1988)

explain further that by institutionalizing these claims to regulate behavior and access to resources one provides power to the group whose norms are legitimated.

The capacity of a class or group to make its preferences and practices seem natural and authoritative is the key to controlling and maintaining social reproduction. These preferences will be identified as dominant cultural capital because they are derived from the authority held by the perceived dominant group. Bourdieu (1974) writes that these cultural norms become the standards because they are presented as neutral, and become the standard preferences for educational systems, which uses them to evaluate students. A simple example would be the standard grammar and language that is taught to all children in U.S. public and many private schools in grades K – 12. Although, the standard grammar and language is considered “standard” it is not the language of all U.S. citizens, yet entry into many higher-level academic programs require a minimum level of mastery of standard grammar and language. Those students who are products of the group that dictate the standards and arrive to school possessing a high measure of ability have a distinct advantage over those who must learn the standard once they arrive. Additionally, the possessors of “dominant” cultural capital are given opportunities because of their in-group membership and advanced abilities. Those who are not in-group members are often not aware of the opportunities and if they are, they do not have the skill, information, or knowledge to take advantage of them. Dominant cultural capital permeates our schools in textbooks, through character education, approaches to discipline, and the grading system, which rewards competency in subject matter and mastery of socially acceptable behavior. Non-dominant group members often become

relegated to their class because they are not privy to the cultural capital that is being rewarded.

Relegation suggests that individuals with non-dominant cultural capital end up in less desirable positions and get less out of educational investment. According to Bourdieu (1979) relegation is often the action taken by non-majority persons as a response to the perceived limited return on their educational investment. Their cultural disadvantage is manifested under the forms of “relay mechanisms such as early, often ill-informed decisions, forced choices, and lost time” (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 14). Within the United States, dominant cultural capital, which consists of having the opportunity to achieve material and immaterial goods through hard work, opportunity, and determination, yields the most opportunity and improves access to the American Dream.

Bourdieu (1977) further explained that ideally, cultural capital is measured with an index combining several variables that fall under three distinct branches of cultural capital. Variables such as the level of formal education of one’s parents and grandparents, the size of one’s community of origin (which influences access to cultural events), and the frequency of one’s cultural activities are examples of cultural capital that may affect educational outcomes (p. 327). The three branches of cultural capital identified by Bourdieu (1986) were embodied, objectified, and institutionalized (p. 47). The first refers to the ability to appreciate and understand dominant cultural goods; the second cultural objects such as paintings, operas, or ballets, which require special skills and knowledge to appreciate; and the third focuses on the institutions; primarily the

school system, which provides the credentials that signal the attainment of recognized dominant culture.

Acquisition of Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is initially acquired in the home from parents. Once children begin school, dominant cultural capital is reinforced and non-dominant cultural capital is discouraged via exposure to a given set of standard cultural practices. Children who arrive with dominant cultural capital are perceived to have inborn “talent,” and recognized as “gifted,” because of the dominant cultural capital they have embodied from birth. Moreover, because the school system transforms “learned” cultural capital into “scholastic” cultural capital, the latter is predisposed to appear as an individual “achievement.” For example, scholars have demonstrated that middle-class parents typically talk more to infants and young children than do working-class or poor parents do. As a result, middle-class children often have larger vocabularies when they enter school, and subsequently score more highly on standardized tests measuring verbal skills (Hart & Risley, 1999; Lareau 2003). Nevertheless, teachers, parents, and students themselves are likely to interpret the differences in test scores as a matter of natural talent or individual effort.

Bourdieu’s arguments concerning cultural capital are notable because they challenged the widespread view of modern schooling as a mobility engine that promotes or demotes people through the class structure simply based on their talents and efforts. Indeed, from Bourdieu’s highly critical vantage point, modern systems of schooling are far more adept at validating and augmenting cultural capital learned from the family than

they are at instilling it in children who enter the institution with few or none of the requisite dispositions and skills.

Consequently, he maintained, that the educational systems of modern societies tend to channel individuals towards class destinations that largely mirror their class origins. Moreover, they tend to elicit acceptance of this outcome, both from those who are most privileged by it and those who are disfavored by it (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Examples of this practice are commonly represented in school systems that are more likely to track limited resource and minority students into vocational programs, while economically advantaged and non-minority students are encouraged to pursue more rigorous course loads that prepare them for advanced degrees.

Therefore, the embodied state is directly linked to and incorporated within the individual and represents what they know and can do. Embodied capital can be increased by investing time into self-improvement in the form of learning. However, the individual must believe that the action or improvement is natural and right in order for it to become embodied (Bourdieu, 1991). As embodied capital becomes integrated into the individual, it appears to be their natural way of being. Therefore, these attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions that become embodied cannot be transmitted instantaneously, they come with time, engagement, practice and want.

The objectified state of cultural capital is represented by cultural goods and material objects such as books, paintings, instruments, or machines. They can be appropriated both materially with economic capital and symbolically via embodied capital (Bourdieu, 1977). Objectified capital is not the item or object in itself but the

understood value that is placed on the possession of the item. For example, possessing an original 1914 Babe Ruth rookie baseball card only has value to one who understands the significance and rarity of such an item, and is just an old card to one who does not. Finally, cultural capital in its institutionalized state provides academic credentials and qualifications, which create a "certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to power" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 248). These academic qualifications can then be used as a rate of conversion between cultural and economic capital. The possession of a high school diploma is institutional capital at the lowest level; however, it is the foundational level of institutional capital.

Bourdieu (1977) and other cultural capital scholars (De Graaf, De Graaf, and Kraaykamp, 2000; Coleman, 1994; Lareau and Horvat, 1996; Farkas, Grobe, Sheehan, Shuan, 1990; DiMaggio 1982) have studied these three key branches of cultural capital as they relate to students and parents. However, a consistent approach to studying cultural capital and its branches remains elusive, making it difficult to measure the impact of cultural capital on educational attainment. I will develop a clear operational definition for embodied, objectified, and institutionalized capital that will guide this study. In addition to defining the components, I will provide relevant examples that will help simplify the analysis phase of the study.

Embodied Capital Operationalized

Building on the notion that embodied cultural capital is a competence or skill that cannot be separated from the person who holds it and reflects what they know and can do

it is accepted that embodied cultural capital is the attitudes, beliefs, and abilities that appear to come naturally to the holder. The manifestation of those attitudes, beliefs, and abilities are articulated and revealed very early in life and are internalized from the actions of parents or guardians. For example, a two year old that articulates their wishes using formal language skills reflects learned abilities that appear to be natural skill. Children inevitably pick up styles of speech and vocabulary, through talking to their parents, and hearing their parent's talk to each other and to others in their social circle. Hearing parents discuss particular topics also expose them to ideas, information, and forms of argument. These forms of passive cultural transmission are likely to be critical in a child's development of language and cultural knowledge.

Language

Bourdieu identified language as the strongest embodied capital that parents transmit to children. The importance of linguistic sophistication was considered the "principal factor" in academic success. "Obvious in the literary disciplines but more subtle in the sciences, the ability to manipulate academic language remains the principal factor in success in examinations" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979, p. 21). Bourdieu's belief about the importance of language suggests that children who enter school and have difficulty communicating are likely to be considered academically delayed. It is undeniable that students, who have a grasp of formal language, rather than being restricted to informal language, are at an enormous advantage in the education system. Bernstein (1973) distinguishes between informal language and formal language using the terms restricted and elaborated codes of language. He suggests that restricted/informal

codes are used primarily by the working classes and are characterized by a low level of vocabulary and limited syntactic variety. He further explains that restricted (informal) language codes and elaborated language codes were derived as a way to explain the low performance of working class students in language-based classes, but their comparable achievement with middle class students in analytically focused classes such as mathematics.

Bourdieu's (1979) focus on language as a primary form of embodied capital uses the more commonly understood labels of formal and informal language skills instead of Bernstein's (1971) elaborate and restricted terminology, however they are respectively the same. To simplify the information, from this point forward, I will use formal for elaborate and informal for restricted. To explain the affect of language on academic success we look at the following two examples

1) Informal: "If you're going to town, get Pooh Bear a new April from you-know-where"

Formal: "If you are going into Eden, please get a new toy for Pooh Bear, the dog from the pet-shop (which we can't name because if the dog hears it he will go mad), to replace the one which we have come to call "April," which, he has almost chewed to bits."

2) Informal: "Martin's at it again."

Formal: "I see from the newspaper I am reading that Shawn Martin, leader of the Opposition, is once again trying to attack the government from a position of right-wing populism as we discussed a couple of days ago."

The distinction between the two codes is in what the language is suited for; the informal code works better than the formal code for situations in which there is a great deal of shared and taken-for-granted knowledge in the group of speakers. It is economical and rich, conveying a vast amount of meaning with a few words, each of which has a complex set of connotations and acts like an index, pointing the hearer to a lot more information, which remains unsaid. It also draws on shared meanings and background knowledge. An informal code carries a social message of inclusion, of implicitly acknowledging that the person addressed is "one of us." It takes one form within a family or a friendship group, and another with the use of occupational jargon within a work group. Its essential feature is that it works within, and is tuned to, a "restricted" community. Most people use restricted code communication some of the time.

One commonly used filler expression "you know" or "you know what I mean" is an informal code that carries an expectation that others within your conversation will indeed know what you are getting at, from a few key words. In contrast, formal coded language does not assume that any part of the information is unnecessary. This does not mean that it is better, but that it is necessary so that everyone can understand it. It has to be elaborate because the circumstances do not allow speakers to condense.

Informal code is therefore great for shared, established, and static meanings and values but if you want to say something new, it is necessary that you use a formal code to deliver the information. Bernstein's (1971) research argued that working-class students had access to their informal codes, but middle-class students had access to both restricted

formal and informal codes, because the middle classes were more geographically, socially and culturally mobile.

Academically, this is important because schools and colleges are concerned with the introduction of new knowledge, which goes beyond existing shared meanings. William Labor (1969) showed that what was then known as "Negro Nonstandard English" was perfectly capable of expressing complex and original ideas: but when students use codes that are not the dominant language code, they are seen as language and skill deficient. Many students may feel when asked to express themselves (speak in class) that they are ill-equipped to do so using formal language codes which, can lead students to feel embarrassed and digress. It is not primarily about informal code users' inability to understand formal codes because they are exposed too much of it in the media. It is however, about their unfamiliarity with using it (speaking it rather than hearing it) to explain complex ideas. When teaching to students who use informal language, their misunderstandings may not come from the instructor's use of elaborated code, but from the use of the restricted code or the code that has been adapted to the instructors own speech community (jargon, abbreviations, etc.), rather than a properly and appropriately elaborated code.

Informal language codes offer security within the group. A class's own language grows up through its interaction and history and using it can be socially important (the shared laugh whenever a particular group member is mentioned is both a means of bringing most of the group together, and of course of excluding others), and powerful.

Students' ability to code switch helps them comfortably and effectively function within the two worlds.

To identify embodied language in this study I will look at the actual language used by participants. I will notice their use of fillers, which may simply identify a comfort level (considering me an in-group member), or discomfort (feeling uncomfortable about explaining a thought). I will also acknowledge the role of language on their success in college by listening for complaints or issues with instruction and comfort with peers. It is my belief that studying language as the primary form of embodied capital will give insight into the participant's early experiences and how those experiences would affect their success in college.

Knowledge

In addition to language being embodied, knowledge as a tool to gain favor is also embodied. The ability to grasp and understand knowledge that is transmitted within the school is obviously rewarded; however, a broader cultural knowledge, which is not necessarily transmitted within the school in terms of literature, music, politics, art, science, etc, are too rewarded. This broader knowledge is gained from conversations that parents may have with children prior to, during, and after exposing the child to different high cultural experiences. It is important to understand that exposure alone does not yield knowledge. It is the debriefing conversations where children can ask questions and receive meaningful answers, pose alternative solutions and engage in lively debates. Exposure becomes embodied knowledge when children begin to engage in dialogue

about ideas, ethics, values, and beliefs and when they become comfortable challenging long held assumptions.

In addition to general world knowledge, it is decisively important that students and parents have negotiation skills and knowledge of the politics that undergird the academic environment. Power and politics are pervasive at all levels of most institutions and organizations and schools are not exempt. Students who enter school with parents who are knowledgeable about the opportunities available within the school and have the skills to access them have a better chance at success than those who do not have that embodied knowledge. Knowledge of which teacher will teach a class better, or who will ensure the child's success because of a social connections are both examples of opportunities that embodied capital yields. I will share a personal example of how having embodied knowledge in school helped my daughter.

My daughter enrolled in the "Health Careers Academy" as a ninth grader in the early college academy and during her first semester she decided she no longer wanted to be in that academy. She was interested in attending North Carolinas School of Science and Math during her Junior and Senior years, therefore realized that she needed to change to the "Engineering Academy" which would accelerate the pace at which she completed her math requirements. She is quite gifted and was taking honors pre-calculus in ninth grade and wanted to move into AP calculus in the tenth grade. After speaking with the ninth grade counselor to schedule a meeting, we were informed that she could not change academies and that AP Calculus was only for Juniors and Seniors. This new counselor did not know me and believed that I would accept her response. I simply scheduled the meeting. I met with her the following day and she shared the same comments. I insisted and she said I would have to get approval and many signatures (teacher, principal, academy director, etc.).

Within a few moments the principal walked past the counselor's office, noticed me, and smiled. We embraced (he is a friend of mine); the counselor asked him about the class and informed him of the pre-requisites. He simply signed his approval on the transaction. My daughter was placed in the "Engineering Academy," and enrolled in AP Calculus because of my social

capital, knowledge of how to bypass the system, and my daughter's knowledge of what she needed.

Lareau (1987) studied this phenomenon when she looked at family school relationships and the importance of cultural capital by studying the differences between the way middle and working class parents relate to school faculty. Lareau (1987) found that middle and upper class parents were able to gain favor for their children in terms of enrollment into advanced programs and help them have favorable relationships with teachers and staff because of their ability to communicate their displeasure and their pleasure effectively and in a non-threatening manner. She also noted that working class and lower class parents often believed that they could not advocate for their children and when they did attempt to do so, the consequences were unfavorable (Lareau, 1987). Lareau (1987) believed that the teachers saw the parents who had trouble articulating their displeasure and those who spoke using expressive body language as aggressive, angry, and not willing to listen to or understand the teacher's perspective. As children observe the behaviors and outcomes of these situations, both groups embody the experiences and typically use very similar approaches to resolve issues or gain positive outcomes.

To measure embodied knowledge held by students and parents I will look for times where they encountered struggles and analyze the approach they used to resolve those struggles. I will also note times when they received favor whether in the family, the school, the community or in other situations that they were able to successfully

acquiesce something through the power of negotiations. Using these markers as the primary points of analysis, I believe I will be able to identify embodied knowledge.

The ability to use both informal and formal language effectively and gain knowledge in skills that allow one to negotiate understanding, are key embodied skills. Exploring these skills in my participant's transcripts will establish the foundation for objectified and institutionalized capital, which, are both predicated upon embodied capital.

Objectified Capital Operationalized

Objectified cultural capital is represented by cultural goods, material objects such as books, paintings, instruments, or machines (Bourdieu, 1977). They can be appropriated both materially with economic capital and symbolically via embodied capital. Pure ownership of a material good is not objectified capital; it must require embodied capital to be useful. For example inheriting a Michelangelo painting is merely an inheritance, understanding that the painting is one of the greatest and most prized pieces of artwork and is priceless is objectified capital. Without prior embodied knowledge of art and artists, the object is a mere painting.

Along with priceless material objects, objectified capital can be in the form of resources such as access to better schools, a computer, a room of one's own for study, etc. In addition, parents with high levels of cultural capital promote the development of academic ability in their children by participation in public cultural activities very early in life. This form of objectified capital is often exclusive in that it is too costly for working class and lower class parents. Objectified capital in the form of priceless works

of art, piano lessons, a home library or participation in mission trips provide youth with the objectified capital through embodied capital that build a sense of entitlement.

To analyze objectified capital I will look for material, and immaterial items valued by participants and determine why those items are valued. Additionally, I will look for items that may be considered dominant objectified capital to see if they are valued because the participant has the embodied capital needed to value it or if it was a mere activity or purchase. I will base my inferences on the information that is given by the participant. Lastly, I will look for things that may not have been mentioned (books, travel, museum visits, etc.) to infer about the objectified capital that was lacking. Ultimately, I will use the analysis of objectified capital to determine if participant's objects were embodied dominant capital, non-dominant objectified capital or objectified functional capital within the confines of their family. An example of each type of objectified capital would be the purchase of a minivan to be a soccer mom, the purchase of an old Cadillac with chrome wheels that cost more than the vehicle, or the purchase of a used car to get to and from work.

Institutionalized Capital Operationalized

Institutionalized capital (Bourdieu, 1977) refers to certificates awarded to individuals' suggesting that competencies and skills have been mastered. When they are credentialed, their embodied cultural capital takes on an objective value that is marketable and leads to economic capital. Institutionalized capital is the simplest of the three to recognize because it requires one to be acknowledged for successfully completing requirements to receive the credentials. Participants will be analyzed by the

credential received and the possible opportunities made available because of receiving the credential. Each participant has received a high school diploma; however, the value of the diploma depends upon the courses taken in high school and the opportunity being sought. Additionally, I will look for recognitions and awards for activities that yielded capital (athlete who received a scholarship, honor roll student who was nominated for a special program, leadership award that yielded favor by teacher/administrator, etc.).

Contemporary Cultural Capital Theorists

Transmission of cultural capital can be active or passive. Parents actively teach their children when they are reading to them in the early years, and, later on, when they coach them in school subjects (Perrino, 2005). Parents' ability to perform effectively these active tasks will be partly determined by their own academic abilities. Passive transmission of capital happens when children pick up styles of speech and vocabulary; through talking to their parents, and hearing their parents talk to each other and to others in their social circle. Just as active forms of transmission are important, passive cultural transmission is also essential in a child's development of language and cultural knowledge. Every culture passively transmits knowledge that is relevant within their culture (Carter, 2005; Delpit, 2006); however when it is not dominant cultural capital, it is recognized as “inappropriate” and thus requires modification or complete change.

Lisa Delpit (2006) a noted author, educator, and activist writes in *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom* that students from non-dominant cultures must be taught the codes of the “culture of power”, but must also be taught the “arbitrariness of those codes and the power relationships they represent.” The culture of

power, according to Delpit (2006), resembles Bourdieu's cultural capital in that it addresses the privilege that accompanies upper and middle class families. For example, Delpit notes that codes or rules of power consist of concepts such as ways of speaking, writing, talking, and ways of interacting (p. 25).

Understanding the dominant culture does not prevent students from embracing the language and behaviors of their preferred culture; however, it does provide mobility within mainstream America. Prudence Carter (2005) suggests that the first institutionalized exposure to dominant cultural capital is school. Bourdieu (1977) suggests that children socialized into the dominant culture will have a big advantage over children not socialized into this culture because schools are the agents of cultural reproduction.

Education is presented in schools from a dominant cultural capital perspective, which shows preference over other forms of cultural capital. Although all students are exposed to dominant cultural capital in school, students' from the dominant culture receive political and economic advantages by having reinforcement of dominant cultural capital from parents, surroundings, experiences, and a milieu of other opportunities that privilege provides well before entering school. Delpit's second aspect of cultural power states that the upper and middle classes send their children to school with dominant cultural capital, while other families' children arrive with functional cultural capital, but not the culture of those in power, leaving them at a disadvantage socially and academically (2006).

In agreement with Delpit (2006), Prudence Carter writes in *Keeping it Real: School Success Beyond Black and White* (2005) that “many educators assume that to communicate and work together across different social categories, students must possess the cultural codes of dominant and mainstream society” (p. 9). Although this concept appears to negate all other cultural experiences and ways of knowing, the institutions of learning in the United States focus on education as a means to maintain the status quo by presenting primarily dominant cultural experiences and expectations and attempting to dissuade other cultural experiences from the formal classroom. This is played out in many movies and television shows such as *The Beverly Hillbillies*, which depict a rural Tennessee family who became millionaires as misfits in Los Angeles because they lacked the cultural capital that was expected by the social environment to which they financially belonged. Although we have enjoyed the reruns of this comedic show for many years, it sheds a true light on the lack of acceptance many rural youths face as they try to navigate through the world of higher education.

According to Bourdieu, the accumulation of cultural capital starts at birth, immediately, without wasted time, only for the offspring of families endowed with strong cultural capital (McNamee & Miller, 2004). The transmission of this type of socialization is the most valued evidence of privilege that heredity offers. Unlike economic capital or social capital, cultural capital provides those who successfully acquire it the ability to navigate systems and preserve the social status quo in order to maintain exclusion and opportunity. Bourdieu notes that cultural capital can be certified in the form of academic qualifications or college degrees, which makes it selective and

for many unattainable. Although many individuals are considered self-made entrepreneurs, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) suggest that without the academic qualifications to support their knowledge, they remain on the outside of the accepted mainstream.

Bourdieu also suggests that schools are instruments of social and cultural reproduction, and schools help students who have dominant cultural capital maintain it and reward them for it with opportunities for upward mobility (McNamee & Miller, 2004). However, it must be clarified that although schools intentionally reward students who possess dominant cultural capital, they do not produce or explicitly teach dominant cultural capital to students who do not possess it. On the contrary, those students become relegated to courses that are less challenging and tracked into technical or vocational education programs. Students, who are academically talented but lack cultural capital, also suffer because of their lack of knowledge regarding navigation of the system and preparation for higher educational programs. Carter (2005) notes that dominant cultural capital provides students with the perceptive skills needed to interact with teachers, apply to colleges, gain quality extracurricular opportunities that institutions of higher education require, and get quality recommendations for colleges and jobs.

Rural, low socio-economic status (SES) students are many times not privy to the dominant cultural capital of their metropolitan higher SES peers and therefore are relegated to repeating the conditions that they have suffered as children (Orr, 2003). As a result, many choose to remain close to home by choosing to work, or attend a community college following high school instead of pursuing a degree at a 4-year institution. Rural

youth who do attempt to go away from home and enroll in universities that are culturally unfamiliar to them, may become isolated and alone, and oftentimes choose to drop out of school or return home to the local community college within their first year of enrollment (Orr, 2003).

Although Lisa Delpit (1996) and Prudence Carter's (2005) scholarly work on youth of color has had some impact on effecting positive change and culturally relevant curriculums (Hale, 1982; Hillard, Stewart, & Williams, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994), we are a long way from recognizing Horace Kallen's (1924) vision. His vision of an ethnic pluralist society that runs like an orchestra in which each culture plays a significant role in producing a national body of knowledge that is equally accepted (1924).

Although youth do not receive dominant cultural capital in school, many of them gain exposure in part to dominant cultural capital as they befriend members of the dominant culture or enter environments where others have it (Carter, 2005). Most of the time students who find themselves in this type of environment must have the ability to "code switch," that is, they must be able to function effectively within their community and within their isolated environment. Students of color who struggle with code switching are often labeled as "acting white" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1988) or being "uppity." Both terms are meant to belittle the student because they are exhibiting dominant cultural traits that are not common within their cultural group. Carter (2005) explains that although dominant cultural capital can play a critical role in socioeconomic attainment the possession of non-dominant cultural capital is critical to the status of individuals from

socially marginalized groups because of its impact on their sense of belonging, connection, and identity within their own group.

Finally, it is important to note that children who have been socialized with dominant cultural capital appear to the teacher to be "more gifted" or academically talented because they come to school with a solid foundation of the expectations for school success. Teachers are more likely to favor those who come to school equipped with dominant cultural capital, ignore, and label those who lack dominant cultural capital as academically incapable or lazy. Thusly, this labeling further marginalizes and stratifies groups based on the cultural capital with which they arrive at school. In this respect, Bourdieu (1977) argues one of the major roles played by the school is social elimination, and this involves the need to progressively, remove pupils from access to higher knowledge and social rewards. Bourdieu (1977) calls this differentiation or the need to "make pupils different" in ways that are recognized as valid by a dominant culture.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The focus for this study is to determine if rural students' who lack Bourdieu's (1973) dominant cultural capital are more likely to drop out of college. I used a phenomenological approach, which examines human experiences through detailed descriptions from the people being studied. It provides opportunities for detailed description and in depth interviews from the participants' perspectives. By conducted long interviews with each of the six rural participants, the data is richer and more focused on their stories, not those garnered by quantitative data that limits the voice and perspective of the participant. Each of the participants in this study enrolled in a college or university following their high school graduation and withdrew during their first or second year of college.

Study participants consisted of males and females from diverse ethnic backgrounds without regard for gender, creed, or other differences. I selected the first six participants who met the qualifications of (a) recent high school graduates, who (b) enrolled in college after graduation and (c) dropped out within the first two years of attendance. Once the six participants were chosen and agreed to participate, I did not screen other possible candidates. Participants lived in rural communities at the time of the study and had attended high school in a rural U.S. community.

To maximize my chances for finding the six young adults I used a process called "snowball" or "chain sampling" (Patton, 1990). This process consisted of asking friends if they knew individuals who started college and withdrew within the first semester. All of the participants were found through this process and resided in a variety of rural communities.

Key Terms and Definitions

Several key terms will be used throughout this study. For clarity operational definitions have been developed.

- 1) Dominant Group in this study refers to White Anglo Americans who are able, through economic or political power, to impose their values, language, and ways of behaving on a subordinate culture or cultures. This may be achieved through legal or political suppression of other sets of values and patterns of behavior, or by monopolizing the media of communication. An example of the dominant group's power can be seen in the traditional U.S. History textbooks that most American students study in high school that gloss over the atrocities of slavery and the removal of Native Americans and highlight the victories of European settlers.
- 2) Cultural Capital refers to the experiences, networks and knowledge that one has that influences their life choices. Cultural capital is derived from ones family, community, school, place of worship and a variety of other social environments. It is how one learns to navigate their environment. The cultural capital that one needs to live in a rural farming community where tractors, trucks, and long roads

are common and where everyone needs an automobile is quite different from one who lives in an urban area with mass transit systems and where grass is a novelty. The rural dweller may only see immediate family daily and only see friends at social gatherings, while the urban dwellers living conditions make isolation virtually impossible. The ability to master the language, socialization skills, and survival skills and thrive within the environment one dwells is cultural capital.

- 3) Dominant Cultural Capital refers to having experiences, networks, and knowledge with the dominant group that lead to power and status within the dominant group. To gain the economic or political power of the dominant group one must have knowledge of, access to, and experience with, dominant cultural capital. Dominant cultural capital is gifted to children who have parents with dominant cultural capital, and are exposed from birth to the networks, experiences, and knowledge needed to master the concept. For many who are not privy heirs through birth, dominant cultural capital may be achieved through cultural experiences offered in schools, community activities, volunteering and traveling. Examples of dominant cultural capital that can be acquired to provide access to economic and political power include obtaining higher education degrees, attending cultural art programs (symphonies, museums, art galleries, plays, etc.) along with mastering Standard English through reading, writing, and speaking.

In addition to the general terms and definitions, Pierre Bourdieu (1977) divided cultural capital into three components Embodied, Objectified, and Institutionalized.

- 1) Embodied Capital refers to the knowledge and beliefs that are valued by people, and which are acquired through lived experiences. Embodied capital is by far the most important component of cultural capital because it is inherited or learned from birth. To embody means to become a part of as to represent or become (Oxford Dictionary, 2001). Embodied capital is difficult to recognize because unlike objectified and institutionalized it does not have a tangible component.

Embodied capital encompasses many of the things we take for granted such as the songs we sing to infants, the music we allow them to listen to, whether we read to them, whether we scream or speak softly, and whether we talk to them in Standard English or a derivation. These common parenting approaches lead to expectations and values for children. As they mature, what implicit and explicit methods are used to inform them of our beliefs, values, and expectations? The events that we celebrate and the meanings we attach to them also become embodied; if we espouse the importance of obtaining high marks in school but ignore them when they are achieved we diminish the value placed on the achievement.

The reverse may also be true; if we celebrate the hard work; it may be duplicated because of the value we place on it. Embodied capital is obtained primarily in the home from caregivers. However schools, churches and other socially constructed environments provide embodied capital through training and teaching the mind and the body how to react and what to expect in social situations. For example, the primary skill that children must master upon entering school is the art of “sharing.” Therefore, daycare centers, preschools, and kindergarten teachers place heavy emphasis on group participation.

Additionally students learn to be orderly (standing in line), not to be aggressive (no fighting) and obey (follow the rules). Although on the surface each of these rules seem very ordinary and important they can limit creativity, leadership and independent thinking; all traits that employers and universities look for when hiring or admitting students. Dominant groups are more likely to find outlets for their children to obtain and build these skills while non-dominant groups may believe that a strict adherence to the rules will bring their child favor and opportunity.

- 2) Objectified Capital refers to the ownership and appreciation for cultural goods that are acquired through economic capital. Unlike embodied capital, objectified capital can be observed. It is represented through tangible goods acquired with economic capital. Mere ownership does not qualify as objectified capital; it includes the ability to use, appreciate, understand the significance, and enjoy that which one owns. Its form can be as simple as reading and/or owning a variety of books, understanding varied artists including painters, musicians, composers, and writers. Additionally experiences such as visiting and appreciating museums, symphonies, operas, plays, book signings and travel that involves visiting national and historic sites are all reflections of dominant objectified cultural capital.
- 3) Institutionalized Capital refers to the license or certification that an institution or governing body confers on individuals who have achieved a societal sanctioned goal or status. In the United States, the accepted certification begins with the bachelor's degree, which one obtains through the successful completion of a chosen program of study at an accredited institution.

Setting

The research setting was rural America. Each of the participants attended high school in communities whose economic base was primarily agricultural or manufacturing. Four of the participants lived in rural central North Carolina, one student lived in southern Virginia, and the final student lived in east Kansas. Three of the participants lived in communities with a population of less than 3000 residents (City Data, 2007), two of the participants lived in communities with an average population of 20,000 residents, and one participant lived on the outskirts of a town with more than 215,000 residents (City Data, 2007). All of the participants resided in North Carolina at the time of the interviews, but most did not live in the community where they attended high school. A detailed description of each community is described in the participants' stories. I met with and had multiple interviews with six diverse rural young adults in the community where they currently lived.

Participants

I conducted qualitative research using purposive snowball sampling (i.e., sampling that reflected the characteristics of the individuals needed for my study). The participants were six rural participants who lived in a variety of rural areas. My participant group consisted of a diverse group of young men and women. The participant group included three males (Thomas, David, and Jonathan) and three females (Melissa, Maria, and Kim). Thomas and Jonathan identified themselves as African American and David identified as Caucasian. Kim and Melissa self identified as African American females and Maria identified as Hispanic Mexican American.

Kim, Jonathan, and David identified their families as middle class working Americans, while Melissa, Thomas and Maria self identified as lower income working class Americans. None of the participants knew the actual financial status of their families but based their class status on the perception that they had regarding their socio-economic status. All participants had completed high school, and had attended college after high school but subsequently dropped out of college before completing a degree program. Through snowball sampling (Patton, 1990), I was able to identify interested participants from “people who knew people, who knew people, who believed participants would be information-rich; that is, good examples for study, good interview subjects” (Patton, 1990, p. 182). Potential participants identified through the sampling strategy were contacted via electronic mail and telephone for further discussion of the research questions, methods, and procedures and asked if they consented to participate.

Data Collection

Data were collected through interviews. Participants engaged in one, two, or three sessions of interviews depending on the level of detail that was provided and time constraints of the interviewee. Maria had a single session that continued for nearly two hours. Melissa had two sessions one of which included a drive through her rural hometown. Thomas also had two sessions, each were one hour and not very detailed. Paul, Kim, and David each had three sessions, which lasted from one hour to one hour and a half.

The interview sessions transitioned from community to family and ended with schooling experiences. Each session continued for one hour or more. The participants’

pace was the guiding force of the sessions, for some all three topics may have been completed within the interview session, and for others multiple sessions were needed for certain topics. Each interviewee was different in the amount and depth of their conversation; therefore, I let the pace be dictated by the interviewee. For example, Thomas responded very briefly to each question and notoriously repeated himself if the question was re-stated or if he was asked to elaborate. Thus, his interviews lacked detail and richness. The opposite was also true; Jonathan was very open and detailed about his experiences. His interview was full of rich detail and description. The other participant interviewees were between these two extremes.

The interviews were conducted in a semiformal format that allowed me to ask questions throughout the interviews and permitted the interview to flow in a conversational manner. This approach seemed to relax the interviewees and release them from being apprehensive about speaking to a stranger about personal life choices and events. This approach allowed me the opportunity to move from the general information about their community experiences to the more specific information about their family and schooling experiences. With multiple interviews, participants were very open and shared detailed information about their lives, and their decisions about dropping out of college.

Data Analysis

Organizing and analyzing data was an ongoing process throughout the research with the goal of presenting the data in a rich and compelling format that sheds light on the topic. Using Miles and Huberman (1994) approach to data analysis, the researcher

transformed the many pages of transcribed data into usable information. Miles and Huberman (1994) defined data analysis, “as consisting of three concurrent flows of activity: (1) Data reduction, (2) Data display, and (3) Conclusion drawing/verification” (p. 10).

Data reduction helps to sharpen, sort, focus, discard, and organize the data in a way that allows for “final” conclusions to be drawn and verified. It can be reduced and transformed through such means as selection, summary, paraphrasing, or through being subsumed in a larger pattern. The first step in Data reduction was to read the transcribed data and make a table of common themes shared among the participants. A table was developed for each participant that revealed their embodied, objectified, and institutional capital. Those tables were used to create a single table that reflected the cultural capital that was shared by the participants and is included in the research (see Table 1, pg 125). Creating the tables allowed themes to emerge naturally.

Miles and Huberman’s (1994) second step in the three part data analysis approach is data display. Data display consist of taking the reduced data and displaying it in an organized, compressed way so that conclusions can be more easily drawn. To accomplish the goal the transcripts were each printed, and color-coded to distinguish between the participants. Following the color-coding Table 1 (see pg. 125) was displayed and each interview was carefully read and assigned a code that aligned with the common themes on Table 1(see pg. 125). In addition to noting the common themes, outliers were also labeled and analyzed for slippage.

Upon completion, of the color-coding, each theme was written on an index card, and transcripts were cut into slithers and matched to the appropriate themed index card. Although, very tedious and time consuming the process allowed the researcher to once again become very familiar with the data.

The final step in Miles and Huberman's (1994) data analysis is conclusion drawing and verification. It is here that the researcher makes inferences about what things mean. This is done by noting regularities, patterns (differences/similarities), explanations, possible configurations, causal flows, and propositions. This part of the data analysis is critical to the overall study in that the conclusions might not be accurate, therefore it is prudent that the researcher maintains openness and skepticism as the research takes form.

This phase of analysis provided the researcher with the most flexibility, while maintaining an acute awareness of the literature and the researcher subjectivity. Implementing trustworthy measures was important in this part of the data analysis, having colleagues who were familiar with the study and participants' who were interested read the analysis helped limit misinterpretations and projections.

Lastly, to present the data Wolcott's (1994) three-part approach to data analysis was used. Description, analysis, and interpretation were presented in three chapters. The first part, description was the participants' stories presented using their words with very limited analysis. The second part of Wolcott's (1994) approach is analysis, which is a presentation of the themes and is grounded in the data. The final analysis section is the interpretation, which explains the meaning and significance of the study. Using

Wolcott's (1994) approach, Chapter IV is the description, Chapter V is the analysis, and Chapter VI is the interpretation.

Subjectivity

According to Alan Peshkin (1988) subjectivity is the “fusion of the persuasions that stem from the circumstances of one’s class, statuses, and values, interacting with the particulars of one’s object of investigation.” Peshkin notes that subjectivity affects the results of all research types (1988). To understand his subjectivity Peshkin used an approach that that helped him become actively aware of his subjectivity; he acknowledges its presence from the beginning, not upon the completion of the research (1988)

Peshkin began to recognize places in his research where he felt the positive or negative emotions, or even recognized times when he wanted to act in ways that were not necessary to complete the research (1988). As he gathered data, he introspectively noticed when his feelings were aroused and then determined the connection of the emotion to an appropriate title or area such as community, culture, situation language, place, etc. Finally, he connected each identifier with the first person “I” (community I, culture I, etc).

My study is on a topic that is very close to my heart personally and professionally; recognizing and acknowledging how my subjective influences my judgments and thus my analyses is vital. Peshkin argues that it is not enough to know that subjectivity is present in research but it must be acknowledged in order to own the parts of the research where analysis and interpretation may be skewed due to subjectivity

(1988). Uncovering the “I’s” in my study helped me to realize that they had an impact on my perceptions and the way I wrote about my participants and their experiences.

Using Peshkin’s style I labeled my I’s accordingly: Location I, Pretty People I, Justice Seeking I, Non Research I, and Prejudiced I. The Location I was the easiest to acknowledge. This “I” was the catalyst for the study and in many ways made the study interesting and exciting. The location reminded me of my experiences as a young person growing up in a rural environment pondering my future. When I interviewed my participants, I realized that I really got the warm fuzzies for those who attended the school that I attended. I ask more inquisitive questions, which were not about the participants’ experience, but about the school itself. The participants who went to rival schools also intrigued me. I would inquire about their school’s standing as if I were having a general conversation instead of conducting an interview.

One of the students perceived that the rural school that I had attended was “better” at preparing their students because the students had more resources. I quickly responded by dispelling the myth and sharing information about the rural schools. Oftentimes I would re-direct and ask questions about individual teachers because I was familiar with them. In contrast, I did not question those participants that were from areas with which I was not as familiar in the same manner, which may have limited my understanding of their experiences. I followed the schooling interview protocol exactly with very little re-directing for those participants. Lastly, the ability to hear about the changes within the community and the people who I may have known caused me to be very interested in the

interviews by participants in familiar communities. I am sure that my analysis and interpretations were skewed by my fondness of the location.

The Location I was also apparent immediately when I encountered a participant who I personally identified with because we had something in common. For example, one of my participants was a young mother who had a daughter a year after graduating high school, as did I. She struggled with the responsibility of trying to attend school and be a responsible mother; I had the same struggles at 19 years of age. I quickly went from researcher to adviser and mentor. She had her beautiful daughter sleeping in her arms while we interviewed and my heart reflected on my days as a young mother and although I followed the protocol, the emphasis shifted to guide rather than researcher. After the three interviews, I wanted to contact this young woman and mentor her through the process of returning to college. She had the strongest disposition and most wonderful outlook on life and I simply identified with her character and became personally responsible in my mind for her future. Although I have not acted on my wishes to mentor her at this time I may do so once my research is complete.

In contrast to the young mother with the baby in hand, there was another participant expecting a child, and I once again found it a challenge to focus on the study only. My passion and life's work has been, and will be, to mentor and guide young people through the college process. When I see myself in someone (as a young mother or as an unwanted throwaway child), it is quite difficult to focus on the agenda. The location I is probably the most challenging for me and certainly influenced my data analysis.

One of my silly I's would be the "Pretty People I". This sounds bad; however in order to bring this study to life and help myself understand how I judge others, it must be included. The "pretty people I" is simple, I have never thought about this before, not that it may not have existed. Now I realize that when I met each of my participants I made an immediate analysis of their potential simply on how attractive they were. I do acknowledge how shallow and thoughtless this "I" is, but I also recognize the fact that it may have influenced the way I initially communicated with my participants.

One of my participants has a disability that causes him to look quite different and not very attractive. At our initial introduction, I made an immediate mental note: "I understand why he dropped out; he appears to be academically delayed." As difficult as it is to read this thought, it was my honest initial perception, which caused me to consider patronizing him for the first meeting and seeking another participant. However, I am grateful that I proceeded in a manner that focused on the interview protocol and with all of the appropriate professionalism as I had with other participants because I quickly realized that my perceptions were unfounded. Not only was this participant very articulate; he was extraordinarily brilliant.

In contrast, I interviewed a very attractive young man who seemed to exude intelligence. At our initial meeting, I was very excited to talk with this attractive participant, yet he had difficulty providing information, elaborating on topics and ultimately was the shortest interview of the six. Although both participants dropped out of college, the one who appeared to have potential may struggle, and the one who did not may succeed.

Peshkin (1988) used the Justice Seeking I that I will borrow for my own purpose. As I met with each of the six participants, only one of the six had taken an AP class, and that was the white male student. None of the minority participants had taken an advanced placement course. When asked why they had not taken one, each had a simple response: “they didn’t put me in one.” I was livid when one very intelligent participant said she did not know about AP classes. She was an AB student and assumed that the counselors were giving her the “right” schedule. Another participant said he was told not to take the AP class because they would be too hard and probably “mess up his GPA.” The justice seeking I found myself angry and frustrated with the tracking systems that are so commonly used to place minority youth in low-level classes. Often students and parents are not aware of what tracking is and simply take the course load they have been assigned.

I found myself asking for names of counselors and teachers who were responsible for limiting access to these classes and was determined to contact them about what I perceived was an injustice. I did not follow through with this idea, because after settling down I recognized that it was not a part of my research. However, this will be a part of my post-doctoral work: equity and access to AP courses and an end to tracking youth based on what they think they may want to do. How many college graduates change their major? I did. To track students in middle and high school in non-university tracks is unethical. This issue not only influenced my data analysis but also supported my notion that we are building a class-based society by implementing tracking systems in minority school systems.

As a parent of a first year college student, I found myself often thinking of my participants as my children, instead of research participants. The Non-Research “I” (Peshkin, 1988) wanted to provide support and information to all of them that had nothing to do with education. I wanted to guide them on relationship matters, financial planning, parenting, career options, and college access. Listening to them share the perceived lack of support that their parents offered made me want to jump right in and “fix” everything. The non-research “I” was the biggest problem. My professional career centers on college access and youth mentoring; I wanted to help my participants go through the process of filing financial aid documents, applying for scholarships, and re-enrolling in college.

After our final interview, I would always ask if they were going to return to school and let them know that if I could help I would. I have not heard from any of the participants regarding re-enrollment at this time, but I have learned that several have re-enrolled in college and I wish them great success. Although the non-research I wanted to step into their lives and “fix” all the broken pieces, I did not. However, I am sure that I used the areas where they seemed to be insecure as “proof” that they lacked embodied capital, which hindered their acquisition of other forms of capital.

The “I” that shocked me the most was the Judgment “I.” I have a very diverse family and never thought of myself as judgmental and really still do not; however, I realized that I do carry some racial judgments. I noticed that although I have family members who are Mexican, Korean, Puerto Rican, and White, I pre-judged my Mexican participant before ever seeing her. I had an image in my mind of a short, dark haired,

young woman and did not think of that as a judgment until it was highlighted when my work was reviewed. Unintentionally and without malice, I used descriptors for my participants that have been perceived as racially insensitive. If this subjectivity exists, it is subconscious. I believe that rather than being judgmental, I may have simply used the wrong terminology to describe my participants.

There are three significant ways that my subjectivity influences my research. First, my childhood experience in a small rural community definitely influenced an interest in this research area. The second personal impact would be my experience dropping out of school during the first semester of college and losing a full scholarship. Last, my professional work and experiences with students who live in a small rural county influences me. I am from an average – sized rural farming and textile community that I believe does not value or encourage higher education. I always hated farming and the monotony of a factory job was like a death sentence to me; therefore, I always desired to do something different. Because I was considered an academically gifted (AG) child, I was placed in classes that were “college preparatory.” I did not know anyone who had gone to college and did not understand the concept of college. I did know that I wanted to escape the life that I was born into and college seemed like the perfect escape route. Alone in this pursuit, I had no one to explain what it was about but I knew it had to be better than where I was.

After my father’s death in 1982, I was sent to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to live with his sister. The school I attended was in north Philadelphia and was considered one of the most dangerous schools in the city at that time. However, because of my high

academic ability, counselors and teachers made me privy to opportunities that most students did not have. I went to plays, restaurants (I had never been to a restaurant, not even McDonald's prior to my father's death), long trips to the mountains, New York, and other large cities. Each of these opportunities helped me know that there was a great world that I could explore. This is where my dreams seemed to become realities. I had a high school counselor who actually believed that I had what it took to go to college and assisted me with navigating through the vast amount of minutia required to get into college. During that time, I was very motivated to attend college and was accepted into several great schools like the University of Pittsburgh and Temple University where I was awarded a full scholarship.

After graduating from high school, I attended Temple University briefly, but withdrew during my first semester because I felt that I was "out of my league." The other students seemed to be confident, knowledgeable, and wealthy. I had none of these attributes and assumed that it was a mistake that I had been admitted. I moved back to my little rural town hundreds of miles away from Philadelphia.

Although I did not succeed at Temple, I was still motivated to go to college; therefore, I registered at the local community college. I was eager to register for the college transfer courses, but during registration and advisement I was informed by the advising counselor that my goals were too lofty. He blatantly stated that because "I was a single black female with a child; I should probably consider early childhood education instead of engineering." I, of course, was not as tactful as I am now, so I gave the counselor a bit of advising of my own and left his office. Ignoring his advice, I registered

for college transfer courses and matriculated successfully through the program. The experience of being directed into a career choice based on my external appearance (young, black, and single mother) definitely affected my decision to conduct this study, yet it has not caused me to project my experience onto others.

In addition to my personal experiences, my professional experience may affect my subjectivity. Professionally, I help students who live in a small rural county with a very low college-going culture aspire to attend college. Unfortunately, I do not begin working with them until they are seniors in high school. I find that many of the students are not fully prepared to enter college because of academics, lack of exposure and of personal aspirations. I believe the cultural capital that they lack causes them to stay at home and attend community college or withdraw from universities in large numbers by the end of their first semester. By conducting this study, I hope to understand some of the reasons rural academically qualified students drop out of college at higher rates than their metropolitan counterparts do.

I recognized that I would not be able to eliminate my personal subjectivity; therefore, I monitored it throughout my data collection and analysis phases. The subjectivities were curtailed by a thorough analysis of the interviews and transcripts and by carefully performed measures of trustworthiness such as member checking, and peer review. In addition, I used memos, shared analyzed data with study participants, and engaged in lengthy discussions with colleagues familiar with the project.

Trustworthiness

To help insure the rigor of my study, I used the following trustworthiness measures:

1. Member Checks: Upon completion of the participant interviews, I transcribed and analyzed the data. Once the data were analyzed, I provided the participants with a copy of my data analysis and asked for their feedback to make sure that I captured their meanings.
2. Peer Reviews: I had several of my peers review my findings and asked for feedback and insight into the study about topics that I had not considered. This was done after the data had been analyzed, which followed data transcription and member checking. I had students within the UNCG ELC Ph. D. program and friends outside of academia review my work.

Benefits and Risks

One of the benefits of this study to the participants was that it provided them with an understanding of how rural communities are held back because of a lack of cultural capital in their communities, families, and schooling experiences. Additionally, participants potentially benefited from the study because it provided them with a chance to think about changing their future or the next generation's future by considering higher education. The study also benefited the participants because they had an opportunity to share their reasons or views regarding pursuing higher education with someone who seemed non-judgmental. Another benefit to the participants may have been that after having the in-depth interview about their higher education choice they may decide to re-

enroll in college and complete their degree. One of the primary risks for the participants was that they might have realized that their decision to drop out of college was a poor decision and thus became depressed or discouraged about their future.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because too often intelligent young people believe they do not have the capacity to succeed in institutions of higher education due to the absence of sufficient cultural capital. However, I believe that although the dominant culture may set the standard for success, it does not need to be a paralyzing liability if young children in pre-k and elementary schools are exposed to dominant cultural experiences. Experiences such as phone and dining etiquette, manners, and communication skills are learned through experiential education, not classroom teaching only. Experiences such as reading books, attending musicals, participating in science fairs, traveling to a national site, and learning a new language are cultural experiences that directly influence success in higher education. The belief that one can function within their community but also within the larger society builds confidence and other skills that help young people navigate complex systems where dominant cultural capital is necessary for entry. This study is intended for politicians, parents, students, and educators and for my own personal insight.

CHAPTER IV

THEIR STORIES

The stories that follow are of six young adults who began college after graduating from high school but withdrew within the three semesters of beginning. Their family, community, and school experiences were captured during a series of interviews conducted in a variety of locations that were convenient and accessible to the participants. The interviews allowed participants to express in their own words their perspectives of what factors contributed to their decision to withdraw from college. Using Wolcott's (1994) descriptive, analysis, and interpretation model for converting qualitative data into meaningful research facilitated a structured and somewhat systematic approach to making sense of the mounds of data. Chapter IV comprises the descriptive portion of the analysis. This chapter will provide the reader with the participants' stories, in their own words with minimal analysis and interpretation. Chapter V will constitute an analysis of the themes found in the data. Chapter VI will conclude the three part series with the researcher's interpretation of the data.

Determining what interview data to include in the participants' introductions was based on the purpose of this study. Although meetings were arranged, there had been no face-to-face interaction with the participants prior to the initial interviews. Benefitting from the anonymity of each participant, the focus was on examining the data for the influence of cultural capital on each of the study participant's decisions to withdraw from

school. Data supporting the themes that emerged during the interviews were included in the stories of each participant. In addition, the consistency of the interview protocol provided guidance and selection of content for their stories, which resulted in a well-formed account of each participant's experiences. Excerpts from participants' interviews are included throughout the introductions.

Each of the six participants had varying experiences that influenced their choices, even though those outcomes were the same. The participants were from three different states, and represented three ethnic groups, and both genders. All but one of the participants lived with both parents. All but one had parents who completed high school, and none had a parent who had completed an Associate or Bachelor's degree or higher. Three of the participants attended 4-year universities, two of the participants attended community colleges, and one participant attended a junior college.

Melissa's Story

As I drove into the driveway of the small quaint home in the city of Banner, a young girl exited the home with a look of expectation and wonder. Meeting the participant for the first time, I presumed she was Melissa, she introduced herself, and we exchanged names and greetings. Melissa was a 22-year-old young woman with a creamy brown complexion, bright eyes, and stood about 5'6" tall. Melissa's slightly exposed body revealed many tattoos of various symbols, animals, and nature scenes. She had well-manicured hands, and feet, along with a mane that was styled to perfection and semi-covered to ensure the style was maintained until she needed to present herself to her public. She offered me something to drink and asked if I needed anything, I informed her

that I was fine and that we could begin the interview when she was ready. I suggested we go outside to the front porch so that we did not wake the young man sleeping on the sofa. Melissa carefully read the consent form before signing it and returned it to me.

Community

Melissa is from Shelton a rural town located in southern Virginia. Shelton has a population of 6,522 residents according to U.S. census bureau (2000). This town has a median household annual income of approximately \$38,960.00, slightly lower than that of the state at ~\$57,643.00. The demographics of the community consist of 31.8% African American, ~62% Caucasian and ~ 6.2% of the population is other ethnic groups (Hispanic, bi-racial or Native American or other races). According to U.S. census data (2000), 59.5% of the population over the age of 25 years has a high school diploma or equivalent and 7.5% have a bachelor's degree. For men the most common occupation in Shelton is manufacturing and for women health care jobs are the primary source of income. Melissa's father worked in manufacturing and her mother was a homemaker until poor health caused her to be placed in a nursing facility.

Melissa lived in an area, which she described as "a pretty rough neighborhood." "It's a lot of drugs a lot of killings and stuff; yeah it was a very rough neighborhood." Melissa did not have trouble talking about the struggles in her community. Although she did not live in the same home throughout her life, she did live in the same small community and matriculated through its school system.

Access to resources and opportunities were scarce in the community; there were no community parks, recreation facilities, or theatres less than 15 miles from her

community and without public transportation, it was difficult to access those that did exist. Melissa described a small basketball court located in the middle of the community. The basketball court was the only recreation site available to the small community. However, she did note that one of the small churches in the community offered a variety of programs for young children and some teens.

They was doing stuff with the youth down there like summer camps like we would go and do basketball (court), and (we would) do history; mainly like black history and stuff. It was a woman named Linda, she helped us with it a lot cause she took us up there to that college in Greensboro, A & T, yeah she took us up there on field trips and stuff she was doing a lot of stuff with the youth like that.

Melissa's view of life was defined by her environment, "growing up I just thought that it was the way life was, and it still hasn't changed in that community, if you go up there right now it's still the same." In spite of the struggles, Melissa aspired to do something different.

I wanted to do better than that, because, well, see my older brother is doing 21 years in the penitentiary and I didn't want to go that route, you know what I'm saying and I just wanted something totally different for me, and he done left 5 kids here. I eventually want kids and I want to be settled down and get all of that (schooling) out of the way before I have kids.

Family

Melissa's immediate family included her parents and two older brothers. As the youngest member in the family, she witnessed most of the mistakes made by her older siblings and the struggles experienced by her parents. Melissa explained that her family like so many others had fallen victim to the troubles of their community. "My oldest

brother, he graduated from high school, but my middle brother, he dropped out of high school, and my older brother is doing 21 years in the penitentiary and then my middle brother he was already in jail doing 8 years.” In addition to the trouble her brothers were in, Melissa was faced with the health crisis of her mother who was diagnosed with gestational diabetes while pregnant with Melissa that progressed into full Type II diabetes before Melissa completed high school. Other complications had developed which caused her mother to be placed in a nursing home just before she graduated from high school.

Melissa described her father in a loving manner as a provider and nurturer. Although he is illiterate and can only recognize his name and those of his family members (wife and children) when they are written, he had provided for his family. He worked in the local manufacturing facility for much of his adult life, which allowed him to meet the needs of his family and to maintain the small home in which they were raised.

Education

Getting a high school diploma was very important for Melissa. She believed her parents expected her to be much more successful than her brothers and education was the way to achieve that goal. “With me it (education) was important, my mama and daddy wanted me to go, I guess, because I was the only girl and I was the youngest.” For Melissa being the youngest and the only girl coupled with not wanting to disappoint her parents’ the way her brothers had provided the motivation she needed to complete her high school education. As so many others, Melissa had faced many instances when dropping out of high school would have been an easy choice, but the desire to please her parents helped her stay focused on graduating. “Uhn uhn, most of them (youth in

community) dropped out (of school), to be honest after you were thirteen you were just out there, just grown.” Melissa suggested that the expectations for youth in the community were dire “most folks expect us to become drug dealers, go to jail or to get pregnant.” Melissa matter-of-factly goes on to say:

There ain't many jobs down there. Like I said it's a lot of drugs, that's what goes on down there in the little part of my community. My daddy always worked, he works now in national textiles. He been there about 15 or 16 years and then he used to work at the brick factory down here in but none of these jobs are in our town, they are in communities about 45 minutes away from my community and most people don't have transportation.

When asked about college she suggested that college was important, but it had not been discussed as an option in her family. “We didn't really talk about college, just graduating from high school, but I knew I wanted to go to college for myself.”

Kim's Story

On a very warm day in July, I met Kim in her small town library. Kim was an African American, petite, small framed young woman of 22 years who wore mid back length micro braids that were gathered in a large band on top of her head. She was wearing a pair fitting “Dareon” jeans, a pale yellow tee shirt, and a pair of stylish sandals. Her outfit was topped off with gold jewelry including earrings, necklace, and several rings. Perfectly manicured hands and feet completed her look. Everything about her was perfectly coordinated and stylish. Kim also carried an infant child seat that held her small five-month old daughter. After confirming that I was her contact she gave her daughter to the young man that accompanied her and we began our session. Kim was articulate and prepared to share her thoughts, which made the interview pleasant and interesting.

Community

Kim grew up in Clayton, a rural town located in northern North Carolina. Clayton is a small town with a population of 14,981 residents according to City-Data.com (2007). It has a median household annual income of approximately \$36,122.00, slightly lower than that of the state at ~\$44,670.00. Demographically, 39.5% of the residents are African American, ~56.1% Caucasian, and ~ 4.4% of the population is other ethnic groups (Hispanic, bi-racial, Native American or other races). According to City-Data.com (2000), 68.8% of the population over the age of 25 years has a high school diploma or equivalent, 15.6% have a bachelor's degree. The unemployment rate at the time of the interview was at 8% (Employment Security Commission, 2008). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2008), men in Clayton, North Carolina worked primarily in the construction industry. Women in the community primarily worked in health care. Kim lived with her mother who had worked in the local tobacco factory since she graduated from high school in the early 1980's, where she earned a salary that exceeded the state average.

Clayton was the largest city in the county and offered more opportunities than other cities in the county. Gainfully employed in the tobacco factory, Kim's mother provided her with opportunities to participate in many extra-curricular activities. Although Clayton offered more activities than other cities in the county, many of the activities she participated in were athletic in nature. Kim enjoyed activities such as basketball, swimming and especially dance. Dancing was Kim's sport of choice and she enjoyed classes in jazz, tap, modern and clogging. Kim perfected her sport so much that

in her sophomore year she became the president of her high school dance team and remained in that roll through her senior year.

Family

Kim's family included her mother and a brother who is six years older than she is. Having a small family and a mother who was gainfully employed, Kim said that she and her brother were spoiled "mom spoiled the heck out of me and my brother; I mean I always liked to have money." Being so much younger than her brother Kim grew up an only child who benefitted from being her mother's sole responsibility from middle school through high school, the years where children struggle most with identity. However, because of her mothers' quality employment Kim, the baby of the family, enjoyed a full life where she participated in a variety of extracurricular activities; "I did swimming, dancing, basketball, I was trained in a little of everything."

Kim's mother graduated from high school secured a "good" job and was able to provide her family with a home and a few modern comforts that enhanced her family's life. Using her life as an example, she taught her children that a high school diploma would allow them to obtain a "good job" and be able to take care of their families. The "value" of a high school diploma was constantly preached; "high school was really important for my mom, my whole time in high school my mom was like come on you got to stay in there and get your high school diploma." Kim's brother graduated from high school and enrolled in college but withdrew after three years of college. "My brother went to community college for one year, and then transferred to A&T for almost two years and dropped out his last year; he wants to go in the army now." As did her brother,

Kim successfully graduated from high school and enrolled in community college, however unlike her brother she dropped out in her first semester of attendance.

Kim felt that she lacked the family support to be successful in college and believed her mother did not see the value in attending college.

Like some people that were raised back in the olden days believe you work. I mean that you get a job when you get out of school, it's not important to them that you go to college like my mom is one of those people, yeah well go to school but you need a job first.

Understanding that her mother's philosophy may have worked in the "olden days" or in the 80's when her mother graduated from high school, Kim felt that the job prospects that were available to her mother would not be available to her but could not garner support from her mother to go to college. "A lot of people used to work at the textile factory or the tobacco factory and could make a good living back then without going to college, but not nowadays..." Kim knew that her opportunities were limited "nothing was there but like McDonald's; it's pretty much hard to even get a job at Wal-Mart without a high school diploma or an equivalent (GED)." Getting a "good" job that would provide her with a "good" life like the one her mother had provided for her and her brother, was the dream that her mother had and her mother believed it could be accomplished with a high school diploma.

Education

"Grades were important to my mom. When we did get our report cards she would give us like money or take us out or something." Although Kim was rewarded for good grades, she focused her attention on working to earn the money she loved and dancing.

I would go to school, stay after school for about an hour and practice or teach my co-captain the routine, and she would teach the team. On other days, I would stay an hour after school and teach the routine, and then go to work. Four days out of the week, I would work one job and the other 3 days I would work another job.

Kim did not have to worry about doing well academically, because she quickly realized that student athletes were given preferential treatment and the traditional guidelines for homework and academic expectations did not apply.

I would do homework when I got home, or when I got around to it. Most of the time I would do it right before class would start, but like when you in sports teachers are more easy on you. They don't like expect you to do the work, sometimes my teacher would go over the work and although she knew I didn't do it she would let me slide.

Kim had always been “spoiled”, from her mother, and later her teachers, unfortunately when she needed to stand alone and perform in college she did not have the embodied capital to be successful.

Although Kim's mother celebrated their high school success, Kim felt that she did not have the same appreciation for college “when I quit, my mom didn't really like ask why you quit, she was like are you going to get a job now?” Kim believed her mothers' views were warranted because of the life she had lived. “I mean it's just that my grandma had 11 kids and it was just more primary to work than to go to school; she graduated high school but she didn't go to college.”

In addition to the perceived lack of guidance and support from her mother Kim believed that Clayton High School was a school that did not prepare students for college, she believed the only people who enrolled in college from her school were basketball or

football players who won scholarships. “I went to kind of the; I guess it was the okay school. Clayton was the bad school, so we didn’t really have much support at our school you kind of go to college on a sports scholarship.” Five percent of Clayton’s population had an Associate’s degree, and 11% had a Bachelor’s degree and 18% of the population had some college (City Data, 2008), revealing that more than athletes enroll, attend and graduate from college.

Kim also had views about the choices of her peers; she believed many of her female peers were headed for early pregnancies by young men who would not marry them, a life on public assistance, and low paying jobs.

Most of them [students] get pregnant, I know a lot of my associates, I wouldn’t call them friends a lot of them dropped out their 12th grade year. Some of them say oh I’m pregnant, oh I can’t do anything, and I’ll just sit down and live on section 8 the rest of my life or welfare and get child support.

Kim judged her peers who appeared to devalue their high school diploma by not exploring the opportunities it affords them. “As far as I know the people around my age that I have known throughout school they aren’t doing anything at all even for the ones that graduated they aren’t doing anything.” She suggests that her future would be different if she had the support and guidance she needed to succeed in college. However, after enrolling in the community college Kim began struggling with the rigor of college work, and the demand on her time. Reluctantly she withdrew prior to completing her first semester.

I had the mind frame that I was going to go to college and that's what I wanted to do to better myself but I don't think I took it that serious as I should have took it coming right out of high school.

Kim's free pass in high school had given her a distorted image of what college would require leaving her unprepared for the rigor and time commitment needed for college success.

I guess I got overwhelmed with the work, like aah wow, I did not know you did so much, I mean between like essays, and projects, and 6, 7, or 8 pages of math each day. I was like wow! It seemed like I would go to school from 8 – 12 that morning to the afternoon, then I would go home and do homework for like 5 or 6 hours. I would be like I'm tired of this, and then I would just be like not liking it no more.

Discouraged and disenchanted by her inability to master the task, Kim withdrew. "I could have did way better, but I just don't think I was ready; I thought I was ready, but obviously I wasn't 'because I kind of goofed off after getting out of college.'" Within a year of withdrawing from college, Kim was pregnant. She moved into the public housing community in a nearby city where she and the baby's father share an apartment paid for by public funds. With limited employment opportunities, their living expenses are subsidized as they try to find work in a small former textile town. At 22 years of age and with a beautiful daughter, Kim appears to have the motivation she needs to complete her college degree.

I got a child and she means everything to me. Now it is not about me anymore, it's bout how I'm going to set an example for her. Cause if she sees me going to college, then she will probably has higher standards.

Maria's Story

I arrived at the meeting site for my interview with a young woman who had identified herself as Mexican. As I waited a woman, appearing to be in her early twenties drove up in a Chrysler 300 that I later learned was her husband's, and had been acquired prior to their recent union. I did not expect this to be my interviewee because Maria had described herself as a twenty-year-old Mexican pregnant woman that was unemployed. However, when the young woman exited the car she approached me, and introduced herself "hello I'm Maria, are you Ms. Hampton-Garland" I answered in the affirmative.

Maria stood approximately 5'8" tall; she had long light brown hair and brown eyes. Her skin tone was pale with pink undertones. She wore a pair of faded blue jeans, a tee shirt, and a pair of Reebok flip-flops. Although she informed me that she was pregnant, she did not appear to be at that time. Maria had a bubbly and friendly disposition and was quite talkative. She had identified herself as Mexican; however, she spoke perfect English with no hint of a Spanish dialect. She expressed her excitement about participating in the study, and seemed uninhibited about responding to the interview questions.

Community

Maria is from Reading, NC a rural town located in north central part of the state. She lived most of her life in Reading and attended Reading City schools from kindergarten through graduating from Reading High School. Reading, NC has a population of 2,256 residents according to City-Data.com (2007). The median household annual income was approximately \$34,859.00, lower than that of the state at

~\$45,000.00. Demographically, the community is comprised of 35.5% African American, ~61.2% Caucasian and ~ 4.4% of the population was made up of other ethnic groups (Hispanic, bi-racial or Native American or other races). According to City-Data.com (2000), 70.3 % of the population over the age of 25 years had a high school diploma or equivalent and 17% held a bachelor's degree. For men and women the most common occupation in Reading was manufacturing however, Maria's parents were the owners and operators of a stone mason company.

Family

Maria has seven siblings including a twin sister, four other sisters, and two brothers. They grew up in a large trailer park located off a major interstate highway. According to Maria, her trailer park community had "only white people, not one black person there, we were like the only Mexicans, and there weren't many kids there either." Maria's parents were Mexican Americans; her father was a third generation Mexican American whose family was from El Paso, Texas and her mother was a first generation Mexican American from El Paso, Texas.

As a young child Maria enjoyed the built in playmates of her seven siblings, however as she moved into her teen years she and her siblings wanted to "hang with (their) cliques, but no one lived close to us." The distance was only a portion of the problem, "my mom's like a very Christian person and if she don't know the person well we couldn't hang with them, and like my father was stricter than my mom because he had so many girls." Maria's parents spoke English fluently; growing up Maria said that her parents spoke "Spanglish," a slang language often used by Hispanics in America that

incorporates English and Spanish. However, her parents required that she and her siblings speak only English. As a result, Maria said that neither she nor her siblings speak Spanish.

Maria recalls her family celebrating birthdays and taking vacations that coincided with her father's trips to Texas and Juarez, Mexico. "Coming from a big family we didn't have much money to do stuff with but my dad would always find a way to go on family vacations. We would go to Texas and Juarez, Mexico." Maria's father was a drug trafficker and the trips to Juarez and Texas were masked as vacations to provide him the opportunity to conduct "business." Maria noted that the trips to Texas and Juarez ended while she was in elementary school because her father was arrested, convicted, and incarcerated for drug trafficking. "When we were little that's when my dad went to jail for three years for drug trafficking; not to justify drugs but it did a lot for our family especially how we were living."

After being incarcerated, Maria believed her father stopped selling drugs to avoid additional legal problems "he (her father) stopped that (trafficking) because he didn't want any trouble with the law or anything." However, "to make extra money he (her father) would (sell drugs) and even now to get in the house we got, my dad had to sell (drugs)." The practice of selling drugs as a means to alleviate financial stress made sense to Maria "he stopped and he was getting desperate for money and he realized he couldn't do it no other way so the furniture we have, it was because he had to do a hustle and sell drugs for it." Because money earned from selling drugs alleviated the family's financial struggles, the three years her father was incarcerated for selling drugs were the hardest

time in her family's life. Although only a young girl, she remembered her twelve-year-old sister dropped out of school to help take care of her and her siblings while her mother worked multiple jobs.

As Maria shared her memories, I pondered the divergence of her parents' approaches to child rearing. I believe that the values and principles provided by her father a "drug trafficker" and her mother a "very Christian woman" would send conflicting messages. Maria suggested that the polar lifestyles of her parents did not affect the way they reared their children; "my mom's like a very Christian person and made us go to church every Sunday, and like my father was stricter than my mom because he had so many girls and he wouldn't let us go out with people they didn't know." The "strict" standards placed on the children did not protect them from the lifestyles their parents led. As reflected in the discussion of the remainder of Maria's story, she seemed to embody her parents' lifestyle by making decisions that mirror what she witnessed in her parents.

Recently married (March 2008) Maria is pregnant and has withdrawn from school. She married an undocumented Mexican man who she acknowledges is a drug dealer and crack abuser; like she did with her father, she has excused his behavior "but he doesn't do drugs all the time." Maria says that she loves her husband and believes she can help him overcome his drug addiction by getting a "good job that will help my family be better." To get a good job "I was planning on finishing (Reading Community College) RCC and transferring (to a four year college/university), that was my plans back then (after high school). Now I will take anything that will get me a job." She continues, "I

wanted to be a teacher, but the teacher pay is not that good; well it's only about \$40,000.00 but now I could settle for being a teacher." Maria suggests that teaching is beneath her when she says she could "settle" with no basis of comparison it appears that she devalues education although she also suggests that it will open up opportunities.

Maria's husband was unsure about her returning to school "we got married in March and I was telling him I was going to register for school after our interview today and he said that's fine and he would support me." Maria's husband believed she would be taking online classes however, she said that when she said the classes would be on campus he was not as supportive. "I told him that some classes I will have to go to campus for and he was questioning that because he didn't like that too much and I told him he can't hold me back from what I need to do."

Employment opportunities in her community were very limited because many of the higher paying factories in her county had closed in the past few years.

A lot of people used to work in factories but now many of them work in Wal-Mart, gas stations and McDonald's and many of my Mexican friends families work in the fields pulling tobacco or gathering food crops like peaches, apples, and now grapes.

Maria was not too troubled about the factories closing because she did not want to work in the factories, fields or at a fast food restaurant, but she would "settle" for teaching. She wanted to go back to college so that she could "get a good paying job, not just a low wage job."

Education

Coming up poor my mom always pushed us to finish high school and go to college, and she has always talked about it and both of my parents they didn't finish high school; my mama quit like in the 10th my dad in like the 8th or 9th, so they had a rough life.

Maria believed the life that her parents had lived clearly expressed their expectations for her and her siblings “we knew what they expected because of their life.” According to Maria, there were no formal statements or examples of why education was important and as of our interview, none of her siblings had completed college but all of them, except the older two, had graduated from high school. The life examples of her parents espoused crime, family, division, and religion but there was nothing in Maria's interview that alluded to education being a priority.

Maria focused on “fitting into the crowd” as a high school student. “When I was in 9th grade I was really stubborn and felt that I could do anything, like I had this bad attitude.” Maria was in trouble for most of her high school career until the second semester of her junior year of high school.

I changed, I think like in the 11th grade, because my teachers both were Spanish, the one that helped me get into the teacher cadet class and the other one Mrs. Perry. I remember I was about to get into a fight and she (Mrs. Perry) started talking to me and said I should set an example for the other Hispanics.

Many students lash out when they believe others are degrading their race or ethnicity, Maria seemed to believe she, and her family had to defend the honor of all Mexicans in her school community. When Maria's Hispanic teachers helped her realize that being a

good student was a better way of defending her ethnicity than fighting she began to think about her future and the role education would have in it, and school was no longer a battlefield but a place of exploration, albeit late.

Immediately, after high school Maria enrolled in the local community college with the goal of becoming a nurse, which was an honorable goal until she could become a doctor. However, Maria had difficulty adapting to the rigor of college, she acknowledged that she had not focused in high school and just did enough to graduate, which left her unprepared for college level work. She withdrew at the end of her first semester. When she returns she will change her major from “nursing cause I ain’t too good in science, but I might do something like teaching or social work, they make good money right?” Maria’s obvious disregard for education and high regard for money will likely affect her ability to be successful if she indeed returns to college.

In addition to the rigor that posed a barrier in her initial effort, Maria now has a husband who struggles with drug addiction and the idea of her taking classes outside of the home, along with a new baby who will demand much of her time. As she continued to talk about her desire to return to school, she solemnly stated, “I know that my husband is the head of the house and if he does not want me to go to school while the baby is young then I will just have to wait.” In addition, she voluntarily mentioned, “a lot of Mexicans were raised to dominate and when he (her husband) tries to stand up and grab on me I tell him you’re not in Mexico anymore, you’re in the U.S.”

David's Story

David arrived at our agreed upon meeting spot dressed very comfortably. He did not wear a noticeable name brand or display any identifying marks or tattoos. David was a young white male, approximately 5'9" tall with very pale skin almost akin to an albino's skin. He had very white sparse hair that seemed to be disheveled and an awkward gait that appeared to be due to an injury. David smiled eagerly when we met and expressed his excitement about the interview. He quickly read the consent form, signed it and the interview commenced.

Community

David was from a very small rural factory and agricultural community in Fauxton, Kansas. Fauxton, a rural city located in northeast Kansas had a population of 26,662 residents according to City-Data.com (2007). The median household annual income was approximately \$34,893.00, lower than that of the state at ~\$47,451.00. Demographically, the community consisted of 3% African American, ~71.1% Caucasian, 21.5% Hispanic and ~ 4.4% of the population is other ethnic groups (Vietnamese, other Asian, bi-racial, Native American or other races). According to City-Data.com (2000), 79.7% of the population over the age of 25 years had a high school diploma or equivalent and 23.8% held a bachelor's degree. According to City-Data.com (2000), most men in Fauxton, Kansas worked in the food service industry and women primarily worked in the field of education. David's father worked as a computer repair technician and his mother was the vice president of a small oil and propane company that managed two gas stations and delivered propane and heating oil throughout the area.

David described Fauxton as a “really small town” whose primary employer was Iowa Beef Processors, Inc (IBP). IBP was a chicken factory that had dominated the workforce in Fauxton, KS for many years. The company employed anyone that would work in the labor-intensive factory, primarily African Americans and Hispanic Mexicans with limited education. David stated, “White folks had more opportunities for better jobs” they were more likely to be educators or business managers in the factories and hold the more prominent positions within the community sustaining businesses like banking, public works, etc. He also believed Fauxton was very segregated. “Yeah, it was kind of bad like that it was really divided we all lived together just at different class levels and the people segregated themselves with people like them.” In addition to living in separate parts of the community, many of the wealthier parents also enrolled their children in the only private catholic school in the city.

There were three schools but one was a catholic high school which was purely segregated with white kids, and there was the country school that was for people who lived way out in the farming area, and then our school which was more for the people who lived in the small city and worked in the factories.

To make matters worse David believed the city officials perpetuated the segregation.

Like they built a skate park which was cool and we were all excited for it and they put it on the south side of the train tracks and the south side of Fauxton, Kansas. It is in the Hispanic community it is was the place that you didn't want to park your car for any period of time because you knew it was going to be stripped and you wouldn't have nothing at all. They just put it there and it was a place to just congregate this certain group. Then they built a soccer field and it was put in the north kind of to the west and you could tell it was for the white people. They did the same thing with the water park; they would spend millions north and west and only thousands south and east. Yeah they just wanted to put enough out there, so

there wasn't a major uprising but nobody was really happy as I got older more jobs opened up.

David also recalled that immigration had raided the IBP factory several times arresting undocumented Mexican immigrants. Eventually, the facility was closed until Tyson Chicken purchased IBP and reopened it several years later. During this time, David began to recognize that the community quickly eroded because so many people were displaced when the factory closed and loved ones were deported. David suggested there seemed to be an air of distrust circulating through the different races and gangs began to multiply and become more violent.

We had CRIPS and BLOODS but they weren't like real violent gangs they just called themselves that and they were mostly black people, but the SOUTHSIDE LOGOS which were the true Mexican gang and they pretty much dominated the whole town and everybody was scared of them. There were not white gangs that I knew of. We had a bunch of drug houses around where we lived, meth mainly but everything else was there too.

Family

Although David's family was from a "middle class" neighborhood, he attended the public school, played on the school's playground with many of the other children. David said his parents did not believe in segregation and would not move him from the public school. "My parents really avoided that they really taught me that everybody's the same and there shouldn't be division. I hated the town for that but you could tell they divided people like that."

David was adopted as an infant by his father who was a former marine and did not attend college, and his mother who did attend a two-year community college. His parents

lived modest lives from the income earned by both parents. His father was an independent computer consultant and retired marine and his mother was the vice president of Shepherd and Sun Oil propane. The family also owned two Phillip 66 gas stations that delivered gas and propane to homes in the area. David felt distant from his mother and never spoke of her in affectionate terms, however he loved his father dearly and felt very close to him.

David suffered from Ectodermal Dysplasia (ED) a complicated disease with a multitude of side effects, including the inability to sweat, unformed teeth, sparse pale hair, cranial-facial deformity and other less visible side effects (WebMD.com, 2009). Although ED can be life threatening there are medications and precautions that can be taken to improve the quality of life for the sufferer. David appeared to be a classic case, displaying many of the external side effects. This coupled with being adopted by a mother he felt could not love him and a father who for most of his adolescent years was hospitalized led David to create a world of trouble that nearly consumed him.

Sixth grade was supposed to be a great year for David, a year of family, friends, and middle school. “Sixth grade was going to be a great year for me, before everything started going crazy and that year was just horrible for me; I was in trouble almost the entire year.” Before the end of that year David would face one of the most difficult times in his life and the roller coaster would last for four long years. David’s adoptive father was his best friend and the parent that he believed really loved him “my dad is the one who like punishes me, and loves me and he knows me.” His dad had been in the U.S. Marines and had suffered multiple head injuries that had caused him to have concussions;

his physicians had warned him that the wrong hit could lead to severe long-term complications. While at work as an independent computer consultant, the wrong hit happened. While under a client's desk repairing a computer he neglected to clear the desk before standing, the hit to his head rendered him unconscious. Although this had happened many times before with minimal cause for concern, this time would be different. "This time he hit it just right and it knocked out memory and he lost like pretty much everything and he was in the hospital for a very long time; like a year or more." David's father was admitted to the hospital where he remained for more than a year with multiple memory and brain function problems. David became visibly upset as he talked at length about his father's injury and the affect it had on his family. David did not know how to deal with his father's injury and became violent and isolated.

David was lost without his father and felt that he had no one who understood or cared about what he was experiencing. School became a place that he terrorized; he was destructive, belligerent, and rebellious toward nearly everyone.

I had a teacher who was a real jerk he talked bad to me and to the whole class. That was the year I just totally rebelled, I like got in fights every day. I ended up cussing my teacher out, I like cussed him out the whole day. I threw his computer out of the window. I was just in that stage, I just didn't care and authority meant nothing to me.

Home life for David was also hard, he isolated himself from his adoptive mother who he felt did not have the ability to be a mother.

Like I had my mom and my mom and I never got along. She has been like the step mom because she couldn't have kids and she didn't know how to be a mom. She would try to step into the role at that point, but by that time, I just didn't care.

I was like 12 years old she didn't know me and at that point, my dad didn't know me. So I had no one to go talk to, I had no one to speak to, so I didn't care what happened to me.

Throughout the interview, David would become visibly upset, and emotionally out of control. Several times, I asked if he wanted to stop for the day and continue later that week; he refused and continued to share his experiences. However, as he tried to articulate his trajectory from being a well-adjusted elementary school student to being an angry and confused teen, the tears overcame him and again I suggested we stop the interview and reschedule for another day. Again, David refused and continued to talk about how the years of turmoil after his father's injury led him to isolating himself and overdosing on "Xanax" a prescription depression medicine taken by his mother.

According to David, "at that time I really realized I had to be on my own and I had to be me and I just had to grow up fast." Once his dad finally returned home after a year of hospitalization, David thought things would get back to normal, unfortunately his father continued to frequent the hospital for minor setbacks for an additional six months. When he was home David realized he was no longer the man he idolized, he had become impatient, insensitive, angry and very argumentative.

David continued to spiral out of control at home and at school. The school agreed to allow him to stay if he met with the school counselor daily and went to a professional counselor outside of school. The school counselor provided David's mother with updates about their sessions, which enraged David. "What about the vow of confidentiality, she would tell my mom about our meetings and my mom would come home and ask me about what I had discussed." In addition to feeling betrayed by the school counselor,

David found several books that increased his disdain for his mother. “I found books that she bought with titles like “*How to Deal with Your Adopted Son*” and “*How to Deal with Your Son or Daughter Through a Divorce.*” Growing increasingly enraged and alone, David contemplated and attempted suicide.

I actually attempted suicide, I took Xanax that my dad was prescribed. I took like 5 cause I didn't know how many to take and he had 5 left in the bottle and I took them. It was a Friday night and I slept until Monday. I woke up and I was so upset that I woke up. My parents they didn't know what had happened they didn't know that I had od'd on anything with everything else that was going on.

Education

David's education had been compromised during his intermediate years; however, he had done well enough to be promoted to high school where he believed he regained control. David reflected on what the consequences would be if he continued on the path that he had for the past three years.

I realized that I didn't want to be 23 in 9th grade and I wanted to graduate with people I know and go to college. My grandpa French had just died but before he died he just started opening up and said if you don't get a high school diploma you are going to be like me. You're going to not have a high school degree, not have a college degree, you're going to go to the military get out of that and can't get a job and be stuck doing the job that they say you're going to have to do.

Although David had squandered his middle grades education, he made significant changes in high school. He turned in homework, behaved in class, and respected his teachers and peers. His teachers began to notice his potential, and encouraged him to do more by nurturing areas where he showed great interest. His freshmen seminar teacher noticed his artistic ability and his high aptitude for science and mathematics and

advocated for him to be transferred from the lower level classes that he was placed into because of his middle grades academic record and enrolled in more challenging courses including art.

In addition to his academic success, David joined the swimming team, soccer team and the band. He was determined to take charge of his life “I realized that there was a whole lot more to life than just sitting around feeling sorry for myself.” Additionally, he aligned himself with other students who were excelling. “I got my first car and that opened up everything and now I could do stuff and I met friends in band, swimming and in soccer that are still my friends and I put myself in a new category in school.” The observations, exposure, and patience of his high school teachers proved to be very positive for David. David’s parents also provided positive reinforcement by linking his ability to use the car with his academic achievement.

They told me that education may be just a piece of paper but it is important. So they just let me know and didn’t make a big deal out of it, they just let me make my own decision. But in high school in order to keep my car I had to make A’s and B’s. If I got a C, I would lose the car for a week, a D a month, and if I got an F it was gone. That was important to me so I was not going to lose it.

The health of David’s father continued to improve, which made home palpable and having a car allowed him to escape when it became too stressful.

Realizing that high school was nearing an end David began focusing on post high school plans. During a college information session held in his junior year, David decided that college could provide the out that he longed for and be prepared to make college a viable option.

When my advisor in my junior year came to talk about college life including drinking and parties she made me want to go. So I worked to get there because it sounded like I could find people who could talk about the things that were of interest to me.

David successfully completed high school and enrolled into Wichita State University. David believed his girlfriend was responsible for helping him successfully complete high school. David and his girlfriend began classes at Wichita State in the fall after graduating from high school. "I had a girlfriend who I had been with for three years, and when we got to college she took the same classes I took, and that is what kept me in school." He was very excited and believed he could start over in a new place. Wichita State University was approximately 100 miles from Fauxton, which provided David freedom and was not too far from home. David and his girlfriend completed their first year of school with very little flare. However, the relationship had begun to turn sour. Once her father died and she relocated to New York with her family, she began claiming that she was pregnant and asking David to move to New York with her. His refusal caused her to threaten that he would not be allowed to see the child if he did not join her.

She called many times each day and would threaten me and would say mean things about the baby. We had a rough relationship before that, like I didn't know a man could be in an abusive relationship but I was and she was so domineering. She would send pictures of a baby that wasn't hers or mine because I found out later that she was never pregnant. That was such a stressful time that I just began to do so poorly in my second year that I just stopped going.

Thomas's Story

I arrived at Thomas's home around 9:30 a.m. on a warm summer morning and as I knocked, I peered through the screened door and observed him and two small children watching television and eating grapes. Thomas opened the door, briefly introduced me to the children, and sent them into an adjacent room where he turned the television on for them. Thomas is an African American male, who wore a white oversized tee shirt, jeans, and a pair of Timberland boots. He has long curly hair and stands approximately 5'7". Thomas responded to the requests for participants after his girlfriend heard about the interviews from a friend. He arranged a space for us to meet and the interview began at 9:45 a.m. Time is a very significant detail in this interview because Thomas is not a talkative young man. He answers questions very briefly, and the follow up questions did not lead compel him to elaborate, but to restated his previous response as if it had not been heard. I met with Thomas as I had the others on two different occasions, where each interview lasted approximately an hour. However, a one-hour interview with Thomas yielded more silence than information.

Community

Thomas was from Barberton a rural town located in central northern part of North Carolina. Barberton has a population of 2125 residents according to City-Data.com (2007). The small town has a median household annual income of approximately \$25,000.00, significantly lower than that of the state at \$45,000.00. Demographically the residents of the community were identified as 54% African American, ~44% Caucasian and ~ 2% of the population were other ethnic groups (Hispanic, bi-racial or Native

American) (U.S. Census, 2000). Additionally, U.S. census data (2000) recorded that 66.5% of the population over the age of 25 years had a high school diploma or equivalent and 6.1% had a bachelor's degree. Men in the community primarily worked in the construction industry while women most often worked in the textile factories. Both of Thomas's parents worked in the textile factories and supplemented their income by working on local farms and on their small family farm.

Family

Thomas's parents completed high school and encouraged their children to get a high school diploma.

My parents, they kept us going to school and stayed on us to make sure we finished school. They was like the best thing for you to do is go to college and get a better job but the most that they wanted us to do was to graduate at least graduate from high school.

Thomas's parents had been laid off from the factories each of them worked at for a few years and depended on the farming season and the money they earned from selling their produce to take care of their expenses. Thomas had three siblings and he was the youngest of the three his older sister and brother had graduated from high school, started college but eventually withdrew and returned home. Thomas believed his parents had instructed him and his siblings on how to live a quality life.

They didn't want us to have kids too early before we finished school and stuff like that. They said no drugs and alcohol, but they [the family] was still doing it, yeah that was deep in my family, I don't drink but they do, they tried to stop but they just got used to it.

Thomas recognized the fact that his parent's instructions were not in line with their actions and believed that he would be able to follow just the instructions. However, Thomas did consume beer and smoked marijuana regularly, but believed that he did not need them and just did it when he was with his friends "I only drink beer and sometimes smoke weed, but it's not as bad as what some other people I know do."

Thomas attended Barberton High School, the only high school in the county, with a total student body of approximately 1000 students in grades 9 – 12. Thomas did not want to remain in Barberton and planned to move immediately after graduating from high school. Initially, he planned to enter the military, however after being diagnosed with an underactive thyroid he enrolled in college. "I went to military training after I graduated, but they didn't accept me because of my thyroid, so after that I went to the community college." He did not want to work on a farm but believed most people had to because many of the factory jobs had left the area; "most of the people do crops and stuff like that, there ain't too much left to do if you stay here." Growing up in Barberton, Thomas did work on his family's farm as a way to earn money "I helped my mama and them do gardening and stuff like that; they grew their own crops and stuff, it was my grandparents garden." In addition to assisting with the family farm, Thomas enjoyed unorganized activities with his siblings and peers "well mostly we played backyard football, basketball, rode four wheelers and dirt bikes and stuff like that and fishing, we didn't have no recreation centers that I know of."

A college education for Thomas seemed to serve a twofold purpose; it would get him out of Barberton and if he finished he would have better job prospects. The jobs that

were available to people with or without a college education were few in Barberton. However, Thomas did not want any of them “most of the time down there people worked in mills, and some worked in the schools like janitor jobs, and stuff like that to make enough to pay bills, but I don’t want that type of job.” Thomas had dreams of becoming a chef “once I started cooking more than I used to, I decided I was going to do the cooking thing.” After researching culinary arts programs in North Carolina, Thomas chose a community college program that was approximately 70 miles from his Barberton home.

Education

Academically, Thomas felt he had not been challenged in high school, “for me they wouldn’t give enough homework, but sense I was able to graduate, I know I was smart.” He earned average scores on most of his work, and when classes were more challenging, he believed the teachers were not providing adequate instruction and support.

Well some of the teachers... the way they acted, like you asked them to help, they get an attitude and try to get smart and when you try to be nice to them they got something to say to you to get you out and then they say, ‘that’s what we mean that students got attitudes.’ That is how they used to do.

Thomas graduated from high school on time and enrolled in the culinary arts program at the community college. Transportation was a problem early in the first semester, causing him to move closer to the college. Thomas had planned to use his college refund check to pay his living expenses while he attended classes, however he had not calculated the full-cost of attending a community college where housing was not

a part of the financial package. His plan worked through the first semester however, there was not enough money to pay expenses between semesters, and therefore, he found a part-time job. Thomas worked during the break, and continued to work when the semester began. After the first month of the second semester, Thomas dropped out of college. "I started working cause when I was working, my refund check wasn't enough to pay my bills so I just left school alone, but after I stopped school, I lost my job and apartment." He lost his job and apartment three weeks after dropping out of school and moved back to his parent's home in Barberton.

Thomas had not disappointed his parents; he graduated from high school. Once he successfully graduated from high school, his focus appeared to be getting away from his small town not continuing his education. Enlisting in the military was his initial plan; however, when that fell through enrolling in college provided him with an alternative plan. Choosing a college so far from home caused him to need reliable transportation or relocate closer to the campus. He chose to relocate, which meant getting responsibilities that would require resources, which would come from a job. All of which distracted him from focusing on succeeding in college. In addition to being distracted by his job Thomas also enjoyed celebrating with friends. He hosted parties and other extracurricular activities that diverted his attention from college.

I know people have to make it for themselves, some might party too much, but if you want it [college] you can stay. Because I was partying too much which also messed up my classes, cause sometimes I would be too tired to go and you can't miss but, I think three or four classes before they kick you out.

The inability to recognize the effect too much work, too much partying and too little studying had on his college career, showed a lack of responsibility and commitment to getting a college degree.

Jonathan's Story

Jonathan and I met on a warm August day at the Clayton library; he arrived in a pair of baggy jeans with a colorful FUBU (For Us By Us) label on the back pocket and along the leg. He also wore a tee shirt baring the same colorful logo a pair of brown Timberland boots and a diamond looking stud earring in his left ear. At a height of approximately 5 feet 6 inches tall and wearing heavy layered clothing in the middle of August in North Carolina, Jonathan embraced the dress code of his peer group. Jonathan was 22 years old and had been out of high school for 4 years, long enough to have graduated from college.

Community

Jonathan was from Cheney an urban town located in western North Carolina. Current population data records indicate that there are 215,348 people currently residing in Cheney (City-Data.com, 2007). The median household annual income for Cheney was approximately \$39,589.00, slightly lower than that of the state at ~\$45,000.00.

Demographically the community consisted of 37.1% African American, ~52.4% Caucasian and ~ 10.5% of the population are other ethnic minority groups (Hispanic, bi-racial or Native American or other races). According to U.S. Census data (2000), 80.2% of the population over the age of 25 years had a high school diploma or equivalent and 30.3% hold a bachelor's degree. For men the most common occupation in Cheney was

construction and for women health care jobs were the primary source of income.

Jonathan's father was a self-employed auto mechanic and his mother worked in a textile factory.

Family

Cheney is a southern town with a vibrant downtown, a large urban low-income population, and a rural farming population. Each area is distinctly marked by changes in architecture, industries, resources, housing, and schools. As a very young child, Jonathan lived in a very large public housing community in Cheney's urban district "I actually grew up until my first year of middle school, I grew up in the ghetto, I lived in the heart of everything, the drugs the prostitutes everything." Jonathan enjoyed that time in his life, he had an abundance of friends who he constantly played with, and the street scene was constantly full of life. "When I stayed in the city it was like my friends and people I knew. I could go outside and I would see most of them outside playing and we would go to the swimming pool and play." Jonathan attended head start and completed elementary school while living in the public housing community. The summer after he completed 5th grade his family moved to the rural farming part of Cheney, which Jonathan did not enjoy as much.

Jonathan moved to Lincoln Road on the North side of Cheney, when he entered the 6th grade. He described the area as "nice family kind of neighborhood, but not a lot to do," Jonathan's friends were 20 miles southeast of him and public transportation was not available in his new neighborhood.

I spent most of my time in the house. Pretty much because it really wasn't too many younger kids in my neighborhood. It was more stable families, wife husband no kids or older couples. It was really just me and my sister, so hey, we ride our bikes up and down the street as much as we could but it wasn't really any kids out there.

Coming from a very busy non-stop environment where friends lived next door, across the street and down the block, Jonathan's new home felt a lot like prison. In addition to being alone, there were no community centers, parks or recreational facilities close enough that he could connect with youth in his relocated area.

I wished they would have built a place close enough for the kids to go out and have fun or play basketball or just be with other young people so they won't go out and get in trouble." In middle school and high school, Jonathan spent his time watching television, riding bikes or just "hanging out.

Jonathan's parents believed in his academic ability and encouraged him to focus his attention on excelling academically. His mother, who was from Arkansas attended college briefly after graduating from high school. During her first year, she became pregnant and withdrew from college to care for her family. Jonathan believed his mother did not want him to end up like her with no college degree and working in a factory.

She went to Baylor, my mom she's from Arkansas so, no it was the University of Pine Bluff actually, yeah that's what it was. She went there for social working; she didn't really take that step because she had had me. She just really wanted me to I guess not make ... well she didn't really make any mistakes but she just wanted me to go further and do more and have more opportunities than what she had.

Jonathan believed that she fully believed and expected him to do well in school and graduate from college. His mother was very nurturing, protective, and intentional in her

approach to ensuring that he would not become entangled in negative behavior or associated with negative groups. In addition to the physical relocation, his parents enrolled him in afterschool activities, church activities, and summer programs to ensure his safety.

They would you know keep me away from a lot of the drugs and bad habits that were out there. They would make sure that I was in afterschool programs and put me in church events where I could, you know what I mean, try to further myself, or maybe to get scholarships on down the line for school and they just keep drilling in my head that school is the way to go.

In high school, Jonathan was considered a leader and was well respected by his parents, teachers, and community members who all let him know that he had a great future ahead of him if he remained focused.

Everybody used to tell me I was a leader, and I liked it because I stood out and they would tell me that you got the power to influence people. My parents really expected me to be successful, because I have always had a lot of book knowledge, like I always did good in high school I'll say.

Jonathan had been reared with Christian values in a family church where his family had been avid members since their relocation to North Carolina. He believed the strict and controlled nature of his church and family provided him with a positive sense of self and prevented him from getting involved in delinquent activities. However, Jonathan also believed his strict and controlled environment might have caused him to yearn for access to traditional teenage activities.

I was looking more forward to getting out of high school and having a little bit of fun you know because when I was in high school I was pushed real hard and I

didn't get to do too much. So, I wanted to get out because when it was little events or parties that were going on in school, I didn't really get to go to them. It was I would say religious beliefs, because my mom felt like if I got around the wrong crowd that I would fall in with them and that I wouldn't want to do what I was doing pretty much to be on the right path. Which wasn't the case because I could have had my little bit of fun and it probably would have helped me out in the long run because when I got on my own I wouldn't have been so ready and so eager to get away from what I was doing.

Education

While in high school, Jonathan was enrolled in honors classes where he performed well and received academic recognition from his administrators and his church members. He was constantly encouraged to excel, "if your teachers or principle thought you were really going in a positive direction and they really wanted to see you do well they would put you in better classes to help give you that extra stuff." Although Jonathan believed he was doing exceptionally well he was not enrolled in Advanced Placement classes or the International Baccalaureate classes that were available at his school, he was enrolled in Honors level classes, where he performed well.

With support from home, church, school, and community Jonathan received a four-year scholarship to one of the state universities for Industrial Engineering. Industrial engineering sounded interesting to Jonathan, his teachers and his parents were all excited about him becoming an engineer, although he did not know what industrial engineering was. Jonathan felt that he had no input into his future, he simply followed the plan that was provided him, as he had done all of his life; he was the "good son." As Jonathan's family, church family, and community family all celebrated the honor he felt

overwhelmed and unsure about his ability to succeed and the disappointment that failure would bring to all who had faith in him.

When I was in high school, I didn't necessarily know what I wanted to do, or what I really wanted to pursue as a career, or take up in college, or anything, so I kind of just went along with what everybody else told me I should take up; which was industrial engineering. That was what my major was when I was going to the university; I kind of just went with the flow instead of just really, doing my research and finding out what I would be interested in. All of the steps I should have really taken, I didn't really take; I just went ahead and took what they told me to take.

Unfortunately, Jonathan found college very difficult socially and academically. He had been protected, nurtured, and guided toward a future that promised high returns, yet he had difficulty adapting to his new environment and did not know where or how to find help. Jonathan realized very quickly that college was not high school and he could not simply smile, make friends, and pass his classes. The requirements for college were rigorous and required focus, time management skills, and direction; Jonathan seemed to lack all three of these skills.

The work was kind of overwhelming to me; I'm not going to lie. And on top of that, I wasn't really as focused as I could have been or trying as hard as I could have been so, you know, it just was all a big mess pretty much.

Jonathan seemed to believe that the protection that had prevented him from exploring the world around him as a teenager was the catalyst for his lack of success in college.

I'll say when I first got to the university my whole freshmen year to me was really more about just having fun more than trying to learn anything. I knew I had put myself in a position where I wasn't going to be able to pass or learn anything. Because I mean, I maybe... like, the first couple of weeks I went to class all the

time and tried to do my work and stuff like that, but I'll say after the first couple of weeks or a good month into the semester I pretty much gave up. There were things I would want to do that I guess weren't the right things and I just wanted to experience them: clubbing, drinking, drugs. I just wanted to get it out of my system and once I did, I set back and said I done had enough. I realized that what they (his parents and teachers) were telling me was the truth and it was what I needed to be sticking to.

Jonathan was able to attend the university for nearly two years because his scholarship paid for the first school year and he was eligible for federal aid the second year.

Unfortunately, Jonathan did not realize the opportunity before him and exhausted his financial resources.

Academically, Jonathan was unprepared for college, he had not been challenged in high school, and the subpar work that he was rewarded for left him less than competent in his college classrooms. Additionally, he struggled with utilizing the academic resources that were available on the campus including classmates, student support services, and his instructors.

I know I'm not in any way a dumb person or a challenge or anything. It was just some of that work and the notes that I would take in class would just not make sense to me. I would ask the teacher for help, and like at a four-year college they don't always have time to help you. You have to go and meet with a study group and stuff like that. And now I made it to maybe a couple of the study group sessions, I was just the type of person that, as far as being around people I didn't really know and talking to them and trying to get help from them and that wasn't really my thing. Like, I would rather go ask the teacher and have a conversation with them instead of like all students. I didn't try hard as I suppose to I guess for college you have to really put yourself out there. And I don't know if I can do that.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF THEMES

Analysis is the second part of Wolcott's (1994) transforming qualitative data structure. This chapter will focus on common themes that each of the participants discussed during the interviews. In addition, their thoughts and those of the researcher will be illuminated in the analysis chapter. The research questions used with participants in this study focused on determining how the lack of dominant cultural capital influenced six rural students' decisions to withdraw from college. Determining if there is a relationship between cultural capital and student success in college is critical to improving retention of first generation rural college students.

Participants' responses are located within the context of community, family, and education. The focal point of this research is on cultural capital with limited reference to other forms of capital including social and economic. Although the interview protocol addressed each of the contextual topics, participants' may not have mentioned some of the primary topics that were introduced in the literature. Their omissions included having personal book collections, exposure to cultural experiences such as plays, and traveling that was non-family related. Table 1 reflects all of the factors; embodied, objectified, and institutional that the participants' had in common. The factors are displayed across community, family, and education.

Table 1

Participant Cultural Capital Table

Cultural Capital	Community	Family	School
Embodied	Peer Group Pressure to have name brand clothing	Work ethic (parent’s believed work was important)	Benefits of being an athlete (academic and behavioral responsibilities are not imposed at the rate they are for non-athletes)
	Tattoos as a form of expression	Children should work after high school	Counseling focused on graduating students, not preparing them for college.
	Incarceration common and expected	College was good, but not essential	Students believe counselors are enrolling them in classes that will prepare them for college
	Gang membership creates family, security, and protection through crime	Impact of Poor Health on Education Choices	Parents and students believe school officials know what is best for the student
	Lack of examples of college graduates	Residing in limited resource communities where poverty and struggle are the norms	Reputation of the school, “this was the dumb school” students believe they had less support from officials than other schools in their area
	Lack of accessible and affordable academic and social programs	Drug and Alcohol Availability, Use, and Effect	
	Limited expectation from larger community (greatest graduate from high school, get a job)	Graduating from High School was Important	
		Language Use	
		Travel experiences related to family visits or sports not	

		sightseeing or touring	
		Independent early; employed, helping w/family expenses, &personal needs	
		Parents over indulged children, inability to problem solve	
Objectified	Community	Family	School
	Having a vehicle in rural areas are critical	Job is important	Limited homework
	Peer group in community identify individuality with tattoos	Vehicles are difficult to come by	Assignments that are not required for athletes
	Fitting into chosen social group is defined by attire (name brands, shoes, jewelry, etc.)	Clothes and shoes are name brand, expensive and necessary	Schedules that help them graduate only
	Manicures, pedicures, hairstyles are finishing touches to daily dress, not special occasions only	The more tattoos the better	Friends and associates
	Young parents, one or more children, no work	Being an athlete is the career of choice	Graduating from high school will secure future work opportunities
	Public financial assistance and housing and healthcare		
Institutionalized	Community	Family	School
	High school diploma	Some college	Dropout rate is high
	Limited number of people with college degree	High school diploma	Graduate with limited academic abilities
	Internet access not available in rural areas of communities	Incarceration common	Athletes do not follow same academic rules as other students

	Urban schools and minority populations are not treated as well as schools majority schools	No library cards or books	Students enrolled in college
	Public access to transportation not available	No one in family with college degree	Students withdrew from college before graduating
	Community college centrally located in county, difficult to access w/o personal vehicles	College is not necessary if you get a job and work hard	
		No student had a computer	

Each of the participants' shares a different story, from a different environment, and through very different lenses. However, many of the factors that influenced their decision to drop out of college stretched across their differences. In general participants' reported that a lack of college preparation, access to economic resources, and the impact of work as primary factors in their decision to drop out of college. However, none of the participants suggested that their childhood environment, schooling experiences, or their family experiences caused them to drop out of college, revealing an unawareness of the impact of embodied capital, or how the capital that is taken for granted as a way of life, has on their decisions.

Additionally, most of them believed they had been intellectually prepared in high school because of the scores they received on report cards. Although, they had not taken advanced placement classes or focused on their academic studies throughout high school, none of the participants' believed their lack of high school preparation and rigor had an

impact on their decision to continue college. The next section will collectively investigate more deeply the embodied, objectified, and institutionalized factors that influenced these participants' decisions to drop out of college.

Influential Themes

As each of the participants' shared their experiences they revealed long held values and beliefs, as their stories unfolded their embodied capital provided insight, direction, and expectation into their thought processes and the actions they are likely to take. In this section, each participant's story is written to reveal a struggle that influenced each participant. The participants' representing the struggle was chosen because their experience may have allowed for a deeper interpretation of the influence and its impact on their decision to drop out. Choosing to interpret the obstacles in this manner did not mean that only the participant discussed faced that challenge or that other challenges were not revealed that resulted from the obstacle.

The Influence of Work

Kim spoke passionately about the importance of getting her education because she now has a daughter for whom she wants to set a good example.

I got a child and she means everything to me now and it is not about me anymore it's about how I'm going to set examples for her. Cause if she sees me going to college, if she knows that I went to college and didn't just stop at college and say hey what the heck then she will probably have higher standards.

However, as she spoke of returning to college she also focused on working, "I am the kind of person who feels like I am not accomplishing anything if I am not going to

work.” One could speculate that Kim values work and although school is of interest to her and her daughter will make going “200,000 times better” school may remain secondary to work.

“I always kept a job, I don’t want to say I’m spoiled, but my mom spoiled the heck out of me and my brother I mean I always liked to have money.” Kim was “spoiled” in the sense that she was rarely denied the latest styles or newest gadgets; her mother worked a job that allowed her to shower her children with the objectified capital that was the envy of her peer group “I was popular and had the all the styles.” Kim reveled in the fact that she always wore the latest fashions, went to the salon two times each month, and enjoyed regular pampering including manicures and pedicures.

Kim embodied the experiences of her youth and one could say that although she enrolled in college, her embodied work ethic coincided with her love of objectified capital, and college did not fit into that plan. It is reasonable to assume that the objectified capital that Kim believed she needed was necessary among her peer groups and because of her position as the dance team captain; she had an image to maintain. She understood that she had to work to have the things she desired therefore work was her priority. She fully embodied her mothers’ work ethic; she worked multiple jobs throughout high school while developing dance routines for her dance group, but leaving academics untouched. “I would stay an hour after school and teach the routine, and then go to work and 4 days out of the week I would work one job and the other 3 days I would work another job.” With multiple jobs and minimal free time, it is likely that Kim’s investment into her academics was minimal.

Work was strongly encouraged by Kim's mother, and the respect she was able to garner for her efforts may have yielded greater objectified returns in the form of clothing, jewelry, and pampering "I was popular and had the all the styles." Kim was not worried about the academic toll on her grades because she benefitted from being an athlete. As an athlete, she understood that teachers provided "free passes" to student athletes, which ensured her grades were typically a "C" or better to ensure her athletic eligibility.

I was an A, B, C student except in math which was my hardest class and I was a D student in math. Most of the time I would do homework right before class would start, but like when you in sports teachers are easier on you. They don't like expect you to do the work. Sometimes my teacher would go over the work and although she knew I didn't do it she would let me slide.

One could speculate that because Kim was able to slide through high school she expected college to be the same, when it was not she did not have the embodied capital to resign herself to actually doing the work. The lack of expectation from her teachers helped fuel Kim's lack of interest by causing her to believe she was entitled to receive grades that had not been earned.

The result of popularity garnered because she was the dance team captain, having material items from being spoiled by her mother and receiving average scores because of the low academic expectations of her teachers, programmed Kim to believe that she had been successful in high school. She was able to work multiple jobs, to feel her appetite for money remain a leader and academically succeed. When she entered college Kim was unprepared for the shock that came when teachers expected her to complete her work just as all other students were expected to do. One could reasonably speculate that rather

than choosing to focus her attention on succeeding in college Kim consciously chose to keep her jobs because they continued to provide her with the objects of her desire and she knew how to succeed at work.

I always kept a job, I don't want to say I'm spoiled, but my mom spoiled the heck out of me and my brother I mean I always liked to have money. Basically my whole time in high school I kept two jobs, and when I got to college I took up 16 credits and still tried to maintain those two jobs, and it didn't work out too well, I mean I stayed with it for a while but I ended up quitting college and kept my two jobs.

Choosing to leave college coincided with the values that Kim has embodied one of which includes "hard work" that leads to "material wealth," it is not difficult to understand why she would choose to quit college. Kim was familiar with instant gratification and fame, college yielded intrinsic gratification, but the outward rewards may not be revealed for years to come. Additionally, college had not been discussed in Kim's home and was not embraced by her mother; the economic benefits were futuristic and unrealistic, and the effort was more than Kim was familiar with doing. Although Kim said she should have remained in college "I should have let one of the jobs go", she explains why she did not "but me, I like nice things and I like money and you gotta work for it."

The low teacher expectations had been lost on Kim, who believed she was prepared for college. She did not see a connection with her teachers letting her "slide" and her inability to do her college work. Kim believed her high school counselors were responsible for not enrolling her in appropriate classes during high school and because she believed she was not informed about the process.

The counselors could have put me where I needed to be, they could have explained it better because half the stuff I took up I was just there because I didn't know what I was doing and they could have better explained it to me.

Kim felt that her school was not forthcoming with college preparatory information; she felt that she was placed in classes arbitrarily without understanding that she was on a “pathway.”

In our school you got pathways, like students who wanted to be nurses, you got a whole pathway on CNA or something like that and I took all the classes to basically do culinary arts I mean they just put me in culinary arts. I liked it and it was a fun class but after I graduated and came to college they asked what my pathway was and I was like nutrition and they said oh you want to do culinary arts and I was like no, I didn't want to do anything with food.

Although Kim felt, she was not well informed about the college process, one could presume that because she had been “spoiled” and “popular” that she did not pay attention to the information that was disseminated by the school and college had not been a consideration until the reality that high school was ending.

Dropping out of school did not seem to be a problem for Kim, who chose work over studying, nor her mother. “When I quit, my mom didn't really say like why you quit, she was like are you going to get a job now?” Although she was working two jobs at the time, her mother wanted her to “stop messing around” and get a full-time job somewhere. Kim floundered for a while and before long was pregnant. She chose not to work during the pregnancy and after the birth of her baby she and her boyfriend moved into a public housing community in a city near Clayton. Kim believes that because she

has a daughter, college is more important than ever before, however, her embodied objectified capital causes her to focus on ensuring that her daughter has the best she can afford, just as her mother had done for her. “See now I have a daughter and I want her to have nice things like OshKosh and Carters baby clothes, my mom will help with these until I can get on my feet.” Kim is unaware that she has embodied capital that focuses on work, for the objectified capital that does not require a college degree to obtain. She did not say she would make sure her daughter valued knowledge, but that she had stylish clothing.

As the interview progressed, Kim stated that if her daughter were to go to college she would have to show her the way.

I got a child and she means everything to me now and it is not about me anymore it is about how I’m going to set examples for her. Because if she sees me going to college, if she knows that I went to college and didn’t just stop at college and say hey what the heck then she will probably have higher standards.

The struggle between the objectified capital that she valued and the institutional capital that she claimed was important; seems to be a battle that time will resolve.

For Kim getting on her feet seemed to mean acquiring valued objects that only requires economic capital to obtain. One could speculate that if the job comes first, education will once again be placed on hold.

If I got a \$150,000.00 house and the bills were paid and the mortgage was paid and I got money left over to fulfill my needs and some of my wants, I feel like that’s a nice lifestyle right there, so I’m not like how am I going to pay my bills.

Kim did not say that a college degree was necessary to reach her goal; she focused on having enough money to cover her, needs, and wants. One could speculate that economic capital is her first priority, and if obtaining institutional capital can facilitate her acquisition of economic capital then it will become valuable to her. Although she chose work over college, she is convinced that she will return as an example for her daughter. “I just feel like your parents are everything, you are them basically, they are you, kids are a blank slate, we imprint life right onto them.” The cultural capital that Kim received was valuable and provided her with values and morals that will continue to guide her future decisions and the ones she transfers to her daughter.

The Influence of Environment

Jonathan wanted to escape the oppressive experience of being held to a no frills life that centered on church. Throughout the interview, he spoke of the experiences he was privy to as a young child while living in his urban neighborhood. The longing that he had to enjoy some of those experiences seem to have consumed his thoughts until he had the opportunity to live them for himself. Jonathan was unaware that he had embodied those experiences and the impact they had on his college decisions. “I’ll say when I first got to A&T my whole freshmen year to me was really more about just having fun.” Contrasting the actions of this statement with his description of his former community, one could speculate that although it was drugs and prostitutes, he recalled the fun that he experienced with friends and longed for as an adult.

When I stayed in the city it was like my friends and people I knew I could go outside and I would see most of them outside playing and we would go to the

swimming pool and play when I was in the city. When I moved to the rural place that I was at the latter part of my years I spent most of my time in the house.

Although Jonathan's family was an intact, two parent working household; the early exposure to a life that appeared to be fun and without worry might have left a strong impression on his life, one that would not dissipate with time. Bourdieu (1973) believed that academic stratification among students partially resulted from differences related to the amount of "high cultural" exposure that students were privy to in early childhood. It can be thought that if children are exposed to "low cultural" experiences or those that are less favorable; hence, drugs, violence, and other deviant behaviors, then their academic abilities may also be hampered, resulting in lowered interest and success in the school environment. Scholars (Lambert, 2007; Valentine, N., Kahler, J. & Cippoletti, S., 2005; Caldarella, Loosli, Merrell, & Sharpneck, 1996) have found a strong link between the environments children grow up in and their educational aspirations', suggesting that early exposure has a greater impact on future academic goals than later influences.

According to his family, church, school and community, Jonathan was "most likely to succeed" among his peers. He was expected to attend the state university that he wanted to attend, graduate with an engineering degree, get a great job offer, and begin his family. Jonathan was the "one" in his family that would set the path for his younger siblings. He had the embodied cultural capital of nurturing, love, value, and praise. He was placed in after school and summer youth programs that would help develop his interest in institutional capital so that he would grow up embodying its value. Jonathan also had two lovingly protective parents, an extended church family that he had known

since birth and he attended a high school that rewarded his efforts by ensuring that he had applied for college. On the surface, Jonathan had embodied all of the cultural capital that was necessary to succeed, however the early years of his life had captivated him. It is possible that he had made mental notes of the things he saw but could not utter and pondered them until he was old enough to experience them.

“I grew up in the ghetto, I lived in the heart of everything, the drugs the prostitutes everything,” until middle school. Although he described the community as a “ghetto” where everything happened, Jonathan also noted that while he lived in the community “I could go outside, and I would see most of my friends and people I knew, outside playing and we would go to the swimming pool and play.” Jonathan’s move in middle school isolated him from the community and friends that he had grown up with for most of his childhood. His parent’s protective measures were justified in a neighborhood where so many social ills were prevalent; however, afterschool programs and church activities did not prevent Jonathan from observing the negative lifestyles that were common in his community. One could reason that the early exposure that Jonathan had to those who led what appeared to be a carefree and fun lifestyles influenced him so strongly that when he was not under the strict supervision of his parents and church he sought that carefree and fun lifestyle.

But me coming from the inner city as a kid there were things I would want to do that I guess weren’t the right things and I just wanted to experience them; clubbing, drinking, drugs, I just wanted to get it out of my system.

Embodied cultural capital is developed during early childhood when children are most impressionable, because it is embodied (a part of the whole; i.e. natural) the interest or drive to act is strong and impulsive. Jonathan lived in the self-described “ghetto” from birth until he was eleven or twelve years of age; he observed drug transactions, prostitution, and violence and although he was well guarded by his parents and grounded with their values and those of the church, he embodied his environmental experiences. Environmental influences have a strong affect on the psyche and although words and practices may oppose the construct of the environment, the psyche takes notice of the environmental cues it receives. In Jonathan’s case, these cues may have become so embodied that after years of being removed from the environment he continued to be drawn by its perceived glory.

Jonathan’s family attended church religiously; he participated in many of the youth activities, and attended most of the church functions. He was involved at a level that made his family feel secure that he would not be swayed by deviance, however; they were unaware of the unexpected influence and resentment that attending church while not being allowed to attend school events would have on Jonathan’s future. It appears that he resented the fact that he could only be with friends who went to his church, or that he could not attend school athletic events, which conflicted with church activities, and that because his family were pillars in the church he was expected to live a “perfect life.”

The people I lived around were very religious people and the majority of them were black people so I mean they real religious people. It helped a whole lot because a lot of the things people were out here doing and trying like robbing, and trying certain drugs, and stuff, coming up in the church I was really taught that

there is a higher person and a higher being. And you don't really need all of this, just pray and you know that everything is going to be alright. A lot of church kids would go off to school and I believe myself that it was more because when you don't get to go out and experience some of the things that a lot of other kids get to do it leaves that thought in your mind like hey what am I missing, why is everybody else doing it. And sometimes I just wanted to skip church and go be with the other kids, but when your family is the main family besides the preacher's family, you can't miss anything.

Struggling with the dual messages, Jonathan chose a university that was an hours' drive from his home where he could "experience some things." It is reasonable to surmise that rebelling against the family, school and church by engaging in actions that had been preached against throughout Jonathan's life gave him a sense of control over his life. He had become empowered, and for the first time he could make decisions about his future without interference or guilt. Because he had been rendered voiceless for so long, Jonathan reveled in the freedom he experienced in college. He had not wanted to attend college immediately after graduating from high school but believed he was expected to be an example for his younger sister, church youth, and his school. A college degree was something his parents' wanted for him, not something he wanted for himself. "They put the pressure on me really, and it was pressure that I wasn't exactly ready for, I wasn't ready to go straight to college." The pressure had become too much and it appeared that the people he had seen enjoying the carefree lives when he was a child were living the life he wanted. Although going to college had not been his priority, he seemed to have used it as an outlet to get away from his family and church. When he arrived on his campus, he was not seeking an education, but he had found solace in escaping the gaze of

his parents and his church and finally experiencing the life, he believed all young people experienced.

In addition to his environmental influences, Jonathan was also strongly intimidated by the demands of college and the responsibility students have for their success. It seems that Jonathan had been guided gingerly through the maze of life without having to face too many roadblocks. Unfortunately, having been so protected and guided he did not have the problem solving skills or the life-skills that he needed to guide him when his parents were not available. Often Jonathan described his childhood experiences as planned to help him avoid trouble.

They would you know keep me away from a lot of the drugs and bad habits that were out there. My church made sure you got your beliefs right and that you were right with god and everything not out getting in trouble. I was in church activities so that I wouldn't get in like a lot of trouble in the streets; I never really got to party.

Throughout his life, Jonathan's parents helped him to avoid being drawn in by the trouble that claims many youth, particularly male youth, however, too much protection may prevent the child from learning to resolve problems effectively. Allowing Jonathan to enjoy some of the school events or teen parties may have satisfied the yearnings he had as a high school student that cost him his college career. "I wanted to just experience some things I guess have a party life I never really got to party hard and go out and have fun like everybody else and I guess it was my way of just letting it all loose then." It is also reasonable to suggest that Jonathan may have embodied other interest but the feeling

of missing out on his teen life were so overwhelming that other more positive values were not realized until he dropped out of college.

Although Jonathan made choices that seemed to be destructive if he had learned to ask for help on the campus, or felt free to contact his parents' during this time in his life he may have had a better outcome. He could have sought out help from tutors in the office of student support services when he began to have difficulty in his calculus class, or meet with the counseling center when partying consumed him. However, he would have had to recognize that a problem existed and realized there was help available. Problem-solving skills may have provided Jonathan with the tools he needed to assess his situation, seek out help, and develop an action plan to get back on track. To embody these skills he would have had to observe his parents approach to resolving issues, possibly develop, and enhance his skills as an adolescent, resolving personal problem with parental support and guidance.

Embodied cultural capital is obtained through observation and practice. Jonathan was so protected from problems that when his arose he did not have the experience to seek help. For example, Jonathan knew his father had a mechanic shop and his mother worked in a factory, but until he dropped out of school, he believed they were financially wealthy.

I figured even if I don't get none of this (education) I could go work for my dad and make money. At the same time my dad and them have their own business and they been working doing this for I say 30 or 40 years. They have clientele that things may not even be wrong with their car they just bring it to them to help them out. Those are things I didn't really understand back then. Then it was more like he was just working and making a whole lot of money or making

money at certain points but sometimes it was just hard. Actually now that I am older and he really explained things to me I realized it was just really hard the majority of the time.

One could speculate that if Jonathan understood his family's struggles it may have helped him appreciate the opportunity he had been given, and college may have become more important to him.

Jonathan had also been made to believe that he was academically gifted and that because of his success in high school he would be successful in college. However, Jonathan's level of academic preparation was less than gifted, but with commitment, focus, and honest effort it is reasonable to believe that he would have succeeded.

In school English was probably like an A, and math more like a C. I can even remember a couple of times I made a D cause I really wasn't that good in math. Math is not my strong point at all, but I mean when I did make D's and stuff I did do them over and try to bring them up and stuff like that.

Jonathan's highest math was Algebra 2, which he struggled to maintain a C, one could conjecture that industrial engineering was not the appropriate choice of majors for someone mathematically challenged. Had his parents experienced college, or had his counselor explored his interest with him, or if he understood the academic skills needed to succeed in engineering, Jonathan may have signed up for a major that better suited his academic abilities and interest or if he was unsure, he could have enrolled as an undecided student. Although it is not a guarantee that he would have fared better, majoring in a math-based field was not the appropriate choice for a student who struggled with math unless he was able to improve his foundational knowledge in the area.

One of my counselors in high school said it was a good field and there was a lot of space out there. She said the people that go through it and graduate are automatically guaranteed a good job. I guess it kind of made my eyes big for a minute so I was like okay.

For five of the participants in this study a “good job” was in part their motivation for pursuing a college degree. The potential earnings “made their eyes big” and they ignored the work that would be required to succeed in college.

When Jonathan attended classes, he immediately faced academic challenges that caused him to believe he had been patronized in high school and that he was not as “smart” as he had been led to believe. “They (family) always would let me know that I was a really smart person by the things that I knew. They knew just by me talking.” However, after he began having difficulty in his classes, he lost his confidence. “I know I’m not in any way a dumb person or a challenge or anything and like it was just some of that work would not make sense.” It did not take long for Jonathan to lose give up.

The first couple of weeks I went to class all the time and tried to do my work and stuff like that. I’ll say after the first couple of weeks or a good month into the semester I pretty much gave up, I just couldn’t do it.

Many students get involved with campus recreation activities, partying, and other social events and ignore or neglect their academic responsibilities; however, students who embody social and practical skills may be more capable of getting back on track. Unlike the other participants in this study, Jonathan’s parents embodied him with appropriate nurturing, exposure, and support, they also had basic objectified capital in the form of

reasonable necessary objects, and although they did not have a college degree, they encouraged and promoted institutional capital. Unfortunately, Jonathan's parents neglected to embody him with the ability to make wise choices, his life had been fully planned without his input, or his interest considered.

The Influence of Family

David decided in the latter part of his high school career to consider college. The decision to consider college arose from a college information session.

My advisor in my junior year came to talk about college life including drinking, parties, etc she made me want to go and so I worked to get there because it sounded like I could find people who could talk about the things that were of interest to me.

During his junior year he began preparing for college by taking the necessary standardized tests, courses, and completing the application process, however his interests was not institutional capital, but escape. Throughout our interview, David never suggested a major or alluded to a career, yet college was his ticket out of Fauxton. He also never said college was important because it could open up opportunities or provide him with a brighter future, only that he could find people and a social life. One could speculate that for David, college was not about obtaining a degree, or pursuing a career of interest, but that it provided an opportunity to leave a home that was not nurturing for an environment where "people could talk about things that were of interest to him."

The struggle David faced was two-fold; he longed for companionship and he sought freedom from his oppressive home environment. David had experienced family

issues very early that left him longing to be the center of his parents' eyes, as an adopted child he believed his mother did not want him, and that his beloved father was his only advocate. Because of the multitude of challenges that David's family faced throughout his childhood, including his health issues, his mother's breast cancer, which he barely mentioned, and his father's injury, which consumed his life, for him college may have become a new start. However, unable to close the door to his past completely he attended college with his high school girlfriend; who ultimately brought more challenges than relief. The need for affection had been denied David for much of his life; his parents' were consumed with their problems, leaving him to make adult choices without guidance at a very young age.

I really realized I had to be on my own and I had to be me and I just had to grow up fast. I would come home my mom was at work, so I had to cook if I wanted to eat after school, if I was going to do my homework I just had to do it.

David believed his mother did not want him and it is reasonable to believe that his lack of conversation surrounding his mother's breast cancer revealed a lack of affection towards her. Although it caused the family to move to Colorado for a year of treatment, he mentioned it only in passing, yet his father's accident, which also took a year for recovery, overwhelmed him. One could speculate that he resented growing up fast, but that he embodied the experience and emulated it by choosing a girlfriend that he felt was abusive.

We had a rough relationship, like I didn't know a man could be in an abusive relationship, but I was and she was so domineering, that was such a stressful time that I just began to do so poorly in my second year, that I just stopped going.

Having embodied the concept of struggle, drama, and confusion, David appeared to thrive on challenges that were not relevant to his ability to succeed in college.

Academically, David was capable of succeeding, socially, he lacked confidence and feared isolation, both causing him to struggle when problems arose. Just as he had taken the Xanax as a youth in an attempt to relieve the pain of his family struggles, he also maintained an abusive relationship in an attempt to relieve his fear of isolation and loneliness.

David's objectified capital was relationships; unfortunately, he would often choose negative relationships. Seeking meaningful and fulfilling relationships may be a challenge for David because he did not know what a healthy relationship involved. He did however remember the bonds established by the gangs in his community. "I didn't want to go home so I moved in with this African American lady in the projects and met this gang who treated me like family and I started working for them." David did not just become a member of the gang; he supported their mission by delivering drugs across the country.

They gave me the most amazing car with the condition that I work for them and pay it off. I knew what the work was and because I didn't have a job and no money I accepted the offer. They made sure I was well compensated and all I had to do was work until the car was paid; which was about two years. I drove drugs all over the country; because I was a plain looking white guy nobody ever asked no questions.

As a young child, David had been exposed to the drug culture, his community was dominated by gangs, and the violence associated with them. Although David stayed out of significant trouble as a youth, the exposure and the family bond that was forged by gang members enticed him after he left college. It is reasonable to suggest that for David the money was a nice by product, but the family bond bared far more weight.

Not unlike David, Maria, Melissa, and Thomas all lived in environments where drugs were pervasive if not embraced as a viable way of life. Maria and Melissa's experiences were fully embodied as they chose paths very similar if not identical to those of their community or family.

The Influence of Money

Maria's parents did not obtain the institutional capital of a high school diploma, which from Maria's perspective, caused much of their struggle. Maria's mother believed the struggles her family faced were a result of not obtaining the first level of institutional capital; a high school diploma, therefore she insisted that her children graduate from high school. "My mom always pushed us to finish high school and go to college, and she has always talked about it." For Maria, her parents' life experiences were enough to encourage her to graduate from high school, "both of my parents they didn't finish high school my mama quit like in the 10th my dad in like the 8th or 9th, so they had a rough life, my dad was on the streets, and we didn't want that."

Embodying the struggles of her parents' and trying to avoid their outcomes may have been the incentive she needed to complete high school. "I don't know, my mom

was always pushing us to do our homework, she didn't care about our grades, and we didn't get in trouble for bad or celebrate for good grades." With little or no emphasis on academic achievement associated with education, Maria only embodied the need to graduate. Although obtaining the institutional capital associated with a high school diploma is noteworthy, without embodying the impact that the institutional capital has on future endeavors the diploma is merely an object without recognized significance. Capital can be bartered to provide access, however for Maria was not prepared to capitalize on the access it provided, thus making the diploma a mere certificate of completion, not a ticket to higher education. Thus, one could surmise that because academic success was not a goal throughout Maria's schooling, succeeding in college would be difficult because she would not have embodied the cultural capital associated with academic success.

Additionally, the basic skills of studying, taking rigorous courses, independent learning, and time management would have been unfamiliar to Maria, thus making success in college difficult. "I just couldn't do it; I was taking night classes, like basics like reading, and writing, so I just quit until later." It is rational to suggest that Maria's difficulties at the community college were due to the lack of emphasis placed on academic achievement throughout her years in school. Students' who pass high school may not be well prepared to succeed in college, including in remedial courses, that are in place to fill in gaps in core courses. Maria's struggles in her basic courses revealed a lack of preparation in high school. It is likely that while in high school Maria maintained adequate academic standing that allowed her to graduate, but not enroll and succeed in

college. She was on a college technical preparatory pathway that had limited requirements and limited rigor. “I didn’t take any of those AP classes, because my grade point average was low, like math was not my subject, yeah, I was college tech prep.”

According to Bourdieu (1984), embodied cultural capital is learned through experience, exposure, and observation; Maria’s experiences included observing her fathers’ drug involvement and the impact it had on the family. Her father was incarcerated for drug trafficking when she was in elementary school leaving the family in hardship. “My dad went to jail for drug trafficking, not to justify drugs but it did a lot for our family, especially how we were living, but when my dad went to jail my mom was struggling.” After her father was released from jail, her parents opened a stonemason company in her mother’s name only. One could assume that Maria’s parents created their stonemason company to legitimize their resources to prevent her father from returning to prison. Maria noted that although her father has not been incarcerated again he continues to sell and traffic drugs, particularly when the family is desirous of objectified capital. According to Maria the company is in her mothers’, name only; however, her father runs the company, which one could speculate is a front for a drug operation.

My parents have a stonemason company, they like put stones on buildings. It’s my mom’s company and my dad runs it, my mom does all of the paperwork and my dad is the boss it’s a good company and I don’t know how long they have had it but it’s been awhile I was in like the 5th or 7th grade.

Although academic achievement was not embodied, Maria did embody skills that would significantly influence her life choices. Additionally, she observed her mother's approach to dealing with the problems. Although she continues to express an interest in college, Maria focuses heavily on economics. Maria's mother appears to maintain a very low profile that is squeaky clean. She attends church religiously, teaches Sunday school, and only handles the paperwork in the business; although the business is in her name. Legally the authorities would have little reason to believe Maria's mother would be involved in drug trafficking. However, according to Maria her family has been able to build a new home and fully furnish it with the help of the drug trade. "To make the extra money he (Maria's father) would [sell drugs], and even now to get in the house we got now my dad had to sell. Until "he was getting desperate and he realized he couldn't do it no other way so the furniture we have it was because he had to do a hustle and sell drugs for it. I don't think he does it anymore because we are struggling."

Maria has witnessed her parents approach to achieving the American dream of a home, small business and a respectable image, and although she is aware of how they obtained their status, it does not seem to be a problem. Maria has embodied the deceptive, illegal, ways of her parents and has made choices for her own life that mirror those she observed as a child. "My mom's like a very Christian person" and "my dad went to jail for drug trafficking", these two descriptions established the foundation that Maria's cultural capital was built upon. By any means necessary seems to apply with Marias' parents. Using bifocal lenses, she grew up embodying her parents' polar beliefs.

As a child, Maria was aware that her family suffered when her father was incarcerated, it would not be farfetched that this experience caused her to justify drugs as a means of survival. Unbeknownst to Maria was the fact that she had embodied drug selling as an acceptable way to acquire objectified capital “not to justify drugs but it did a lot for our family especially how we were living.” The statement does justify drugs because she justified her fathers’ decision to sell drugs as a way of acquiescing material wants (furniture, new home, vehicles, etc.), not as a solution to economic struggles, surrounding needs (food, clothing, basic shelter). The objects she pursues are those that were made to have value within her family; a home, fine furnishings, and other material items reflected in television shows like MTV’s CRIBS.

Maria suggested that money was the barrier that impeded her ability to continue her college education. Maria arrived for the interview in a new Chrysler 300, yet complained that she could not afford the gas to attend classes. Maria attended Reading Community College for a single semester and cited several reasons for choosing to withdraw.

I was at RCC, it was only for a semester, and I just didn’t enroll again. The next year I went to Brookstone and both of them, (RCC and Brookstone) were too far from home. I quit Brookstone because I was just getting a certificate and I did not think it was worth it and with gas, it was just too much.

After hearing several reasons for withdrawing from school, I asked Maria again why she withdrew from the community college. “That was because of gas and money, I didn’t have gas, and I was working full time as a dispatcher but I just couldn’t do it, I was

taking night classes, like basics like reading, and writing and it was just too much.”

Maria purports to have withdrawn from the community college because she did not have gas, yet she was working full-time. During the time Maria was enrolled in the community college she was living at home with her parents’, she was not married and had no children, therefore, it is questionable when she was working full-time to say that money was the problem. Although she said money was the barrier, she also said, “It was just too much.” Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that she was not equipped with the embodied capital needed to pursue and complete a higher education degree.

Maria’s marriage to a drug dealer and abuser supports her statement regarding the benefit drugs bought to her family “not to justify drugs but it did a lot for our family.” Her husband was an independent painter who worked odd jobs on construction sites and worked with Maria’s father between paint jobs.

He’s a painter, and a lot of Mexicans were raised to dominate and when he tries to stand up and grab on me I tell him you’re not in Mexico anymore you’re in the U.S. He also sells (drugs) sometimes and I’m trying to get him to stop using cocaine, he says he will before the baby comes, so I just have to trust him.

Maria may have seen drugs the same way she saw school in that it would do a lot for her family, financially. Maria may have believed the drugs trafficked, by her father and sold by her boyfriend could allow her to live a lifestyle of means. She may also have believed that if she were to go to college, it would have to provide a financial lifestyle that would reach or exceed what her family was able to gain from drugs. “I will take anything that will get me a job.... teacher pay is not that good.... well it’s about \$40,000.00, something

decent, but I could settle for a teacher.” She did not consider the intrinsic value she would gain from going to college, or the fulfillment that would come with teaching students, or the benefit it would bring to her as the first college educated member of her family; her focus was on the monetary benefit only. Many students may think about the amount of money they may earn once they complete a college degree; however, thinking about the earning potential alone will not be a strong enough motivator to sustain a student once they have enrolled in college.

Although, Maria stated that she wanted to return to school and believed her husband would support her in doing so, it is unlikely that he will have the resources or an interest in her returning to school. Although, Maria stated that she wanted to return to school and believed her husband would support her in doing so, the degree of his support is questionable, since he already expressed reservations when he realized that her classes would not be entirely online, but would require her to go to campus. Support that requires no personal sacrifice is easy to promise; support that requires a domestic partner to be away from her home and her domestic duties to be assumed by her spouse is more difficult to implement.

The Influence of Violence

Melissa’s external appearance revealed many tattoos stamped on her body, the well-manicured hands, and feet, along with a mane that was styled to perfection. These objects provided insight into what she valued. Melissa stated that she did not have enough economic resources to have the car repaired or to pay for classes however, the resources used for her bi-weekly personal grooming sessions and the tattoos may have

been ample resources to repair the vehicle. Objectified capital according to Bourdieu (1986) is only objectified if it is embodied such that the bearer understands its cultural meaning and for Melissa the tattoos, manicures, and other external grooming rituals have a cultural meaning that she has embodied. One could speculate that within her community and among her age group, these symbols were highly valued and regarded as high status symbols. Thus, choosing to invest in these activities instead of her education or repairing the vehicle would be considered a better use of her limited resources. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that when resources are available she will be more likely to use them for the objectified capital that she values and education is superseded by the cultural capital of the age group and possibly the community.

Melissa shared experiences that may provide insight into how her values were formed. Her natural tendency was to discuss the community norms, not education. She grew up in a very small community plagued by poverty, drugs, murder, teen pregnancy, and high school dropout. Much of Melissa's interview focused on avoiding the trappings of the social problems in the community and although there were very direct questions about her educational experiences, much of the interview lingered on the "really rough neighborhood." Although there was a strong focus on survival her way out was not through education, but avoidance "I wanted to do better than that, because well, see my older brother is doing 21 years in the penitentiary and I didn't want to go that route, you know what I'm saying and I just wanted something totally different for me". Melissa embodied skills that would help her survive for the moment, yet without a plan to move beyond survival Melissa would likely fall back on those embodied experiences. She

appeared to conquer each of the problems that were common by believing that she was suppose to fulfill her parent's wishes. "With me it (education) was important, my mama and daddy wanted me to go, well my oldest brother he graduated from high school, but my middle brother he dropped out of high school and they really wanted me to go on I guess because I was the only girl and I was the youngest". Not wanting to disappoint her parents and running from the struggles that seemed common, Melissa did not get pregnant, she did not drop out of school and she did not use drugs, yet she had embodied these struggles as normal. "I just thought that it was the way life was, and it still hasn't changed in that community; if you go up there right now it's still the same."

In addition to not disappointing her parents, she had a childhood experience that strongly influenced her decision to pursue an education beyond high school however; she did not have the support and nurturing that would have sustained her when the challenges came. Melissa's only memory of her early education was of a teacher telling her that she was a troubled child who would not succeed.

My teacher Ms. Crite thought I was a bad child, and I did act out a lot and she just told me I was never gonna do nothing and by the time I was 15 I was going to be pregnant and out of school. I remember that and she just seemed like she just hated me, but I did send her an invitation to my graduation to prove that I didn't mess up.

Melissa seemed to have internalized this experience and it influenced her life so much that years after she completed elementary school she invited Ms. Crite to her high school graduation and was disappointed that she did not attend. This experience was a strong motivator and helped her avoid "get (ting) pregnant or drop (ping) out of school."

According to Melissa, pregnancy and high school dropout were common for students in her school. “To be honest after you were 13 you were just out there, just grown, that as soon as you got old enough to work, you need to get a job and help out or that they would become drug dealers and go to jail or get pregnant for the girls”. When her teacher made the prediction Melissa set out to prove her wrong, and she succeeded. However, she did not change the realities of the community, it remained “rough,” high school dropout continued to be high, and once she had beaten the stereotype set by her teacher and community Melissa was left without direction.

One could speculate that the embodied capital acquired by Melissa was survival and strength, which were very important in her community, and although formal education was spoken of, it was more important to focus on street smarts, instead of book smarts. Therefore, the poor behavior Melissa’s elementary teacher encountered was the manifestation of her coping with daily experiences. Unfortunately, these manifestations in school may have limited her access to the academic resources that were available because her teachers were more likely to reward students for stellar behavior and ignore troubled students. If Bourdieu’s (1984) notion that teachers are responsible for reinforcing dominant cultural standards is accurate, one could suggest that teachers are less likely to provide that support to students they find difficult. This would suggest that because Melissa did not arrive at school with dominant cultural capital it could not be reinforced, but because of her behavior, she would not have been privy to the dominant cultural capital that teachers confer upon students. This is very important because students who arrive at school without the dominant cultural capital, primarily embodied

for young children, may be ignored by teachers throughout their schooling years, which may lead to increased drop out. Although Melissa obtained institutional capital by graduating from high school with scores that allowed her to enroll in a two-year business school, her decision to enroll in school was not embodied; it was a way to remain connected with her best friend. “Out of my community 10 of us went to school together, out of that 10 only 6 of us graduated high school and out of that 10 only 2 of us went to college, me an Kimeko, my friend and she is the only one who is still in college so far.”

Friendship may have been her motivator; however, it did not sustain her. Melissa stated several disconnected reasons for not being in school, all of which were common struggles for any student. Melissa stated that the only thing preventing her from returning to school was transportation, “right now I don’t have no transportation that’s the only thing that’s holding me back, that is holding me back for real financial is a big thing”. When I asked her about the vehicle sitting in her yard she said; “it is Eric’s (her live in boyfriend) and it needs some work, before we can drive it every day, we drive it some but not all the time.” She later stated, “I dropped out because I moved to Banner so that I could get a good job and me and Eric wanted to get away from the drugs, even though he sells drugs he was only going to do it until we found real jobs and it had gotten too far to drive.” Next, “I wanted to be a CMA (certified medical assistant) but I think I want to switch my major because me and medical, I don’t think me and medical is going to work out. I’m just the needles and the blood, that’s just still I thought I was going to grow out of that phase but I don’t know some of the classes I was taking up there, I just couldn’t do it.” Each of these reasons suggests that education was not embodied and

although she received the institutional capital of a high school diploma, she had not embodied the meaning of such an accomplishment and the possibilities that come with its acquisition.

Examining each of these reasons we see a pattern of projecting the blame from her toward some other cause “needing a job, CMA too difficult, no transportation” unfortunately Melissa did not seek solutions to these issues. When I asked Melissa what were her grades in college she stated “I really don’t know” yet she could recall her high school grades “I did pretty good in high school I was an A/B student in high school.” She had been out of college only a year at the time of our interview and out of high school for several years, yet she could not recall her college grades. It is reasonable to suggest that academically she struggled and decided to withdraw because she felt she could not improve her scores. A couple of simple solutions to this issue may have been to consult with the instructors, go to tutoring or spend more time studying and focusing on the education, however the ability to problem solve these common issues is problematic for many students. An element of embodied capital is the ability to problem solve. It is developed by observing parents, siblings and other impressionable people solve issues. Melissa was exposed to brothers who solved problems using weapons, or drugs, parents who solved problems by ignoring them, and teachers who ignored students with problems. Not aware of the impression these experiences had on her life, Melissa used the same tactics to solve her problems. When school became difficult, she turned to drugs by moving in with a drug dealer and gave up on school.

The objectified capital of her affection became the things money could buy that provided status within her community. Tattoos, manicures, stylish clothes, and hair may have been more valuable in her community than continuing her education. Although Melissa does not possess the dominant cultural capital that is promulgated throughout mainstream society, she does possess the community cultural capital that allows her to “fit in” and be a part of the community. Melissa suggests that fitting in is critical to survival “financial is a big thing up there, so a lot of the parents don’t work, so a lot of them just do what they got to do to fit in, sell drugs and all so they will have everything everybody else has”.

Melissa grew up in a community where safety existed only as a condition of being a part of the chaos. Choosing to enroll in college was a step outside of the normal cultural patterns of the community but one that was promising; however when the normal challenges that many students face arose, Melissa was unable to navigate the system to find the answers that would have helped her attain the next level of institutional capital. Growing up with an illiterate father, a bedridden sickly mother, and two drug dealing brothers Melissa learned to survive by being determined not to continue in her family’s path. She did not want to be illiterate therefore she graduated from high school. She did not want to go to jail, so she did not sell drugs. However, Melissa may not have the dominant cultural capital to help her become successful outside of her community or one like it. Obtaining the institutional capital that has eluded her would have opened that door, yet without the embodied capital to recognize the significance of the institutionalized capital, one could presume that she will not return to school.

Melissa was influenced by the drugs within her community, yet the impact it had on her family was a greater influence. Her brothers had lengthy prison terms for drug related offenses, which caused Melissa's parents to encourage her to make different choices. The difficulty with choosing a different path might have been the fact that she was fully submerged in the drug environment. Although Melissa spoke of college as a primary goal, she seemed to find a variety of reasons that would inhibit her success. "Right now I don't have no transportation that's the only thing that's holding me back, that is holding me back for real." The car that sat in her driveway was operational, however she noted, "it is his and it needs some work, before we can drive it every day, we drive it some but not all the time." Melissa's boyfriend was a drug dealer and like her brothers had been incarcerated many times for drug related issues, yet her frame of reference for a boyfriend was drug dealer.

The Influence of Knowledge

Thomas enjoyed growing up in a rural town where he enjoyed working, living, and playing on his families land. He worked on his family's farm, and enjoyed riding all terrain vehicles, playing basketball, and backyard football with his brothers and friends. He embodied hard work, family time and relaxation; with neither being dominant.

We would always have big summer cookouts with the whole family. My grandma would have big Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners at her house where the whole family would come. There was always a family get together; those were the most fun. Sometimes the whole family would go to the mall, and we went to the movies and bowling when we had time.

These family events were uninhibited joyous occasions where food, alcohol, and other vices were readily available for all to enjoy. Thomas's parents, advised against drinking alcohol and smoking however, they did not practice their advice; they fully enjoyed the pleasures of alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana. Not surprisingly, Thomas also embodied his parent's acceptance of these vices.

Well they was like they didn't want us to have kids too early before we finished school and stuff like that, they said no drugs and alcohol, but they was still doing it, that was deep in my family. I only drank beer and sometimes smoke weed, but it's not as bad as what some other people I know do.

One could speculate that embodying these experiences as a young child may have caused Thomas to believe they were innocent and harmless, therefore acceptable practices. However, engaging in illicit drug use can become addictive and impede one's ability to comprehend information. It is possible that although Thomas believed he performed well academically his concept of "well" may have meant being eligible to graduate from high school.

Academically, Thomas said his grades were mostly "B's and C's except in math because I didn't get that too easy, but I got an A in P.E. [physical education]." Not only had Thomas earned average grades the classes he had taken such as Technical Math 1&2, carpentry, English, and other classes seemed to meet graduation guidelines not college preparatory guidelines. Believing that grades alone prepared him for college may be an indicator of just how limited his understanding of college was. In addition to accepting

moderate grades in lower level courses, Thomas also appeared to rationalize and empathize with behaviors that most would consider inappropriate in high school.

They [teachers] said you couldn't sleep in class and you had to stay up. Some people in school they was working because their parents weren't bringing in enough money and stuff. They were working to help, and they come in, in the mornings, they probably be tired then when they get done with they work they tell you you can't go to sleep or you can't talk in class. Then they say you can't have your cell phones in the building.

It is reasonable to believe that Thomas completely embodied the concept of graduating from high school, and lacked the embodied knowledge that would have helped him to succeed in college.

The hands-off approach that his family took towards education may have provided him with the illusion that school was something to be completed; the concept of complete is finite, but if he was embodied with the concept of life-long learning, he and his family may have college preparation more seriously. The language Thomas used to express his parents advice revealed what he believed was accepted "they was like the best thing for you to do is go to college and get a better job but the most that they wanted us to do was to graduate [from high school]." Language and the way it is interpreted often times can be the guiding principle for the hearer.

Thomas's parents encouraged him to complete his high school education and they chose not to interfere with his problems at school as long as he would graduate. They believed the counselor knew what was best "they [parents] aint get involved with school, they just said pick something else and said maybe that will help me out instead of that

other class.” One could speculate that Thomas’s parents focused on the objectified capital of the certificate, not the institutional capital that opened future academic doors. Registering for the appropriate classes and going through the college process alone is a daunting experience for most students, but for first-generation college students it can be very discouraging. However, Thomas was not discouraged, on the contrary, he was confident “in high school when I figured it out, I would have to teach the class how to do the work because they [teachers] didn’t want to explain it to the students and that happened at [the community college] too.” Confidence is great, but it did not compensate for preparation, commitment, and focus.

College for Thomas was primarily focused on getting a job. He stated that he wanted to work as a chef and had enrolled in a culinary arts program at a state community college; however, once he found work he quit college. When he had the option to choose Thomas did not sell drugs, although his family used marijuana and alcohol regularly; “they said no drugs and alcohol, but they was still doing it, that was deep in my family.” Thomas believed his use was not as severe as others were in his family, “I only drink beer and sometimes smoke weed, but it’s not as bad as what some other people I know do.”

CHAPTER VI

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Finalizing the last of Wolcott's (1994) transforming qualitative data structure, this chapter aims to interpret the study's findings. In addition to the findings, the significance of the study and the implications of the study will be shared. In this study the influence Bourdieu's (1973) dominant cultural capital was explored by dissecting the three dimensions; embodied, objectified, and institutionalized as they related to the participants' stories. In the course of the data collection phase, additional factors identified from the rural participants' perspectives that deviated from Bourdieu's (1973 - 1997) conceptualization of the three dimensions were added. Although the three dimensions remained in their original form as defined by Bourdieu (1973), additional identifiers were added to the dimensions, based on the participants' experiences.

Embodied capital was expanded to include influences that were common to the rural participants' in this study. The influence of living around drugs, the impact of parents' educational accomplishments, and the relationship between work and education were added to embodied capital.

Embodied cultural capital explores the inherited values and beliefs that children are exposed to that define their preferences and leanings as they mature. Bourdieu (1977) explained embodied capital as the "tastes" that one has inherited since birth. Because the concept of "tastes" is broad in nature, this study looked at the participants' ability to

problem solve and navigate power structures to gain access or support services.

According to Bourdieu (1973), parents' are the primary transmitters of embodied capital. However, through the course of data analysis there were additional common factors that the participants' embodied resulting from environmental influences that were inherited since birth.

Objectified cultural capital focused on the value of objects that one possessed that required dominant embodied capital to appreciate. Objects in Bourdieu's (1973 – 1997) definitions focused on rare collections, paintings, and cultural experiences such as plays, symphonies, or ballets. The participants in this study were all rural southern students residing in areas where many of Bourdieu's (1977) dominant cultural experiences are rarely available if at all. Therefore, to identify objectified cultural capital in this study I focused on listening and observing the items of value that participants discussed, and those items they desired. Additionally, I focused on the relevance of their activities to gain insight into their interest and the value of the activity in their lives.

According to Bourdieu (1977), institutionalized cultural capital is defined by certificates and awards issued by institutions conferring awareness, accomplishment, and attainment of knowledge on its recipient. Institutional capital is often considered degrees from higher educational institutions and awards for a variety of high accomplishments, such as the highly coveted, Nobel Peace Prize. However, understanding the nature of this study, participants' had dropped out of college, the institutional capital that was measured focused on awards for personal accomplishments, honors for athleticism, captain of a team, honor rolls, and other certificates of accomplishment that students mention that

conjure up feelings of accomplishment or success. Each of the participants' received the institutional capital of a high school diploma; therefore, I will focus on other honors that are shared to eliminate their institutional capital.

One of the challenges of conducting this study was the difficulty of determining boundaries between the varied forms of capital. Many may be very decisive, such as the impact teacher expectations will have on the acquisition of institutional capital. However, others may present an unclear delineation, such as the impact of parents' hard work and provision influencing a child to want material objects and money more than education. Was hard work embodied or was material provision objectified? While inferences can be made for both arguments, it is reasonable to believe that multiple forms of capital can be received and interpreted differently. The greater objective is to identify the forms of cultural capital that influence rural students' decisions to drop out of college and interpret them in an understandable way such that retention specialists and student support services can minimize or eliminate their impact on rural students college futures.

Throughout the interview, process participants' may have presented information in a light that was favorable to them, diminishing their accountability for the choices, they made. Therefore, although their words are presented in the way they were received, the interpretation will attempt to look beyond the face value of their words to provide a deeper understanding based on their physical appearance, words, tone, slippages, and their silences.

The purpose of this research was to determine the impact of dominant cultural capital on rural students' decision to drop out of college. The findings of this study

reveal that dominant cultural capital as defined by Bourdieu (1977) had a direct influence on the participants' decision to drop out of college. Dominant cultural capital not in the sense of high cultural experiences (attending plays, symphonies, or extensive travel), but the middle class values that many times traditionally place an important emphasis on education as a primary objective may have influenced their decisions. The capital they did embody had a direct relationship on their choices to drop out of college. Additionally, reproduction of class through the educational system did not seem to have a great influence on their decisions, however the participants' environmental factors and family circumstances, appeared to have had the greatest influence on their decision to drop out of college.

Although each of the participants' had challenges within their educational institutions, their self-reported and actual decisions resulted from the community and family forces that had been dominant throughout their lives. This chapter will focus on interpreting the influence of teacher expectations, intrinsic value of education, impact of environment, and other common experiences that were captured during the interview process that may confirm or disaffirm the influence of cultural capital on rural students' choice to remain in college.

Community

Where Have You Been and What Have You Seen?

The lives of each of the six participants' have been molded by their individual experiences. Experiences that include limited opportunities to discover a world outside of their community. Those who explored environments outside of their home

environment were limited to homes of relatives, travel associated with a team sports, and amusement/theme parks. McFaul (1989) noted that many rural families remain in the same area for generations and have not traveled outside of their local community, often because of the nature of their occupation or a lack of resources.

Travel for the six participants included family visits, travel associated with health care, team sports, amusement parks, and one participant's travel was criminal/family travel. None of the participants mentioned traveling as an interest, or appeared to be concerned with not having been far from their home. When asked about cultural experiences none of the participants' had visited museums or attended cultural events that were not connected with school field trip experiences. Although, three of the participants had traveled outside of the state, their visits did not incorporate high cultural experiences such as visits to historical sites or attending plays or operas.

Jonathan's mother was originally from Arkansas and he remembered traveling there during his youth. "I'd say we took trips to Arkansas, that's where the rest of my family lives, so we would go to Arkansas frequently, but when I got a little older we kinda cut back on those trips." In addition to trips to Arkansas, Jonathan talked about two visits to Florida "we took a couple of trips to Florida just to go and see places." He could not recall the places he saw, but explained that the family had not been on a trip in a long time, because their family will come to North Carolina for visits. When asked why they stopped the visits, Jonathan shrugs and says "probably money."

David's family traveled out of Kansas regularly. When asked what kind of vacations his family took, David quickly noted, "my parents' are not like poor, they were

middle class.” Although the question was not about economics, he offered clarity, and continued by sharing the type of vacations his family enjoyed.

We kinda went everywhere, my dad’s side of the family lived in Colorado and Topeka, Kansas, and we went to Topeka all the time. We went to Ottawa a lot where my Grandpa lived...a lot. In Colorado when my mom got cancer we lived in Monument for a year while she received treatments...then we came home.

Each of David’s travel experiences was associated with family visits. His lengthy visit to Colorado also was family related and did not include sightseeing or experiencing the cultural experiences of Colorado. David stated, “We just visited family that was why we went so we didn’t worry about other things.”

Maria also traveled out of North Carolina, and out of the United States. Maria’s travel experiences were shrouded under a cloak of family vacations to see relatives but were ultimately determined to be criminally motivated.

Well uhm my dad would always find a way to go on family vacations, we would go somewhere, in the summer we would always take family trips to Texas and Mexico, that’s where my parents are from, back then when we were little that’s when my dad went to jail for drug trafficking.

Maria’s family stopped traveling after her father’s incarceration. Although the travel was criminally motivated, Maria excused her father’s behavior under the guise of the benefits it afforded her family “not to justify drugs but it did a lot for our family.”

Thomas’s family remained close to home but did enjoy trips to Virginia Beach, which was about a two-hour drive from their home. “With my mom and them, we went to the beach in Virginia, every now and then.” However, the bulk of their travel

experiences centered primarily within the state, and was for his brother's athletic competitions.

My brother played sports we go back and forth to the game and stuff like that, my brother played AAU, so we went back and forth to the games when he was playing, that's about it.

During summer vacations, Thomas enjoyed "backyard football, basketball, ride fo' wheelers, and dirt bikes and stuff like that and fishing." Unaware of what constituted a cultural experience, when Thomas was asked if he visited the historical sites when he traveled with his brother he confidently stated; "Yes, we go to the mall or something and we went to the movies and bowling when we had time."

Unlike Thomas who traveled with his athletic brother, Kim was a school athlete and traveled regularly with the dance team, however she did not recall family travel experiences. Kim's summer vacations were filled with local activities. "On vacations, I mostly swam and danced, that's about it." When I asked why, she said; "my mom works a lot, I mean my mom spoiled the heck out of me."

Like Kim, Melissa did not travel very far, although the travel was out of her state. "We went to local state parks (Virginia), but when I could go with my aunts I went to the beach and Carowinds (NC theme park) and places like that." In addition to trips to local resort or theme parks, Melissa's participation in a community church group provided her an opportunity to visit a university outside of her community.

It was a woman named Linda Strange, she helped us with it a lot cause she took us up there to uhm what's that college in Greensboro ***long pause while

thinking*** A & T, yeah she took us up there on field trips and stuff she was doing a lot of stuff with the youth like that.

Each of the six participants had minimal travel experience, yet the historical or cultural experiences that were available on their travel routes were left unexplored. None of the participants' appeared to notice or consider possibly visiting a notable site, or experiencing something beyond their trips purpose. For each of the participants, their limited cultural experiences were perhaps through school and church excursions, which they did not note.

The Lasting Impact of Negative Exposure

Each of the participants' lived in communities that had been severely impacted by globalization and off shoring. Factories that had long served as the anchors for families no longer existed and replacement industries provided less security and economic resources leaving many living in poverty. Recognizing that student aspirations are influenced by poverty (Perrino, 2005) it is important to acknowledge the prevalence of poverty in the participants' stories.

Each of the six participants lived in communities that suffered from high levels of poverty, primarily due to the closing of factories that had sustained their towns. Five of the participants had parents who lost jobs when the factories in their towns shut down, spiraling them into a condition of lack. Each participant also was exposed to a close family member, if not themselves, who was involved with drugs, alcohol, or violence that led to incarceration. Studies (Ballard & McCoy, 1996; Caldarella, Loosli, Merrell, & Sharpneck, 1996) have shown that many rural youth under the age of 15 have

experimented with alcohol and drugs, and are more likely to join violent gangs due to increased rural poverty.

Kim's exposure was very limited and may have had little or no influence on her personal choices. "I mean I have a couple of family members and they get out of jail and no one really give them a chance and so they go right back to jail, I got a cousin that is kind of like 24 in there."

However, the other five participants were exposed at very young ages to drugs and violence. For each of them the exposure significantly influenced the choices they made. David's first comment regarding life in his community was being exposed to and living among gang violence.

I grew up in like the poor side of town so there were a lot of gang wars there. We had CRIPs and BLOODs, but they weren't like the real gangs they just called themselves that. We had the Southside LOGOs, which were the true Mexican gang, and they pretty much dominated the whole town. We had a bunch of drug houses around where we lived, meth[amphetamine] mainly.

David was not a sideline observer to the gang and drug problems of his community he was often a victim. David said that he had not become a member of the gang in his local community, but eventually succumbed to the pressure.

Not in Fauxton, I tried to stay away from it as much as I could. When you see guys get beat up in the middle of the street ... you watched guy get jumped and beat up right there, and being young your really vulnerable and it is easy to get into.

Although David lived in his "middle class home," his real life exposure certainly influenced his decision to join a notorious gang once he left for college.

I didn't want to go home so I moved in with this African American lady in the projects. I met this gang and started working for them. They gave me the most amazing car with the condition that I work for them and pay it off. I knew what the work was and because I didn't have a job and no money I accepted the offer.

Thomas's experience was quite different, in that his exposure to drugs and alcohol were at home. Although they verbally encouraged their children not to use illicit drugs, their behaviors, contradicted their advice.

They (his parents) said no drugs and alcohol, but they was still doing it. That was deep in my family. I only drink beer and sometimes smoke weed, but it's not as bad as what some other people I know do.

Thomas could also justify drug use because the exposure he has had throughout his life has made it a non-issue for him.

Jonathan was young when he left a very dangerous neighborhood. At just ten years of age, he had not yet entered the time of his life where drugs were an option. However, he had observed drug deals from the comfort of his front yard. Additionally, he was exposed to prostitution and gang violence, yet at eleven years of age his parents believed he had not yet been influenced.

I actually grew up until I was about I say 13 or my first year of middle school [11] I grew up in the ghetto until, I lived in the heart of everything, the drugs, gangs, the prostitutes everything.

Although young, Jonathan had seen enough of the street life that made him long for it and eventually, pursue it once he was away from home.

I was looking more forward to getting out of high school and having a little bit of fun you know because when I was in high school I was pushed real hard and I didn't get to do too much so I wanted to get out. For me coming from that inner city as well, there were things I would want to do that I guess weren't the right things and I just wanted to experience them like, clubbing, drinking, drugs, I just wanted to get it out of my system.

Jonathan chose to get his "fun" out of his system once he was away from the confines of his home and had independence on his university campus. Although, he had not lived in the drug environment for more than eight years when he entered college, it appears that his early exposure had stayed with him and influenced his decisions significantly.

Maria saw the effects of drugs very early in her life. Her father's involvement in drug trafficking when she was very young caused him to be incarcerated, which brought hardship upon the family.

My older sister quit school to help my mom, because my dad was in jail for like 3 years when I was in elementary school. My dad went to jail and my mom was struggling and my sister quit to help my mom. I am 20 and my sister is 25 so she was 12 and now she works for Ashley furniture and she is the most bilingual.

In addition to Maria's sister quitting school at 12 years of age, her brother also quit high school. "My older brother quit high school, I guess he felt like he wasn't going anywhere so he quit." Maria believed her father's drug trafficking benefitted the family and although they owned a stonemason company, there were times when selling drugs was necessary.

Not to justify drugs but it did a lot for our family especially how we were living. He worked too, and to make the extra money he would do that too. Even now to get in the house we got now my dad had to sell. Like cause he quit, he stopped that cause he didn't want any trouble with the law or anything he stopped. He

was getting desperate and he realized he couldn't do it no other way so the furniture we have it was because he had to do a hustle and sell drugs for it. I don't think he does it anymore because we are struggling.

Maria was very young when her father was incarcerated for drugs, and she recalls the hardship his involvement caused her family, yet she married a man who is also very involved in drugs. In addition to selling drugs, he is also a drug abuser.

He's a painter, and a lot of Mexicans were raised to dominate and when he tries to stand up and grab on me I tell him you're not in Mexico anymore you're in the U.S. He also sells sometimes, and I'm trying to get him to stop using cocaine, he says he will before the baby comes, so I just have to trust him.

It is evident that Maria was strongly influenced by the deviant behavior of her father and those behaviors have been duplicated within her home.

Melissa's exposure was very close and personal. She was exposed to drugs, violence, and incarceration for much of her life. As the youngest of three children, she was charged with the hope of bringing the family honor after her two brothers' were incarcerated for drug selling, use, and murder. She described her neighborhood with very clear terms "it's a lot of drugs a lot of killings and stuff yeah it was a very rough neighborhood." Her family had not been spared the violence, and was often the perpetrators.

I wanted to do better than that, because well see my older brother is doing 21 years in the penitentiary, cause they said he shot somebody, and I didn't want to go that route. My middle brother he was already in jail doing 8 years. You know what I'm saying, and I just wanted something totally different for me.

Although Melissa wanted something different, she appeared to be drawn towards the activities that dominated her community. She chose a boyfriend who had been incarcerated for drugs and who continued to sell drugs. “He wanted to get away from the drugs, even though he sells drugs he was only going to do it until we find real jobs.” Melissa articulated the impact that her environment on her life in simple, but true terms, “I just thought that it was the way life was.” With her view being so bleak, her desire to do something different appears to be overshadowed by the stronghold of the familiar, strongly influencing the choices she has made.

The participants’ were exposed differently to a variety of negative experiences, yet those experiences were not displaced when new and more pleasant experiences were introduced. Childhood is the time in our lives when our characters are developed and our individual selves are molded into the form that will carry us into our futures. Although, one may not be doomed by the experiences of their childhood they might be strongly influenced by them, as are their choices.

Family

Children Learn What They Live

There is a poem by Dorothy Law Nolte titled “Children Learn What They Live” this is revealed often in the area of education. Many first generation youth struggle with completing their college education without an example, a mentor, or some intervening hand of support to guide their steps. Parental educational level is an important predictor of children's educational and behavioral outcomes (Davis-Kean, 2005; Dearing,

McCartney, & Taylor, 2001; Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994; Haveman & Wolfe, 1995; Nagin & Tremblay, 2001; Smith, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1997).

Two of the participants' in this study had parents who did not complete high school. Although each of them graduated from high school, they struggled to complete their diploma. Melissa's parents did not reach high school and Maria's parents dropped out of school in the 9th and 10th grades. Both of these young women focused on graduating from high school and college; however, their lofty goals may have been difficult to attain with the standards that had been set. Melissa's father the provider of her family, married, and reared a family without attaining a high school diploma, and being illiterate.

A lot of the adults in my community can't read, like my daddy he is 53 and has been in National textiles for 16 or 17 years and he can't read nothing further than his name. He can recognize like my name, my brothers' name, my mamas name but other than that he can't read. It's a lot of people in my community like that because my daddy an them never got pass the 8th grade, so the real older community don't know how to help us.

Although the goal for Melissa was to graduate from high school and college, she summed her condition and others in her community when she said, "so the real older community don't know how to help us." Real old for Melissa was 53, her father's age. Maria's parents and older siblings dropped out of high school and appeared to be successful. The business that her parents' owned, her sister's position at Ashley Furniture and her brother's job with her parents' made each of them appear successful without a high school diploma. For Maria getting a "good paying job" was the reason for additional

education and the appearance that her family was able to accomplish the task without college may influence her decision to continue in a higher education program.

Coming up poor my mom always pushed us to finish high school and go to college. She has always talked about it. Both of my parents they didn't finish high school, my mama quit like in the 10th my dad in like the 8th or 9th, so they had a rough life. My sister quit to help my mom, I am 20 and my sister is 25 so she was 12 and now she works for Ashley furniture. My older brother quit high school, I guess he felt like he wasn't going anywhere so he quit. My mom and dad have a company and he works for them, they have a stonemason company. They like put stones on buildings.

The relative success of Maria's uneducated family facilitates an air of accomplishment for her as a high school graduate.

Four of the participants' parents completed high school and went into the workforce. The conversations they have had with the participants were mixed, all wanted their children to complete high school, some wanted them to work afterwards, and some encouraged college as a post-high school option, however none of the parents could provide support or guidance through the college process.

Kim's mother advocated for the work option and was insensitive to Kim's wishes to attend college. "My mom is one of those people, yeah well go to school but you need a job first." In addition to not supporting the idea of college, Kim's mother also delayed on completing the financial aid documents that would have provided Kim with the resources to attend college. "I was like, come on mom, come on and she was like we'll do it and it became too late to apply for financial aid, and so I applied for financial aid and went in the spring." When Kim began to struggle and chose to drop out of college

her mother's reply was not encouraging, but a bit cynical. "When I quit, my mom didn't really like why you quit, she was like are you going to get a job, now."

For Jonathan, the experience was the opposite of Kim's, his parents' encouraged him and supported the college goal, however when he dropped out of school, they blamed themselves for being restrictive parents.

They were mad at first. But then they kind of figured that it was going to be like that because one they knew that they had kept me on a short leash, or at least tried to keep me on a short leash. And they figured like all that freedom where you do what you want to do when you want to do it, and they were like well.

His mother also excused his actions by suggesting that she could not be too disappointed because she too had dropped out of college.

My mom she's from Arkansas so, aah, no it's the University of Pine Bluff actually yeah that's what it was, and uum she went there for social working. She didn't even really take up what she went for because she said she felt like she should have went into something else. She said in social work you have to reach a higher level in order to get a good job in it. She didn't really take that step because she had had me by the time and she just really wanted me to I guess not make ... well she didn't really make any mistakes.

Jonathan's, father's experiences also influenced his decisions because although he did not have a college degree, he had what appeared to Jonathan a successful mechanic business.

My father he, was one of 10 brothers and my grandfather they have a family owned business. They work on cars and stuff and he was, they was pretty much raised in it and they worked on cars their whole life. He still works on cars and I guess it's a business where you can do good and make a lot of money. I figured even if I don't get none of this (education) I could go work for him and make money.

As an adult, Jonathan learned the harsh realities of his father's business.

My dad and them have their own business and they been working doing this for I say 30 or 40 years. They have clientele that they things may not even be wrong with they car, they just bring it to them to help them out. Those are things I didn't really understand back then. Then it was more like he was just working and making a whole lot of money.

The survival skills and techniques Jonathan's parents had acquired were unknown to him, he lived with the idea that his family was successful without education; they had good jobs and owned their home and a business.

Parental involvement in school during high school wanes dramatically from earlier school years, because parents believe their children are prepared to take care of their school needs (Engle, 1989; Hickman, 1995-1996). Unfortunately, one of the most critical times in their lives is getting the opportunities that will open doors for them after high school and many students' do not have the problem solving skills or the respect of the teachers to garner that support. Many parents of limited resource students also struggle to effectively, gain opportunities for their children and may often choose to avoid the battle (Lareau, 1987).

Thomas knew his parents expectations, "the most that they wanted us to do was to graduate, at least graduate from high school." When struggles arose or classes were denied Thomas did not expect his family to advocate on his behalf "naw they aint get involved I just picked something else and said maybe that will help me out instead of that."

Many parents strive to provide a quality life for their children, as they shield them from many of the harsh realities of their struggle, however once children are adults and those blinders come off, the hope is that they will have the ability to exceed their parents' accomplishments. Each of the participant's parents wanted success for their children, however the words that were spoken, were not as powerful as the actions that were taken. "Children Learn What They Live."

Education

The Importance of Teacher/Student Relationships

Five of the participants recalled relationships with teachers that significantly influenced their self-perceptions and their future decisions. Bourdieu (1977) introduced the idea that teachers are more likely to favor those who come to school equipped with dominant cultural capital, ignore, and label those who lack dominant cultural capital as academically incapable or lazy.

Three of the participants in this study experienced both of these phenomena at differing times during their compulsory education career. Two of the students, experienced a nonchalant or negative relationship. All of the participants recognized that teachers valued students' differently for a multitude of reasons including ethnicity, intellectual ability, relationship with parents, and a host of others that were accepted as "normal."

David's experiences with teachers had been very positive during his elementary school years. However, once his family experienced a health crisis that removed his father from his home for more than a year, his behavior and the relationship with his

teachers diminished. David recalls enjoying his teachers and school “I liked my teachers, I obviously had a few that I hated but most were good, that’s kind of where I found peace was at school.” The accepted norm of teachers being “hated” for David may have resulted from his actions and perceptions of adults as an adolescent.

6th grade was just horrible for me, I was in trouble the entire year. I had a teacher who was a real jerk, he talked bad to me and to the whole class. That was the year I just totally rebelled, I like got in fights every day. I ended up cussing my teacher out, I like cussed him out the whole day, threw his computer out of the window, I was just in that stage I just didn’t care and authority meant nothing to me.

Unfortunately, his perceptions may have compounded the poor behavior, causing teachers to subjugate him into lower level courses. During this period of adolescence, David faced struggles at home and at school. Although his teachers understood his family situation, they were unable to tolerate his destructive behavior and relegated him often times to confinement or suspension.

In middle school, I was in detention the entire time I was in class for a max of 2 weeks in 8th grade. The principal just put a mark on me, which meant that nothing was tolerated and I actually just got worse.

David’s actions resulted in him being enrolled in lower level courses once he enrolled in high school. Although he began to change his behavior, his record had been noted and his curriculum established. However, with continued improvement David encountered an art teacher in one of his elective courses that recognized potential and advocated for him to be re-assigned into higher-level courses.

I had one teacher who was my French teacher and my seminar or study hall teacher. At first, I was a real shy guy and she opened me up and got me out of my shadow. She noticed that I liked to draw and she talked to the art teacher. He noticed that I liked to set structures and he connected me to the technology teacher. Having that (class) I was able to take physics and math and stuff that I wanted to take.

Although David was given another opportunity, he had lost formative years, which would have provided him with access to more rigorous courses. The teachers who eventually recognized his abilities had not been the same teachers who had been cursed at, or whose computer was thrown out of the window, but the relationship they forged provided hope and opportunity for David.

Maria also was empowered during her last year of high school to strive towards a college education by teachers who believed she had potential that she was not revealing. Her early high school career was spent defending her family against all who "talked junk."

When I was in 9th grade I was really stubborn and I can do anything like I had this bad attitude. It started from the 8th grade cause in my family with my sisters and brothers we were always fighting. We was always tough and it was always somebody talking junk to us and we stood up for one another.

Maria's tough exterior caused teachers to ignore her potential and relegate her to lower level classes. After noticing a program that she was interested in becoming a part of, Maria approached the teacher and asked about the qualifications.

I think I was in like the 11th grade, because my teachers both were Spanish. The one that helped me get into the teacher cadet class and the other one helped when I was about to get into a fight and she started talking to me and said I should set an example for the other Hispanic.

The relationships Maria found to be supportive and nurturing were from teachers she believed understood her cultural experiences. Receiving their encouragement and improving her behavior because she did not want to lose their respect provided Maria with a sense of belonging in an environment where her culture was slimly represented.

Jonathan had not experienced the personal struggles that existed in David's home; however enrolling in a different school during his 10th grade year required Jonathan to establish relationships with new teachers who were not familiar with him. He was enrolled in honors level classes based on his 9th grade performance, which introduced him to teachers who eventually believed in his ability. Jonathan enjoyed his teachers. However, with his outgoing and non-confrontational personality he was the type of individual that may have garnered favor in a school environment that struggled to find successful African American males.

I would say I had pretty good relationships; I had two teachers that I had a pretty close relationship with that would talk to me and tell me that they feel like industrial engineering was like when you get a job in that field it was like a leadership role.

Jonathan was very satisfied with his relationship with his teachers and did not question their recommendations or thoughts about his future. These teachers were not his math or science teachers but his English and Real World teachers. When asked if he liked math or had he done well in it, his response revealed that his teachers had poorly advised him.

English was probably like an A, and math more like a C and I can even remember a couple of times I made a D. Cause I really wasn't that good in math. Math is not my strong point at all, but I mean when I did make D's and stuff I did do them

over and try to bring them up and stuff like that. The classes I like the most were more than likely history and science.

In addition to poor relationships with students that may diminish opportunities, students like Jonathan were favored by teachers and administrators. Yet it seems that they provided advice that may have caused him to pursue a field that did not suit his interests or abilities.

Melissa's early experience represented one of the most disheartening teacher/student relationships among the six participants. Teachers of young children may enter the classroom with dominant cultural capital that blinds them to the real experiences of their students. Children who live in violent environments may not present themselves in a tactful manner but in a defensive and more protective manner. The environment that Melissa grew up in required a tough exterior and in the 3rd grade she had not mastered what Prudence Carter (2005) called the ability to code switch. Unfortunately, her lack of ability did not prevent her teacher from filling her mind with a negative outlook.

My third grade teacher thought I was a bad child, and I did act out a lot, and she just told me I was never gonna do nothing. By the time, I was 15 I was going to be pregnant and out of school. I remember that and she just seemed like she just hated me. She never apologized. I did send her an invitation to my graduation to prove that I didn't mess up, but she didn't come.

The teachers comment has remained very fresh in Melissa's mind and she wanted very much to disprove her prediction, yet without the teacher coming to her graduation Melissa feels that she continues to believe that she became "nothing."

Impact of Golem Effects and Galatea Effects

In psychology there are two terms coined to identify the effects of teacher expectations, Golem and Galatea (Babad, Inbar, & Rosenthal, 1982). Golem effects are undesirable and negative effects, which are the result of low teacher expectations that impede student academic achievement. Galatea effects, on the other hand, are desirable and positive effects, which are the result of high teacher expectations that augment student academic achievement (Babad, et. al., 1982).

Teachers spend more awake and alert time with children than parents. During this time, teachers greatly influence the self-perception students have regarding their academic ability. When teachers have high expectations for their students, and refuse to accept less than they believe is possible, while revealing genuine interest in the students potential, many students rise to meet the expectation. Unfortunately, the opposite phenomenon may also be true. When teachers express low expectations, students also take ownership and perform at the expected level.

Each of the participants in this study responded to the expectations of their teachers. At different levels throughout their compulsory education they experienced differing expectations and performed accordingly. Although, Jonathan enjoyed the teachers at the school he graduated from, he believed their expectations were very low and left him unprepared to succeed in college.

At North the programs were better and they taught you at a faster pace and they pushed you a little bit harder. As for when I went to [the other school] it was a good school, but they made it easy on you, they didn't push you as hard and it was easier work. They took you at a slower level than the school I went to before. I guess at the time I didn't really have a problem with it, but I mean I wish I

would have stayed where I was at, who knows where I would have been at if I wouldn't have left.

He continued to express the difference in teacher expectations between the two schools.

I wouldn't necessarily say it was the teachers that didn't prepare me because the teachers have a certain kind of work schedule that they had to follow. I just believe it was the school in general, because they never pushed the hard work on the students like they did when I was going to North. My freshmen year, we started off with hard work and they pushed you hard the whole way, like and if you didn't get it they made sure you got it pretty much. When I went to the [other school] it was more of the work that I was doing at North, I didn't get to that work until the next year. I believe that the teachers' maybe, I don't know how it works but as far as the curriculum that they teach and everything, I believe honestly that the teachers at North pushed harder to get a stronger curriculum for their students than at [the other school]. I think the teachers wanted to see their students do good, but if you are giving them easy work it's easier for them to do better but they are learning less actually.

Jonathan is a product of low expectations. He is aware of the differences between the two environments, but was not in a position to realize the effects until he was asked to use the skills that should have been learned in high school in college and they were unavailable. For Jonathan the distinction was clear because of his exposure to the different school environments, however for the other five participants the distinction was not very clear.

Thomas was very confident in his academic abilities, however when I inquired about the classes he had taken in high school it was clear that he had not taken college preparatory classes.

I did fairly good, B's and C's except in math because I didn't get that too easy. I got an A in PE cause once I learnt something, once I got to picking up learning something it didn't take me long." I forgot the math it was some new class they

came up with, no it was after algebra, cause it was algebra, geometry, calculus and trigonometry all that together. Well they gave me algebra and geometry, but they wouldn't give me calculus and trig, they wouldn't give them to me for some reason, they wouldn't give them to me. It was something with tech in it... yeah that's what it was tech math, where they mixed all of them together.

Thomas was confident that he had been a scholar in high school and had been well prepared. During the interview, he continued to express how gifted he was in both high school and college.

For me the teachers wouldn't give enough homework. They wouldn't explain it to certain people and stuff like that and how it suppose to be done. When I figured it out, I would have to teach the class how to do it, because they didn't want to explain it to the students. That happened at community college too.

Although, Thomas had difficulty articulating his thoughts intellectually, he was unaware of his inability. Thomas met the criteria to graduate from high school and believed that he was prepared to enter college and succeed. Thomas does not attribute his failure in college to academic difficulty, but to a lack of resources.

Kim's situation was much different and more common than the other five participants' were. Kim was a high school athlete, she had been the captain of the dance team from grade 10 until she graduated, and as an athlete, she benefitted from the favors received by her teachers. Kim informed me that athletes receive homework passes that other students are not always privy to but that benefit very busy athletes who may not be able to complete their assignments.

Like when you in sports teachers are more easy on you they don't like expect you to do the work. Sometimes my teacher would go over the work and although she knew I didn't do it she would let me slide.

In high school, Kim appreciated and exploited the reward, however she did not realize the impact it would have on her future academic endeavor.

Unlike any of the other participants' Melissa's school made students' options very clear in a school-wide meeting.

We had a school meeting in the auditorium where they made this great big announcement that when you get 16 and 6 months, you can come to the front office and get this piece of paper without a parent or guardian sign it and you don't have to come back to school. I mean if you tell people that, what do you think they gon do?

This meeting was called just prior to two schools within the district merging due to extreme dropout rates. Parents were angry, but not at the fact that students' were informed that they could drop out of school, but at the fact that their child athlete may not have a spot on the team.

Melissa continued..." from my point of view it was like Shelton had one of the best sports teams around and it was competition with Laurel, and nobody wanted to go over there with them because we felt like they was going to take our school and making us go over here. What it was, is that Shelton was mainly black, and Laurel was mainly white and that caused a big issue. When we did get over there they wouldn't treat our players as fair as they did there's, they was giving Laurel players a lot more playing time. It got to be a whole lot of stuff going on behind that.

For many limited resource families, athletics may be their only ticket out of poverty; they do not see education as an option. Information on how to dropout was fine, because many parents' expected their child to take that route. Moving a predominately-Black school into a predominately-White school was about territory, and opportunity, dropping out of school may have been simply information.

Most of the people dropped out, so many people had dropped out, and we basically didn't have enough students to populate the school. We had 5 high schools in the county and we didn't have enough high schools to populate the high schools so they had to consolidate and they had to close them and now we only have 2. The people started dropping out that bad.

Melissa succeeded and exceeded the expectations of her 3rd grade teacher and the administrators of her high school; however, those limited expectations may have played a role in her struggle to overcome the barriers she faced in college. Like Melissa, the other participants were in environments where teacher expectations were limited and relationships with teachers led to unrealistic expectations for the students. In addition to having unrealistic expectations, the students' regrettably, made career choices with the information that left them disappointed and unsure about their futures.

Making a Career Choice...Money or Fulfillment? Why not Both?

Career counselors assist individuals with an approach to choosing a career that fulfills a need that the individual has expressed is important. Often time's economics is the base of that need, yet too often people hate their chosen career paths, or find that they are not adept in the field of choice, or that they are not interested in the field they have chosen. Many college students change their majors two, three, and sometimes more times than they admit to, yet there reasons are usually for two primary reasons; they faced academic difficulty in the first choice, or the major chosen was not their choice but the choice of someone else. Regardless of the major, they choose it is realistic to consider the economic future of the major and determine if advanced education will be needed to maximize that future.

Unfortunately, the participants in this study did not have access to or did not utilize a career counselor or college advisor when they chose a major. Five of the six participants' realized they had chosen the wrong field after enrolling in classes, however once they encountered difficulty, rather than consulting an advisor or counselor they quit.

Jonathan and Kim blindly went into fields that school counselors or teachers had advised, they accepted without question guidance of their well-meaning advisors. Jonathan was fully aware of his struggles in math, but was very interested in the economic benefits that accompanied an industrial engineering degree. "I guess because a lot of people heard that you come out making a whole lot of money." Unaware of what the major involved, Jonathan applied to college for industrial engineering and received a full scholarship, only to immediately realize his error once classes began. Like Jonathan, Kim was blindly guided into a career path that was out of her interest and competence realm.

That first semester I took up business administration. Because I was one of those students that didn't quite know what they were going to do. Like some students know I am going to go to school for this, I'm kinda of like umh I don't know what I'm going to do and I kinda went into that and it was horrible, I was not interested.

Kim believed she had been properly advised, and although she was unsure of her major, she was sure of what she wanted to accomplish once she completed her field of study.

Whatever lifestyle you choose to live and you're not struggling in it, say if you got a 150,000.00 house and the bills are paid and the mortgage is paid and you got money left over to fulfill your needs and some of your wants. I feel like that's a nice lifestyle right there, so you're not like how am I going to pay my bills.

Unlike Jonathan and Kim, who were led toward careers that may not have aligned with their interest, Maria wanted to go to college for career or job that she could make a lot of money doing. Maria's focus was money, if she could accomplish her goal without college she would take that option, education for her appeared to be a means to an end.

Well I will settle for RCC and transfer to UNCG was my plans back then. Now I will take anything that will get me a job. Because I wanted to be a teacher, but the teacher pay is not that good. I guess I want what I see on TV. Like on MTV and CRIBS. I don't need a lot but something that can pay bills. Like right now this was an unplanned pregnancy and I don't want to have to depend on the government.

Maria's lofty goal of having the lifestyle of superstars and television stars is unrealistic, however the lessons she has learned growing up with her father has taught her that obtaining the life she wants is only a drug deal away. She married a man who ascribes to the drug life and she does not think drugs are too bad if they will improve her lifestyle, "not to justify drugs but it did a lot for our family, especially, how we were living."

Now that You are Admitted, Will you Graduate?

College coursework is not for the faint at heart. It is rigorous and thus only those who have been adequately prepared in high school will succeed. Community, private, and public institutions of higher education require a minimum level of preparation, but students who exceed the minimum guidelines are likely to fare better when they begin their programs. U.S. high schools throughout the country have programs and tracks geared to prepare students for college level coursework, however too, often students find themselves woefully unprepared when they enter the college classroom.

Unfortunately, many times they have not had to ask for help and doing so in college may cause them to feel out of place and unintelligent. Unfortunately, many students who face this challenge dropout of school before the end of their first year. According to Whitbourne (2002), half of all freshmen will either drop out before getting their degree or transfer to another institution later in life to complete their degree.

For the six participants' in this study a combination of causes influenced their decisions to drop out of college, but one of the primary reasons for each of them was the level of rigor that was required. It was not just the difficulty of the coursework that overwhelmed them, but the depth of the work and the independent nature of college as a whole. The teacher/instructor was often not available at anytime to respond or fill in gaps where students' learning had been weak. Of the six participants' Jonathan expressed this fact more than any other student.

When I first got to A&T my whole freshmen year to me was really more about just having fun. Like the first couple of weeks I went to class all the time and tried to do my work and stuff like that I'll say after the first couple of weeks or a good month into the semester I pretty much gave up. I was really trying to do the projects, actually studying for test and stuff. I know I'm not in any way a dumb person or a challenge or anything and like it was just some of that work and off the notes that I would take in class some of the work would just not make sense to me. Like I would ask the teacher for help, and like at a four-year college they don't always have time to help you, so you have to go and meet with a study group. I made it to maybe a couple of the study group sessions you have to go to the study groups all the time. Teachers they not going to be there when you really, really need it, like they always having other classes or like preparing for tests or grade papers or something. It's more like you have to depend on the people around you and me I wasn't ready for that.

Study skills, independent learning, initiative, group work, and time management are all key ingredients to succeeding in college; however, being academically prepared to

do the work is the top ingredient. Jonathan did not allow himself time to adapt to his environment, or meet other students who would have been assets as he continued his studies. Two weeks of effort means that he had given up by Labor Day. However, he remained a student on scholarship and then a student on federal aid for nearly two years before he had exhausted his financial resources.

In high school Jonathan was a star; he was a leader in his school and was honored in his church. His family believed he would excel in college and in life, however, he was sent out unprepared to succeed due to the low standards that were accepted as achievement at his high school.

I took the honors classes, I took honors English, I didn't never make it to any AP classes. I believe, no, no I didn't, yeah I had honors Spanish, honors algebra and stuff like that. We had classes like real world 101. I believe that just the student's that were making just straight A's pretty much cause I mean when I say I was making A's and B's I mean I made maybe on a report card where you had six classes I would make maybe one A, 4 B's and a C, or something like that.

It is important for students to be encouraged, it is also important for students to recognize their strengths so that their goals are aligned in areas where they are strong or understand their weaknesses so they may improve upon them prior to taking on greater challenges.

Jonathan had the ability to succeed. However, he may have needed to start at a lower level math or in an environment that was not a large university so that the transition would not be so abrupt and socially he may have fared better. Additionally, he may not have chosen to explore the social scene at the level he did had it not been so accessible. Jonathan acknowledges that a smaller environment may have been better suited for him than the university "I know that the community college is smaller and it is going to be

better teaching habits and the classrooms are going to be smaller than a four year college.”

Kim was lost immediately, she felt so overwhelmed at the community college because she was completely unprepared for the quantity and the depth of the work that was required.

I got overwhelmed with the work, like aah, wow; I did not know you did so much. I mean between like essays, and projects, and 6, 7, or 8 pages of math each day, I was like wow. It seemed like I would go to school from 8 – 12 that morning to the afternoon, then I would go home and do homework for like 5 or 6 hours. I would be like I'm tired of this, and then It would just be like I started not like it no more.

Kim had not taken responsibility for her work in high school, because she was an athlete and took advantage of the free pass. Additionally, she had not taken the college preparatory classes that would have helped her in college.

I was an A, B, C student except in math, which was my hardest class, and I was a D student in math. They just put me in culinary arts, they were like you need another elective and you already took nutrition 1, and you can take nutrition 2, and advanced nutrition, so it was my pathway and I liked it and it was a fun class. After I graduated and it was like when I came to community college they asked what was my pathway and I was like nutrition and they said oh you want to do culinary arts and I was like no.

Kim's focus in school was dance, she was the captain of the dance team and very popular; therefore academics were not her primary focus. Once she arrived at the community college, she became painfully aware of what her athletic and popular positionality in high school had yielded.

David acknowledged the struggle college brought when he was asked if college was for everyone.

No it is not, because of the alone time. Your parents are not there for you, you don't have someone to bail you out. Then the requirements for academics, like in college you have to go to your fellow students for help first, and your teachers for help second. You have to read the books ahead of time, which is another reason it's not for everyone. Financial part of it is so extreme from several hundred to several thousand. Having to do things quick, alone, and finding your own group. Some people can't do this.

David had difficulty accomplishing the task he listed. His girlfriend joined him on campus, which may have been one of his greatest struggles while in college. David yearned for attention, he had struggled with his family's lack of attention and did not want to experience that alone feeling again, thus inviting his girlfriend to enroll in the same college. When the relationship turned sour, so did the education. A lack of focus and concentration and David quit "it was such a stressful time that I just began to do so poorly in my second year that I just stopped going."

Maria was aware that she was not prepared for college, "I didn't take any of those AP classes because my grade point average was low, like math was not my subject, oh yeah, I was college tech prep." However, once Maria arrived at the community college she was enrolled in all remedial classes, but found many excuses to quit college.

It was RCC it was only for a semester and I just didn't enroll again. The next year I went to Brookstone. Both of them were too far from home, and I quit Brookstone because you were just getting a certificate. I didn't think it was worth it and with gas it was just too much. I couldn't turn to my mom and dad because they're struggling themselves. So, that was because of gas and money, I didn't have gas, and I was working full time as a dispatcher but I just couldn't do it, I was taking night classes ,like basics like reading, and writing.

Maria seemed committed to returning to school, yet the added responsibilities may prove to be more than she can cope with.

Do I Really Want Education or Just a Job?

The aspirations of participants in this study were varied; however, each of them recognized the need for education beyond high school to achieve their future goals. For many rural youth as for the participants' in this study the idea of college was greater than the reality. The need for employment, transportation, and the struggle to succeed academically and socially once on the campus were all hindrances for these participants. Haas (1992) found that often, rural students placed great focus on relationships in high school and less focus on being proficient in coursework. Kim alluded to this when asked how her experiences had been in high school "socially, I was popular, I was the dance captain, and academically not too bad."

When asked about post high school plans, many high school seniors might say they plan to attend college, even if they have not taken measures to attend. However, once students graduate if they have not had the rigor, or if their family dynamics are such that work is primary, or if they have worked throughout high school, their focus may not be on education, but on the job. Four of the participants in this study appeared to be more focused on maintaining a job than on continuing their education.

Kim enjoyed high school and did not focus much on preparing for college, however in her senior year she realized that the popularity she had found at school was quickly ending. Realizing that she had not applied to colleges, taken advanced classes, or completed the work for her current classes Kim believed she would go to the community

college and just transfer. She enrolled in her local community college, however she did not quit her two jobs, because like high school, it was just community college and everybody got in, so it could not be too difficult. “A lot of people from my school came to the community college; it was like the high school transferred to the Community College.” Seeing so many of her former classmates only made the community college appear to be easy.

When I got to college, I took up 16 credits and still tried to maintain my two jobs. It didn't work out too well. I mean I stayed with it for a while but I ended up quitting college and kept my two jobs. I always kept a job, I don't want to say I'm spoiled, but my mom spoiled the heck out of me and my brother I mean I always liked to have money. I should have let one go, but me, I like nice things and I like money and you gotta work for it.

Kim's focus was on the money and although she noted that letting one of the jobs go may have helped her, she only wanted to let one of them go.

Thomas wanted to leave his community and do something, anything different. Initially, he prepared to enlist in the military, however after the initial physical he was found ineligible due to health issues. His second “way out” was college. Although, he had not prepared academically or financially for college Thomas applied to a program that he believed he was interested in and prepared for; culinary arts. “I went to military training, but they didn't accept me because of my thyroid, so after that I went to the community college.”

For Thomas school was a fallback plan, after a few other options fell through, “I was first thinking about sports, I thought I was going to get a scholarship off of sports. Then the military, but when none of that happened, once I started cooking more than I used to, I decided I was going to do the cooking thing.

Once in school Thomas decided that he needed a job. He had moved away from home closer to the school, although commuting was an option. His parents' had provided him with a vehicle; however, he wanted to get away. When asked why he decided to work and not focus on school "cause when I was working, because my refund check wasn't enough to pay my bills so I just left school alone and focused on work."

For Kim and Thomas, when they were faced with the choice to continue their education or maintain employment, both chose employment over education. For Maria work had a different value. Maria had grown up in an environment where drugs provided resources and pleasures that may not have been available without them. College appeared to be an option only as it allowed her to meet or exceed the resources that were available by selling drugs.

After high school, Maria enrolled in her local community college but when there was an element of difficulty, she quit. When asked why after one semester she said, "that was because of gas and money, I didn't have gas, and I was working full time as a dispatcher but I just couldn't do it, I was taking night classes, like basics like reading, and writing." Maria did not quit her job, but she did not struggle with quitting school, "I just didn't enroll again." If she was working full-time, gas and money should not have been a great challenge, at that time she was living at home, not married, and had no children. Work and money were her primary interests.

I will settle for RCC and transfer to UNC was my plans back then, but now I will take anything that will get me a job. I wanted to be a teacher but the teacher pay is not that good, well about \$40,000.00, or something decent but I could settle for a teacher.

Maria “could settle for being a teacher,” only if the money is good enough, she ignores the value of being an educator, or the pleasure of education for its own sake. Maria’s is extrinsically, motivated by what she views on Television and the lavish lifestyle she dreams of, “I want like what is on TV like on MTV and CRIBS.”

Returning to school is something each of the participants’ talked about, however, Maria’s interests stemmed from her mother’s encouragement. “I’m pregnant and I’m married, because my mom said I need to go back to school, so I figured I should.” Although Maria said, she was interested in returning to school, her reasons appear to be guided and the responsibility of a family may prove to be more than she can manage while attending college.

As each of the participants’ shared their stories, they were able to provide insight into their reasons for considering college and for dropping out of college. The hopes, dreams, and realities they faced along the way and the impact of what they had experienced provided each of the students with an opportunity to express it their way. A lack of preparation, the need for employment, a lack of family support, or just the desire to escape may have been the underlying issues that prevented them from succeeding. However, through this process each participant became aware of the fact that the opportunity to complete a college degree takes many paths and the one they have traveled may be the path to lead them to their institutional capital.

Sharing my personal story helped each of them feel that they were among friendly company, not “research judger.” I believe this sharing is what allowed them to relax and share very intimate details about their families, personal trials, and their reasons for

eventually dropping out of college. Most importantly, I believe just the feeling of being heard and believing that someone cares about their story made the interview valuable for them.

Implications

Understanding the struggle facing rural students who drop out of college is not a simple task for researchers. It is an issue greater than the community, teachers, parents, counselors, and legislatures individually. However, a collective effort with common goals and approaches may improve the problems with rural students' pursuit of higher education. Providing consistent high expectations from teachers and administrators, encouraging a sincere effort from all students, and educating parents early on, how to prepare students for post high school options are possible practices that may improve rural students' success in college. Preparation will ensure that if a student chooses to pursue a university education, vocational education, associate degree or the military they will be prepared and not required to take remedial classes after graduating from 12 or more years of compulsory education (Baum and Ma, 2007). All students should graduate from high school prepared to move into any post high school program of their choice. With consistent expectations for all students, it is likely that students will be aware of their abilities.

Educating parents, teachers, and students on the pathways or tracks during middle grades will provide all parents the information they need to help their child be prepared for their post high school choice. Although embodying the value of education is critical to academic success, without knowledge of what courses and what level of courses

students' need for college success, a student may achieve excellent scores, but in courses that do not prepare them for college. This study provides several implications for practice and policy that may assist parents, teachers, students, and communities with improving the outlook for rural students' who are interested in pursuing higher education.

The six participants' in this study provided insight into how their childhood rearing, schooling experiences and the norms of their community influenced their college experience. Although the goal of this study was to understand the impact of dominant cultural capital on rural students' college success, the research revealed that cultural capital in the forms developed by Bourdieu (1977) were primary factors because of their absence in the participants' lives. There were indicators where a lack of dominant cultural capital may have improved their outcomes; however, none of the participants' had access to the embodied, objectified, and institutional capital described by Bourdieu (1977). The lack of dominant cultural capital in any of the forms caused the focus to shift to the barriers that were evident in the study and within their rural communities.

Factors such as low teacher expectations', need to work, a focus on graduating from high school, and a lack of parental and community examples were greater barriers than attending a play or owning a valuable baseball card because the former influenced the development of embodied cultural capital on a daily basis. Recognizing that participants' are not one-dimensional characters' who can be summed up in a few hours of interviews, places this study in context of a beginning look into a problem that has persisted for decades. The implications and insights garnered in this study merely hope

to be a beacon of light that will open the door for continued research into the issues of rural students matriculation from high school to college and their successful completion of a college education.

Raising Teacher Expectations

Many believe there is great disparity between "what youngsters are capable of learning and what they are learning" (Bishop, 1989). The participants in this study all believed they were prepared to succeed in college; they maintained at minimum average grades and graduated from high school with a diploma, the institutional capital awarded to students' who successfully complete compulsory education in the United States. The participants applied to post-secondary institutions; and were admitted to college after high school. For each of them the goal was to complete a program of study that would open up more employment opportunities. However, they were unprepared for the level of work that was required by the institution of higher education they attended. All of the participants' took classes in high school where they were bored because the work was not challenging, or being discouraged from taking advanced classes because they might not succeed, or being given a free pass because they were athletes. The issues that must be addressed by administrators and teachers must be held accountable for their role in lowering the expectations.

Fordham & Ogbu (1988), suggest that students' who enter school with dominant cultural capital appear to be more academically gifted than children who have not been exposed to dominant cultural capital. Teachers' are more likely to favor those students' who arrive with dominant cultural capital and the expectations they have for them are

much higher than for those who do not have the capital. As has been the result of this, study the possession of dominant cultural capital, is not a predictor of intellect and thus should not be the basis for setting expectations. All students should be held at the highest level of expectation and nothing short of their best effort should be the measure of their success or failure.

Kim was rewarded for having been exposed to dance as a child and having the ability to lead the dance team at her school. Her effort in dance deserved a reward, but not academically. Academically, she should have been held to the same guidelines as all other students; homework passes for physical or athletic competitions should be cause for dismissal. Kim understood the practice existed and appreciated the benefit; however, she did not understand the impact it would have on her ability to succeed in college. It is difficult for a student to say no to a homework pass. Where is the integrity of the teacher? Educators are expected to prepare students to succeed at the next level. If students' are rewarded using different rubrics unrelated to academic ability, how will students improve when their scores have been inflated? If a student is not held to the highest standards, they remain mediocre and oftentimes will not progress at all, but digress. Teachers are the gatekeepers for promotion and hold the knowledge to assess what is and is not acceptable work. The standards are irrelevant if not all students are held to them. Asa Hilliard III (1991) contends, "our current ceiling for students is really much closer to where the floor ought to be."

Weinstein (2002) explains that teachers' expectations for students' can be self-fulfilling prophecies for students. Therefore, Jere Brophy (1986) advises teachers to,

routinely project attitudes, beliefs, expectations, and attributions...that imply that your students share your own enthusiasm for learning. To the extent that 'you treat your students as if they already are eager learners,' they will be more likely to become eager learners.

Teachers can begin to improve the outcomes of their students by first improving their attitudes about their students' abilities and expecting greatness out of each human being, not the best dressed, or the middle class, or the academically gifted, but every human being in their class.

Take a Gap Year to Work: But Make College the Priority

For many students graduating from high school is a rite of passage into adulthood, the last move they want to make is to enter another classroom. It may not be that they do not want to attend college or that money is more important, it may be the very real feeling of stress. High school and particularly the senior year is a very stressful year and a gap year offers a period to recoup. Unfortunately, many counselors, teachers, and parents believe students who do not attend college immediately following high school will never attend. The gap year is when a student postpones college for a year and spends that time doing something else (Rockler-Gladen, 2008). Some students work during the year others may travel abroad, and others may recover from the stress of their senior year.

A gap year may have benefitted a student like Jonathan, who received a full scholarship to attend college but knew that he wanted to have some fun before enrolling in college. Unaware of a gap year option, Jonathan had fun during his first and second years of college, but in the process, he lost his scholarship and financial aid options by goofing off. A chance to mature before college may have given him the life experiences

he needed to appreciate the option to attend college. Gap years give students the chance to learn responsibility.

For several of the other participants' work was a priority. Participants' whose families believed that graduating from high school translated into being a responsible adult may have encouraged or required students to take on jobs to assist with household responsibilities. For these students' it is important that they investigate the varied options and schedules available for college courses. Online courses, evening courses, and weekend courses are available to accommodate the influx of adults into college and the various work schedules of students. However, if students are unaware of these options they may take on work, extra classes, and continue personal activities or commitments that may impede their ability to succeed in any of them.

For students it is important to weigh their options and make a decision that will help them be successful once they enroll in college. Attending college immediately after high school may not be the best choice for all students (Rockler-Gladen, 2008). Counselors, teachers, advisors, and parents must be educated on the options for students after high school that does not interfere with their college options. If students do not feel the pressure to make life decisions immediately after graduating from high school, they may make wiser choices with some time to think and recoup from the stress of their senior year. College is an option for students even if they do not choose to attend two months after completing high school.

Thinking about College Early

Each of the participants' in this study began preparing for college in the second semester of their junior year or in their senior year. Most of them had not considered college as an option until an advising session late in their high school years. Only two of the participants in this study took the standardized test that are required to determine eligibility to enter most 4-year institutions, which may reveal a lack of knowledge about the tests or a lack of confidence in their ability to do well on the tests.

David was a junior when his class was invited to participate in the college information session held by the school counselors; prior to this meeting he was tracked, due to behavior into lower level courses, and had not considered college as an option. His teachers began to recognize his potential but he was already a senior by the time his courses could be adjusted. David took the standardized test and performed well enough to be accepted into a state university. Most students do not fare so well.

To prepare for college, families must begin seriously focusing on their child's academic coursework as early as 7th grade and make the expectation to attend and graduate from college part of the ongoing parenting of the child. Many times parents and students do not consider college as an option until well into their junior year of high school. This may for many be too late or make the process more difficult than it had to be. By this time, students should be visiting colleges, taking standardized tests, and exploring areas of possible interests. Additionally, the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) researchers has found that middle school lays important foundations for higher education (Williams, 2008). Students' in middle school

can also begin to use calendars to build time management skills that are critical to their success in college. They are at an age where all of their core classes are no longer in one room with one teacher and learning to plan time for studying and completing homework, engaging in after school activities, and watching television or playing video games help students recognize their limitations and their strengths.

Parents are the primary agent for students at this age; therefore, it is critical that they are involved and aware of what their child is doing more than ever. This is because by the second half of their 8th grade year students' will begin signing forms to enter high school. One of those forms is a pathway or tracking form that places children in their high school courses. Many times parents ignore these forms and sign them assuming the school has their child's best interest in mind. With an average class size of more than a hundred students, it is not likely that all children will be placed correctly. Parents' have the final say for their child's educational path. If they are educated in the requirements and review the form, careful to make adjustments as needed, their child will be correctly placed.

Most colleges prefer to admit students who have taken courses in certain subject areas. For example, many colleges prefer that high school students have taken challenging science courses and mathematics courses beyond general math and algebra. In the age of technology, basic computer skills are essential, and some colleges prefer two or more years of a foreign language. Understanding the requirements for college admission early can help families better direct their students' academic career in high school.

Many high schools and middle schools send out their standard course of study, which provides detailed information about the requirements for their state institutions and for graduating from high school. The difficulty for limited resource populations, first generation populations, and English as second language learners, is that much of the information is unclear. They may have no frame of reference and often may not know an appropriate question to ask to get help. It is critical that schools and communities come together to make information available in multiple forms that can be understood by parents from all groups. As a society, we assume everyone is on an even playing field and we neglect to recognize the team members who never show up by labeling them lazy, or suggesting that they do not care instead of realizing that many times they are not aware that there is a game.

Developing Rural College Mentors

Local colleges/universities and business leaders can play a critical role in changing the outcome for many rural students by bringing college fairs to the high schools, having local college graduates from a variety of fields talk to students about their career paths, and sponsor field trips to local universities.. Many college fairs are held in larger cities because the venues allow for more participation. However, rural families may not have transportation to attend the events. As a community or region, it is important that all students' have opportunity and access to attend events that expose them to college.

Many rural students also may not pursue higher education because they lack family members and role models who have attended college. Many come to believe at an

early age that college is something that will take them away from their communities where they feel safe and comfortable. In addition, many do not pursue higher education because they cannot negotiate the admissions process. Providing rural students mentors in the form of college students or professionals with college degrees from their local communities to share their experiences and alleviate the students' fears, may help students pursue and succeed in college. Spending time on the campus and learning the importance of early preparation will also promote college in a positive non-school environment way.

Dalton and Mills (2008) established a mentor program for rural students that would expose them to someone who had successfully completed college and could guide them through the process. According to their data, 280 colleges provided mentors for 480 pre – K – 12 schools, encompassing thousands of elementary, middle, and high schools students. Of those who received mentoring, 96% of the high school. Students enrolled in college (Dalton & Mills, 2008). As part of the program, the students were able to walk the halls of campuses, visit dormitories, talk to admissions officers on the campus, and talk to rural students' who were once where they are.

These kinds of programs are not new or innovative but they are often not implemented because of a variety of reasons that leave children uneducated. Our president (Obama, 2009) encouraged children to stride toward excellence. In addition to our children making strides, we as a citizenry must make education a priority for all students, not only those who are privileged with dominant cultural capital, but also those who are privileged to have their community cultural capital.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the current literature because it examines the impact of cultural capital on rural students' decisions to drop out of college from their perspective. Much of the literature, examining dropout rates focus on high school or urban dropout rates. Very few researchers have studied the phenomenon of rural students' college dropout. Examining the literature from the students' perspectives provide information not available when quantitative data is analyzed or when the view is from the teacher or parents perspective. This study gave six rural college dropouts an opportunity to give their views on why they dropped out of college.

It is plausible that the participants' lack of dominant cultural capital in the forms of, embodied, objectified, and institutionalized capital influenced their decisions to drop out of college. From the researchers perspective dominant cultural capital is prevalent in schools and communities and seeks cultural reproduction by focusing on students' who exhibit dominant cultural capital characteristics and limiting or diminishing the role of students who lack dominant cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973, 1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Carter, 2005; Delpit, 2006; Katsillis & Rubinson, 1990). However, the participants in this study did not either reveal intentionally, or make inference to dominant cultural capital characteristics that may have influenced their decisions to withdraw from college. Their omission revealed their lack of dominant cultural capital, due to family, community, and school influences—and the presence of non-dominant cultural capital that strongly influenced their decisions.

Each of the participants acknowledged that they were responsible for their decision to drop out, yet they did indicate that they felt they were not well prepared for college level work. Teacher expectations were low for all of the students, one student; Jonathan realized that the school he was enrolled in did not challenge him as much as the school he attended in 9th grade. He excused the action as a choice of curriculum set by administration. Jerry Bamberg (1994) stated,

The expectations teachers have for their students and the assumptions they make about their potential have a tangible effect on student achievement. Research clearly establishes that teacher expectations do play a significant role in determining how well and how much students learn.

Although teacher expectations play a significant role in how students learn, parents, and community members also play a vital role in the education of our children.

For the participants' it may be said that personal influences may have had the greatest impact on their decision to drop out of college. However, although dominant cultural capital may not have had an influence on their decision, the cultural capital that they embodied from their communities may have had a significant impact on their personal influences. Growing up in communities filled with drugs and violence must have an impact on the psyche, and each of these participants had been touched by this criminal scene. Administrators', teachers, parents' and students' are all responsible for ensuring that rural children, like urban children, do not fall through the cracks. Raising the education levels and the quality of that education is essential to improving the

economic life of rural communities and the well-being of the rural population (Gibbs, 2005. P. 4).

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APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol

Community – Research Question: How does the cultural capital that rural young adults have impact their future decisions?

1. Tell me about this community.
2. What is it like living here?
3. What are the people that live here like?
4. What do you do for fun; for relaxation?
5. What do people expect from young people growing up in this community?
6. What would you like to see available in this community that is not offered?
7. What activities do people in this community participate in?
8. Who makes decisions in this community? Who does not? How are these leadership roles maintained?
9. Where do people in your community work?
10. What is important to people in this community?
11. What do people who live here believe about education? Religion? Politics?
12. Where do most people in this community go for vacation?

Education – Research Question: What challenges do rural young adults face that lead to dropping out of college?

1. Did you go to school in this community?

2. Tell me about your experience in school? [subquestions: What was elementary school like for you? Middle school? High school?]
3. What were the best things about your school experience here? The worst things?
4. Was school challenging for you academically or socially?
5. What were the relationships like between students and teachers in your school experience? In elementary school? Middle school? High school? (authority, transmitter, facilitator, collaborative, etc.)?
6. Were you aware of the “track” that you were on in school? (if so what track were you on and did you want to be on that track)
7. What do you believe is the purpose of K-12 education?
8. When did you first start thinking about your plans for after high school? What did you think about?
9. When did you first start thinking about going to college? How did thinking about going to college make you feel?
10. Do you believe that your school experiences in this community prepared you to go to college? Why or why not?
11. Did you receive any help with your college plans? If so, from whom? How did they help you?
12. Tell me about your experience in college?
13. What were the best things about your college experience? The worst things?
14. Was college challenging for you academically or socially?

15. What were the relationships like between students and teachers in college?
16. What were your relationships like with other students in college?
17. What campus challenges did you encounter that lead to dropping out of college?
18. What are your future career/job/family goals?
19. Do you think a college degree is necessary for you to reach your goals?
20. Would you consider going to college at this point in your life? if so why? if not why?

Family – Research Question: How does cultural capital impact rural young adults' decision[s] to attend college immediately after graduating from high school?

1. Tell me about your family.
2. Tell me about life in your family.
3. What things are important to your mom and/or dad (or caregiver)?
4. What things are rewarded or recognized in your family?
5. What are the everyday family practices and routines?
6. What behaviors and attitudes are encouraged or discouraged?
7. What role did family play in your decision to pursue higher education?
8. Did your family talk to you about preparing for a college education? If so, when? What did they say?
9. Was going to college discussed in your church or other areas of life outside of school? (if so what was said about it)
10. What role does religion play in your decision to go or not go to college?

11. What social groups do you or your family participate in or are members of?
(Money, race, land ownership, religion, jobs, etc.)
12. When did you decide what you would do after high school?
13. What influenced your decision about going to college?
14. As a young adult what did you think of higher/college education?
15. Does anyone in your primary family (mother, father, siblings) have a college degree?
16. Do you think that going to a community college is the same as going to a 4 year college? (if no, why?)
17. Do you agree with the statement “College is not for everyone?” if so who is college for and who is it not for?
18. Did money effect your decision to go to college? (if so how?)
19. What home challenges do rural young adults encounter that lead to dropping out of college?
20. What personal challenges do rural young adults encounter that lead to dropping out of college?