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Perspectives of 12th grade students, their families, and school officials related to affordability and accessibility of the West Virginia PROMISE Scholarship program at Logan High School

Craig S. McClellan

Dissertation submitted to the
College of Human Resources and Education
at
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in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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in
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ABSTRACT

Perspectives of 12th grade students, their families, and school officials related to affordability and accessibility of the West Virginia PROMISE Scholarship program at Logan High School

Craig S. McClellan

With only 14% of West Virginia's population over 25 years old possessing a bachelor's degree, the lack of a skilled workforce often thwarted state legislators' attempts to attract new industry to the state's struggling economy. To address workforce qualification concerns, state educational stakeholders implemented a merit-based scholarship program with average requirements in 2002. The West Virginia PROMISE (Providing Real Opportunities for Maximizing In-state Student Excellence) Scholarship Program goals include encouraging high school students to work harder, and to entice more graduates to attempt post-secondary work at in-state institutions.

This qualitative study was designed to discover the perceptions of five high school seniors and their families who qualified for the PROMISE Scholarship. Interviews were conducted to gather data about family perceptions of college, educational and economic opportunity, and the PROMISE Scholarship in their college decision-making processes. Using an emergent design, additional data was collected from school personnel about programs mentioned as influential to family decision-making processes. Collected data was analyzed using a constant-comparative method.

Study findings indicated that students are working harder to earn the PROMISE Scholarship. The findings also reveal factors influencing family decisions to attempt post-secondary work such as perceptions of their community, college, the benefits of attaining a college degree, and the financial importance of the availability of the PROMISE Scholarship. There were also indications that school programs were influential factors.

Implications of study findings for West Virginia educational stakeholders indicate concern over the continued funding of the program by study participants. There was also evidence of a lack of understanding of program rationale. It was also evident that more research needs to be conducted as the program continues to discover the eventual career paths and locations of PROMISE graduates. Additional research should also be conducted on students and families choosing not to take advantage of the scholarship program to attempt post-secondary work.

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My recent life has been dominated by two major personal goals. They include my life-long dream of earning a degree from West Virginia University, as well as a more recent goal of earning a Doctorate in education. How does one begin to acknowledge all those individuals who were instrumental in two such important personal accomplishments? I suppose it will encompass those who most inspired me to accomplish this task, the people of Logan, West Virginia. This place, no matter how long I have been gone is my home. These people, whether I know them or not are my people. Those from Logan who have inspired me the most are my family and friends. They include people who loved and supported me like my Aunt Jane Trammell and second family Donnie and Barbara Dyer. They also include those who are no longer here to watch me graduate like my Grandmother Madge McClellan and friend Beth Kraus. I would also like to thank officials at Logan High School who so willing helped me in this process like Pam Porter and long-time friend Jan Hanlon.

The most important West Virginians, however, are my mother Marilyn, brother Chris, and the original Mountaineer, my father Cliff. This accomplishment is as much for them as it is for me. My father still teaches me life-lessons even though he left us in 1999. My mother supports me and loves me unconditionally no matter how impractical my goals at times may seem. My brother is my best friend and tolerates my shortcomings. His children Nathan, Emily and Allyson constantly remind me of why education is so important to our society.

I would also like to thank colleagues who have guided me in this journey that began in Washington, DC and who have become my friends. They include people like Dr. Mary Futrell and Dr. Jay Shotel at The George Washington University and Emerson Elliott and those at NCATE who taught me and supported me through the most difficult time of my life.

I would also like to acknowledge West Virginia University and all the meaningful times it has provided me throughout my life and express how proud I am to finally be among its Alumni. My mentors here have become like family to me. They include Paul, Jean, Emily, and Joe Chapman and Van Dempsey, Jaci-Lynn, and Tara Webb-Dempsey. They also include other members of my doctoral committee, Dr. Sebastian Diaz and Dr. Ernest Goeres, and everyone in the Benedum Collaborative Office. Special thanks also go to people like Carol Spiroff for all her help and friendship.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
My Motivation.....	1
Appalachia and West Virginia.....	2
The Research Topic.....	9
Studying Five Students, their Families and School.....	10
Choosing Logan County.....	10
The Research Questions.....	13
Implications of the Study.....	13
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	17
Affordability and Accessibility.....	18
A New Type of Merit.....	26
The Debate over these New Merit-Based Scholarship Programs.....	30
The West Virginia PROMISE Scholarship.....	34
Appalachian Culture.....	40
Summary.....	44
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN.....	47
Making the Case for a Qualitative Study.....	47
Method.....	52

Setting and Time Table	52
Choosing the Participants	52
Data Collection	56
Document Analysis	56
Interviews	57
Observation	58
Protecting Confidentiality	58
Triangulation	59
Data Analysis	60
Data Presentation	60
Reflections	62
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS	64
Introduction from My Field Notes	64
The Taylor Family: “I’ve lost all hope for this community”	65
The Leary Family: “If everybody leaves, nothing’s going to turn around.”	81
The Johnson Family: “Somewhere close to me.”	98
The Potter Family: “Not in Logan”	118
The Mason Family: “Trapped”	132
CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL PERSONNEL AND PROGRAMS	157
Introduction	157
School Administrators	157
School Counselors	160
Senior Projects	162

ACT Workshop.....	170
Teachers	176
Conclusion from My Field Notes	180
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	182
Conclusions.....	184
Research Question 1	185
Research Question 2	187
Research Question 3	189
Research Question 4	190
Findings and Implications.....	192
Research Question 5	192
Future Research.....	199
REFERENCES	202
APPENDICES	210
Appendix A: Initial Interview Protocol for Student Participants.....	210
Appendix B: Initial Interview Protocol for Parent or Guardian Participants.....	211

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: *West Virginia Average 2005 Tuition Costs*.....7

Table 2: *Logan County Population Trends 1960-2000*.....11

Table 3: *Highest Educational Attainment Percentages for Logan and Surrounding Counties Ages 18-24*.....12

Table 4: *State Merit-Based Scholarship Programs*.....28

Table 5: *West Virginia Fall College Enrollments 2001-2004*.....39

Table 6: *Logan High School College Attendance Information*.....53

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

My Motivation

As I creep ever so quickly toward middle age, I find myself in what often seems to be constant reflection of my life. I have come to realize that who I am is the direct result of those who came before me. In May 1999, I experienced the loss of my mentor and role model . . . my father. Since his death, I am constantly amazed by the person he was and what he was able to accomplish with his life. He was not a rich man or nationally recognized figure. He referred to himself as a “simple” person who did the best he could to help others as a school educator. He was a son of the West Virginia coalfields born during the Great Depression. He was a student told by his Logan High School football coach that “he was not college material” when asking for a college application reference. He was an average high school student who failed at his first attempt at college work. My father, however, was a resilient individual. While faltering in his studies at West Virginia University, he also started on the university freshman basketball team at a height of five foot seven inches. My father eventually succeeded in college, not only earning a Bachelor's degree, but a Master's as well. He finished his career with thirty-eight years of service to the children of West Virginia and Virginia as a teacher, coach, and school administrator. My father may have been “simple,” but he was resourceful . . . he was a West Virginian.

My life began in the same small southern West Virginia town that raised my mother and father. For me, Logan was a place where I was nurtured by extended family and neighbors, and where my cousins were my best friends and were always around when I needed *looking after*. This place was home. As the region's coal mining industry began its decline during the late 1960's and 70's, my father was faced with a difficult decision. Should he and his young family

suffer through the impending hard times in the place we called home, or venture beyond its mountains in search of a life with more opportunity? My father eventually made the decision to leave family and friends behind for a chance at an economically different life. This is a decision that has long affected our family with both positive and negative results. By leaving West Virginia our family had more educational and economic opportunities, but these advantages were not without a cost. The price of these opportunities included our family, friends, and hometown of Logan. Had there been more economic choices in Logan and West Virginia, perhaps this decision could have been avoided.

Having finally returned home to West Virginia after decades of being a *visitor* in another state, I find myself amazed over the man my father was, and the spirit of the people and land that was his very essence. As an educator, I am driven to explore the conditions that made him, as an Appalachian, the resilient person he was. By understanding this land and its people, I hope to provide a resource to our state's leaders as they attempt to redefine who we are as West Virginians through educational and economic policy. As a West Virginian, I am driven by the hope that future young West Virginia families will not be forced to make the difficult decisions that faced my father. New information for state policymakers is needed to facilitate a renewal process that will finally end this diaspora of West Virginians, and one day enable our people to come home.

Appalachia and West Virginia

West Virginia is a state with a unique culture and great natural beauty; however, it is also an area with significant economic and social challenges. It is the only state that lies completely within the region known as Appalachia. This region suffers from a high school graduation rate almost 5% lower than that of the United States average (ARC, 2004). Over half the counties that

lie within the Appalachian region have dropout rates that exceed 40% (ARC, 2004). It is also a region plagued and handicapped by degrading stereotypes of its people as ignorant *hillbillies* and an isolated, uncultured way of life in the Appalachian Mountains.

Embedded within West Virginia's Appalachian identity and culture, lies the state's own unique characteristics and challenges. The state's population of 1,815,354 has grown only .4% since the 1990 census (US Census Bureau, 2005). Twenty-two percent of West Virginia's children live in poverty compared to a national average of 17%. Twenty-one percent of the population has less than a high school diploma or equivalent as compared to Kentucky's 17.2%, the lowest of all states neighboring West Virginia (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2005). Less than 15% of the state's population over 25 years old has earned a bachelor's degree compared to the national average of 24.4% (PROMISE, n.d.). Forty-three of the state's 55 counties fall below the state average with respect to highest education attained, and the state's median percentage is 10.8 (US Census, 2000). Only 59% of the state's high school graduates attempt higher education (PROMISE, n.d.).

The 2000 US Census predicts that West Virginia will be one of only two states to lose population over the next 30 years. The challenges facing West Virginia leaders as they attempt to address these statistics are not new. They have been in place for decades and are the result of the states rural mountainous geography and an economy based upon natural resources (ARC, 1995; DeYoung & Lawrence, 1995; Donohew & Singh, 1969). They are deeply entrenched within the state's people and their culture.

Since the decline of coal mining and other industries based on the extraction of natural resources, West Virginia's economic relevance has remained in a state of economic flux. State political leaders have continually attempted to develop and foster new economic directions for

the state and its working citizens. Many modern leaders believe West Virginia's future may no longer lie in what is below ground, but what walks above it. Leaders from the political, social service, health, and educational arenas are attempting to help West Virginia re-identify its self and its place within the modern United States' economy and society. How can West Virginia's leaders create this new type of *mining*, one that extracts the talents and resources of its people? How can any of these goals be realized with one the nation's lowest percentage rates of college graduates?

Industrialization created the need for workers who specialized in one aspect of the work environment. This included the creation of workers who specialized in one mundane task on the assembly line, or inside the mines and mills needed to supply the raw materials for the industrial process. These tasks required little thought; they only required doing. The world is now adapting to the ramifications of a technological revolution. Modern technology has given us access to more information and communication than ever before. This revolution has also created a new economy and the need for a new type of worker (Drucker, 1994; Mashall & Tucker, 1992). These new demands placed upon workers are causing problems for nations such as the United States, as well as states such as West Virginia. National and state leaders are working to find ways to reinvent economies and work forces that will promote their economic relevance in the modern world.

Our educational systems must create this new American workforce that is more trained to think and make work-related decisions (Marshall & Tucker, 1992). Americans must constantly learn to grow, and reinvent ourselves if our nation is to stay competitive on all areas of the world stage. As the primary educational stakeholders responsible for change and reform, politicians, policy makers, and educational leaders must address this challenge. As the entities charged by

the constitution with the responsibility of educating our citizens, states must lead these educational renewal efforts. They must develop and implement programs that will not only train citizens to be better American workers, but also better workers within each state's own unique economic system.

New economies can no longer be based on the abundance of natural resources. Workers who can think are now the most valued resource in today's corporations (Marshall & Tucker, 1992). Modern corporations are organized around these thinking workers. With the nation's lowest percentage of citizens over 25 years old who have completed post-secondary education, West Virginia is attempting to reform its economy to compete on the national and international economic stage. State leaders must improve this completion rate to increase the number of workers with the skills necessary to attract new business and industry. To accomplish these reform goals, more West Virginia high school graduates must attempt and complete post-secondary work.

Throughout modern times, economic and educational leaders have maintained that providing greater access to higher education by making it more affordable is a way to address challenges such as those facing West Virginia's workforce. Affordability of tuition rates, however, is also a concern facing West Virginia families. As state funding for higher education continues to decline nationally, tuition rates are increasing drastically to account for the disparity. According to the College Board (2005), average total tuition and fees increased by 7.1% at four-year public institutions, 5.4% at two-year public institutions, and 5.9% at private institutions between the 2004-05 and 2005-06 school years in the United States. American families are being forced to absorb the greatest part of these increases, thus drastically affecting

the affordability of higher education. Table 1 shows how West Virginia average tuition costs compare with national averages for the 2005-06 academic year.

Although West Virginia tuition costs are below the national averages, with public two-year and four-year tuitions rates ranking as the 12th and 11th least expensive respectively, these figures are deceiving. In the 2004 Measuring Up report compiled by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, West Virginia earned the grade "F" in the category of affordability. The report states, "Over the past decade, West Virginia has made no notable progress in providing affordable opportunities for higher education" (p. 8). This grade is largely influenced by West Virginia's low per capita household income. Because this amount is one of the lowest in the nation, it takes a higher percentage of family income to send children to college. The United States Census Bureau (2005) reports West Virginia's median household income in 2000 was \$29,696 as compared to the United States average of \$41,994. West Virginia's low rating is further supported when comparing the reliance on student loan rate of \$3,046 with the national average of \$2,619 (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2005).

With the belief that the lack of a college educated workforce was impeding state economic reform efforts, the West Virginia State Legislature attempted to address the issues of affordability and accessibility of post-secondary education. In 1999, a program was approved to assist students who graduated from state high schools with college tuition to in-state institutions. The program was named the West Virginia PROMISE (Providing Real Opportunities for Maximizing In-state Student Excellence) Scholarship Program. With a mission of increasing state economic opportunities by making post-secondary education more affordable and therefore more accessible for West Virginia students and their families the program is now in its fifth year of implementation. In 2005, 3,457 PROMISE Scholarships were awarded (PROMISE, 2006).

Table 1

West Virginia Average 2005 Tuition Costs

	Two-Year Public	Four-Year Public	Four-Year Private
United States	\$2,191	\$5,491	\$21,235
West Virginia	\$1,840	\$3,650	\$15,300

(College Board, 2005)

Information is needed to assess what effects the implementation of the program has had upon students, families, and schools. This study is designed to answer the question, what are the perspectives of 12th grade students, their families, and school officials related to affordability and accessibility of the West Virginia PROMISE Scholarship program at Logan High School?

Because West Virginia leaders are attempting to change the *culture* of state students and families not attempting post-secondary work after high school graduation, this culture must also be explored. If there are cultural influences, they should be addressed during policy formulation. As a state engulfed within the Appalachian region with complex, deeply embedded barriers to educational attainment, any attempts of policy formulation must consider these influences if the policy effort is to be effective. By implementing PROMISE, educational policy makers are gambling that it will address all barriers to post-secondary education. They are betting that the availability of college tuition will override any negative cultural influences on the pursuit of post-secondary education.

More information is needed on state programs such as the PROMISE Scholarship that is designed to facilitate needed educational and economic change in West Virginia and its communities. This information is needed not only to assess program goals for accountability purposes, but to also reveal directions for new policy. State educational policy development should be based on a combination of national and state goals within state and local realities (Marshall, et al, 1989). It is a time when educational stakeholders gather to make decisions with the information at hand (Rist, 1998). The resulting policy should reflect the values of the people it is to serve about the way things should be done (Marshall, et al., 1989). These considerations should be emphasized when attempting to address the challenges facing West Virginia. State

policy must be formulated in West Virginia's unique context that uses the strengths of the state's people to address their weaknesses and help them to realize their maximum potential.

I propose that adequate information does not exist about the PROMISE program to effectively analyze its strengths and weaknesses given the following key questions. Is the PROMISE program meeting its stated objectives to help West Virginia children and their families? How can the effectiveness of PROMISE be judged? Do West Virginia educational policy makers have the information they need for the accountability aspect of the policy making process? The data on the PROMISE program that currently exists is based on statistics that document award and retention rates. Social concerns have also been voiced from national groups such as the Harvard Civil Rights Project about where the money to fund these programs comes from and who ultimately receives it (Orfield, 2002). Are national social concerns such as these valid in West Virginia with its unique context? These questions gain additional importance for all West Virginia educational stakeholders as funding challenges of the program face legislators on an annual basis.

The Research Topic

This study will focus on five 12th grade students at Logan High School and their parents or guardians. Using interviews, it will reveal how students and parents or guardians perceive the college experience and how these perceptions influence their pursuit of post-secondary education. The study will also identify what effect the availability of the PROMISE Scholarship has on their notions of affordability and accessibility in the college decision-making process. With any policy effort there can be unexpected outcomes. This study will identify these effects as they emerge during the study and their effects upon other aspects of the educational process at

Logan High School. An analysis of the findings will also suggest implications for state policymakers.

Studying Five Students, their Families and School

Five students and their families will be used to gain multiple perspectives of the effects surrounding the PROMISE Scholarship program. The students selected for this study and their parents or guardians must view the PROMISE scholarship as their primary means to a college education based on family socio-economic status. The experiences of these five students will be documented to tell the stories that are unique to each student and their parents or guardians. The experiences will also be used to find themes that are common among the stories in the contexts of affordability and accessibility, as well as any other emerging factors.

Choosing Logan County

Logan County has a population of 36,502 and lies in the center of the southern coalfields, boasting a rich tradition in both coal mining and local history connected to such national folklore as the Hatfield and McCoy feud. The population of Logan County has steadily decreased since 1960 (See Table 2), having lost 3.2% of its population since the 2000 census. It has an 18 to 24 year old population of 3,568. The educational attainment statistics for this group are similar to many counties within this region of West Virginia that now struggle to find new economic directions with the decline of its coal based economy (See Table 3). Of Logan County's residents 25 years or older, only 63.1% have high school degrees and 8.8% have a bachelors degree or higher. This is almost half the state's low national average of 14.8%. Logan County's three high schools include Chapmanville, Logan and Man. Logan High School is the

Table 2

Logan County Population Trends 1960-2000

Year	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	61,570	46,269	50,679	43,032	37,710

(US Census, 2000)

Table 3

*Highest Educational Attainment Percentage for Logan and Surrounding Counties
Ages 18-24*

	Boone	Lincoln	Logan	Mingo	Wyoming	WV
Not a High School Graduate	24.4	32.8	29.4	32.5	22.9	21.8
High School Graduate or Equivalent	46.3	43.5	41.7	38.7	49.5	34.3
Some College, No Degree	22.9	20.4	22.8	21.5	23.3	35.0
Associates or Bachelor's Degree	6.2	2.9	5.4	7.0	4.4	8.4

(US Census, 2000)

largest high school in Logan County with an enrollment of 801 students in grades 9 thru 12.

Almost 44% of the school's students qualify for free or reduced lunch as compared to the state average of almost 50% (WVDE, 2005). Twenty-eight and 25 PROMISE Scholarships were awarded to 12th grade students at Logan High School in 2004 and 2005 respectively.

The Research Questions

What are the perspectives of 12th grade students, their families, and school officials related to affordability and accessibility of the West Virginia PROMISE Scholarship program at Logan High School?

1. What perceptions do students and parents or guardians have about attending college?
2. What factors influence student and parent or guardian decisions about attending college?
3. How has the availability of the PROMISE Scholarship influenced the student and family college decision-making process in West Virginia?
4. How has the availability of the PROMISE scholarship influenced other factors such as student effort and achievement, parent or guardian support, and overall school programs?
5. How can the perspectives of students, families, and school officials inform policy maker attempts to increase post-secondary educational access and greater economic opportunity for West Virginia High School graduates with programs such as the PROMISE Scholarship?

Implications of the Study

Rist (1998) states that policy makers often do not have access to adequate information during the policy-making process. He identifies the three components of the process as formulation, implementation and accountability. During formulation, information is needed to

help policy makers define the problem they are trying to answer. These problems can be complex, with answers having many effects not only upon the problem, but also upon those who will be most effected by policy efforts.

During the implementation phase, information is needed to assess if the policy was enacted correctly and efficiently. Reasons for any failure must be identified, such as a lack of commitment of those directly implementing the policy, inadequate resources, a change in key individuals that changed the direction of policy or program efforts, or a change in conditions of the initial problem since the policy was originally implemented. Rist (1998) states "Social conditions do not remain static, and the realization that the characteristics of a condition can change necessitates periodic reexamination of the original policy intent" (p. 415). A problem anywhere during the implementation process can make a well formulated policy ineffective.

Information is also needed to hold policy accountable for accomplishing its stated objectives. When dealing with educational issues, there are often limited resources to enact much needed reform. Educational stakeholders must be committed to ensuring these resources are being efficiently spent. The individuals formulating and implementing the policy must also be held accountable for their intentions and commitment. Is the merit-based PROMISE Scholarship program with its more moderate requirements the mechanism needed to foster educational and economic changes in West Virginia? Rist (1998) states:

...policy makers and program managers have been misled more than once by investing a great deal of time and effort on their instrumentation without equal emphasis on answering the question of whether their measures were the appropriate ones to the problem or condition at hand (p. 414).

The information this study provides will help address policy maker's informational needs.

All West Virginia educational stakeholders (educators, voters, legislators, policy makers, etc.) need to know how programs such as the PROMISE Scholarship actually impact the lives of the state's children and families, as well as the schools that serve their communities. The statistics show that college enrollment across the state increased since the implementation of the PROMISE program. Quantitative data alone, with a "heavy emphasis on quantifying outcomes and process have left key aspects of the condition undocumented and thus unattended to by those who should have been paying attention" (Rist, 1998, p. 414). The use of the qualitative interviews to provide the personal perspectives of those most directly affected by the PROMISE Scholarship program will give these facts and figures faces and names.

Thorough information can also better inform national supporters and critics of these merit-based programs. The qualitative data produced from this study will provide depth to the existing quantitative data on the PROMISE program. Quantitative numbers only document outcomes, not processes. This new information will provide the stories that are missing in the debate to help better understand the process. Because the research that exists on programs such as PROMISE is anecdotal, based on numerical facts and figures, the information this study produces will provide an exclusive picture of West Virginia's merit-based program to better support or refute the claims of success or criticism. It will also present the unique state conditions in which this program exists and operates. It should provide a glimpse of the program from different a perspective, the perspective of those most directly affected by the program; West Virginia students, parents and guardians, as well as school programs in general.

Educators across America are calling for more family involvement in the education of children. When programs such as the PROMISE scholarship provide this, educators must be ready for the benefits and challenges associated with increased involvement. Because this

program is reaching out to families that may have limited exposure to the college experience, the role of school officials such as the high school counselor is of greater importance. School officials must be prepared with answers to questions and the knowledge to educate parents on how their decisions can affect their child's educational future. Information from this study will be useful to these educators attempting to be resources to families.

This study may also provide information that is unique to the students, families, and communities of West Virginia. Programs can be developed to address the unique needs of West Virginia's children in order to facilitate greater academic achievement and school reform through efforts such as PROMISE. A student's initial success in college can depend on the types of programs they take while still in high school. Is PROMISE a program that can help facilitate school reform?

Appalachian educational stakeholders in states such as West Virginia are looking for answers to the barriers that have handicapped the region and its people educationally, socially, and economically for decades. These challenges are complex cultural aspects of a mountain existence that serve as both strengths and weaknesses in the character of Appalachian people. These stakeholders will continue developing and implementing policies and programs such as the PROMISE Scholarship program to foster educational opportunity for its children. Programs that attempt to empower our people and state should be reviewed when developed and implemented to better understand the complex interaction of the factors involved. This study will attempt to provide a source of rich information for the evaluation process. This must be done to better, and more fully understand what the actual barriers are facing West Virginians in the pursuit of post-secondary education and the impact that policy created programs such as PROMISE actually have on overcoming these barriers.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Policy makers who formulated and implemented the PROMISE Scholarship program believe the answer to West Virginia's low percentage rate of citizens with a bachelor's degree is to give middle class families greater access to state institutions of higher learning. The assumption of the PROMISE scholarship program is that this accessibility will occur by making college more affordable to these families. An underlying assumption can also be made that by addressing these two factors with the PROMISE program, any other factors deterring students and families from attempting college work will also be addressed. This study attempts to discover if the status of these assumptions is accurate by exploring the perspectives of 12th grade students, their families, and school officials related to affordability and accessibility of the West Virginia PROMISE Scholarship program at Logan High School.

This review of the literature focuses on the concepts of affordability and accessibility upon which the PROMISE Scholarship was formulated. The literature on these factors and their relationship is well-documented. This review will give the reader an understanding of these concepts, their history and development within the context of national financial aid policy. Literature is also included to provide an understanding of newer merit-based scholarship programs with average academic requirements such as PROMISE, as well as the emerging national debate over their effects.

Additional discourse is provided on a possible underlying factor that influences the relationship of affordability and accessibility in student and parent or guardian perceptions. The effects of Appalachian culture upon educational attainment goals are not as well documented, but available research does present considerations that could be both strengths and weaknesses for

state policy makers when attempting to change the college attendance trends in rural Appalachian states such as West Virginia.

Affordability and Accessibility

In 1956, Arthur S. Adams, President of the American Council on Education wrote this statement in the introduction of *Background for a National Scholarship Policy*:

Human talent is our greatest natural resource. Its conservation and development should be, therefore, a primary concern of everyone. When human talent is wasted, everyone is deprived; when it is rightly developed, everyone benefits. Indeed, American democracy is firmly established on the bedrock proposition that the fortunes of the individual and society rise and fall together. (p. v)

Calls for an educated citizenry are not new within any generation (Longanecker, 2002). Times influenced by events such as wars, economic strength and weakness, and periods of nationalism have always influenced policy makers and politicians to refer to the wide range of benefits that come with an educated society. The American economy has gone through several transitions in its 229 year history. Changes in technology and world events have facilitated economic change. The United States has transformed from an agricultural society, to an industrial society, and now into a knowledge society (Drucker, 1994). Americans must now “think for a living” (Marshall & Tucker, 1992).

Again, this is not a new notion. In 1956, similar statements like this were made:

There is a critical shortage of specialized manpower. It is nation-wide. Yet there are large numbers of capable high school graduates who do not go to college or who do not stay long enough to be graduated. This lack of maximum development of the most able high school students represents not only a loss

to the individuals concerned but also a tremendous loss to society. Continued national development-perhaps national security-may depend on a more positive program to retrieve this loss. The need for highly trained personnel will not diminish (American Council on Education, 1956, p. 1).

Today's educational stakeholders are making the latest calls for a better educated population. They are the same calls that have been heard by every generation of Americans and in every region and state of our nation. Today's educational policy makers must answer these calls with policy efforts to prepare future generations to compete in modern local and global economies. As a society, we must create better educated workers needed for a modern workforce, while remaining committed to social justice and equality for all Americans. In the past, American educational stakeholders, policy makers and politicians have proposed greater access to post-secondary education for students and families as the means to facilitate the change necessary to keep the nation socially strong and economically competitive. When attempting to provide greater access, however, special attention must be given to what segments of the population should be targeted.

Higher education stakeholders have always placed great emphasis on affordable post-secondary education costs for students and families. In 1947, the Truman Commission Report stressed the need for affordable college tuition rates. The report emphasized the importance of an educated citizenry to national security (President's Commission on Higher Education, 1947). As financial aid programs and policies have evolved, concepts such as affordability, need, merit and choice have risen to the forefront of the debate. Most educational stakeholders today would agree financial aid should focus on increasing accessibility of post-secondary education by balancing out rising tuition costs to keep college educations affordable (Longanecker, 2002).

Disagreement, however, begins when the discussion turns to who should have this access? The debate then divides into two camps, those who favor need-based aid and those in favor of merit-based programs.

Early financial aid efforts were limited. What financial aid that existed was usually awarded by an individual college or university and was funded from private sources (Creech & Davis, 1999; McPherson & Schapiro, 1998; Thelin, 2004). These incentives were mostly merit-based and aimed at attracting students available from within the institution's applicant pool (Creech & Davis, 1999; Thelin, 2004). Colleges attempted to reward the most worthy and deserving students. Worthy students had demonstrated potential or actual evidence of academic excellence. Deserving students were those who achieved academically in spite of financial challenges (Creech & Davis, 1999; Kane, 2004; McPherson & Schapiro, 1998; Thelin, 2004). Private college aid efforts attempted to decrease the tuition gap between public and private institutions (Thelin, 2004). There was little emphasis at this time placed on providing greater access to higher education to larger groups of students.

In 1944, however, one of the largest merit-based financial aid programs ever envisioned was created. The GI Bill was enacted to reward veterans who were returning home from World War II with tuition support in exchange for their service to the nation. A goal of this program was to create more educated citizens as the nation began moving into the cold war period (Creech & Davis, 1999; McPherson & Schapiro, 1998; Thelin, 2004). National leaders and policy makers felt that by rewarding these individuals for their service to the nation, it would also create a stronger national labor force. A majority of these veterans would have qualified for need based-aid by today's standards if these resources had existed (Creech & Davis, 1999).

Through the 1950's the trend of merit-based financial aid continued. These programs took on new meaning with the onset of the Cold War between the United States and the former Soviet Union. Programs such as the 1958 National Defense Education Loan Program provided financial support to applicants with outstanding academic credentials and were committed to studying math and science (Creech & Davis, 1999, Thelin, 2004). Merit-based aid that was blind to need became increasingly available for students with aspirations of careers that were considered valuable to the nation. Political leaders during the 1960s were interested in improving the educational levels of the population to strengthen the economy and win the Cold War (Creech & Davis, 1999).

National security was not the only issue facing financial aid policy makers in the 1960s. This was also a period of great social unrest as Americans sought to redefine issues of social justice and equality. Once again, greater access to college for students was viewed as a major route to initiate needed changes. Civil rights leaders attempted to increase the desire of African-Americans to attend college. This was viewed as a way to help overcome the negative effects of generations of segregation. In 1964, the Johnson administration implemented The Great Society reform program. One idea from this movement was that extending educational opportunities to all who would benefit from them, not just those demonstrating outstanding academic achievement, would make the country stronger (Creech & Davis, 1999; Longanecker, 2002). The nation was also seeing a marked increase in the number of students graduating from high school who were adequately prepared for college (Creech & Davis, 1999; Kane 2004). Private schools also benefited from these trends as they experienced the results of a growing emphasis placed on going to prestigious colleges and universities (Kane, 2004; Thelin, 2004).

These commitments to social change and the increased desire of students to attend college emphasized providing greater access to college for those with financial need. This notion gained support during the mid 1960s and 1970s as need-based programs began to surpass merit-based funding programs. Financial need and the ability to pay began to be emphasized over merit (Creech & Davis, 1999). Prior to this period, states had been the primary source of funding for financial aid programs. During this time, however, the federal government began taking a major role in providing funding for need-based programs (Creech & Davis, 1999; Heller, 2001; Thelin, 2004).

With the passage of the Higher Education Act of 1965, federal funding for financial aid increased from \$200 million to \$14.4 billion (Gillespie & Carlson, 1983 in Creech & Davis, 1999). This program addressed growing social justice concerns of racism and generational poverty, and was implemented to prevent students from being denied access to higher education due to lack of financial resources (Creech & Davis, 1999; Heller, 2001; Kane, 2004; Perna, 2005). In 1972, the Pell Grant program was finally implemented as a delayed response to the conclusions of the Truman Commission Report (Thelin, 2004). Originally called Basic Educational Opportunities Grants, the program was an addition to the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Creech & Davis, 1999; Kane, 2004; Thelin, 2004). It also represented the first program that issued aid directly to the qualifying student rather than to colleges and universities as were federal work-study funds (Thelin, 2004). With tuition rates remaining low and the increase in need-based aid for lower income families, the rate of minority and other disadvantaged student groups attempting college work increased (Orfield, 2002).

These changes in national financial aid policy also brought the issue of choice into the debate. Proponents for increasing a student's choice of institutions he or she could attend wanted

policies and programs that would enable students from lower or middle class backgrounds to choose private institutions or more selective public colleges with higher tuition rates (Creech & Davis, 1999; Kane, 2004). Because new federal aid was issued directly to students, they had greater choices of where they chose to pursue post-secondary education. New state funded programs were also created and targeted at increasing student choice (Heller, 2002). If students met the qualifying criteria based on enrollment status, need, and academic standing, they were guaranteed aid and could spend the aid at whatever college or university at which they had been accepted (Thelin, 2004). McPherson and Schapiro (1998) wrote that during the 1970's:

...the claims of need were to be met by eliminating price as a factor in choice of school for needy students and the claims of merit were to be met by matching the most able and promising students with the best educational alternatives (p. 8).

There was also emphasis placed on students being provided this greater access through the community college system. Students who would have previously enrolled at two-year colleges were now enrolling at four-year institutions. Community colleges saw significant increases in enrollment from students who previously would not have attempted college work (Boyd 1975; Creech & Davis, 1999).

Politicians also began to realize the potential ramifications of such programs to make voters happy (Creech & Davis, 1999). New voter support came from the ability of these programs to make post-secondary education realistic and affordable for families. Other state leaders, who supported giving greater choice, believed that if students attended private institutions, it would save tax payer dollars because often the financial aid award for these private institutions was less than a public institution was subsidized for the same students. The

state would still get the benefit of a college educated citizen, but at a lower price. This appealed to more frugal tax-paying voters (Creech & Jones, 1999).

State spending for scholarships increased during the late 1960's and 70's with the passage of the State Student Incentive Grant program (Heller, 2002). Fifty states and the District of Columbia had need-based financial aid programs by 1969 (Creech & Davis, 1999). This amounted to \$200 million awarded by states. (Fenske & Boyd, 1981, in Creech & Davis, 1999). Because college tuitions began drastically increasing after 1970, the increases in available financial aid ensured the continuing availability of access to higher education for American students (Thelin, 2004).

As college tuition rates increased, the debate of who should be provided greater access and choice began and quickly intensified. Many educational stakeholders believed that limited financial aid dollars should be spent on the students with the most financial need. This group also believed that providing choice was a secondary concern as it was more important for needy students to get some post-secondary education regardless of where it was received (Creech & Davis, 1999; Kane, 2004). Educational policy makers and researchers also presented a set of barriers to needy students having access to higher education. These barriers included:

- 1) Families could not overcome financial obstacles in order to afford college tuition for their children;
- 2) Students could not overcome the academic challenges that were the result of poor high school preparation;
- 3) Student and family perceptions that a college education was not worth the money and/or effort;

- 4) Student and family perceptions that the student would be unsuccessful attempting college level work;
- 5) The lack of a local higher education institution with affordable tuition. (Creech & Davis, 1999).

These educational stakeholders maintained that financial aid policy would have to address these barriers if accessibility efforts for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds were to continue.

During the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, the United States experienced a decrease in the number of students graduating from high school. This once again increased the rhetoric of merit-versus need-based aid. Because the number of applicants to college decreased, institutions of higher learning began to target recruiting and financial aid efforts towards older and other non-traditional students. Once again there was increased emphasis for need-based financial aid as these older students were often independent, no longer having access to parental financial support. Private institutions were increasingly awarding merit-based awards that were blind to need to attract the most talented students (McPherson & Schapiro, 1998; Thelin, 2004). Financial aid programs also began to include features that would support and improve retention rates after students began college work (Creech & Davis, 1999).

With tuition costs continuing to rise in the late 1980s, more middle income families began competing with lower income families for available financial aid dollars. Because a higher rate of middle income parents vote, this group was getting more attention and support than in the past from politicians (Creech & Davis, 1999; Orfield, 2002). By the end of the 1980s, many states had created new merit-based scholarship programs designed to reward top high school graduates if they would attend state schools (Creech & Davis, 1999). The programs cost less than

state need-based programs but addressed voter demands for merit-based programs that recognized effort and scholarship (Creech & Davis, 1999; Thelin, 2004). These types of aid programs answered the demands for help being placed upon state politicians by middle class voters. This was also regarded as a good investment of money because merit-based recipients were often better prepared than need-based recipients, and their chances of graduation were higher. Programs that allow awards to be only used in their home state were also regarded as a significant benefit for states to keep their best students home (Creech & Davis, 1999).

With the beginning of the 1990s, financial aid programs had grown from initial attempts to reward a small number of academically talented students, to complex high dollar programs that addressed issues of access, choice, and affordability. These were programs designed to help students overcome financial, cultural, academic, and geographic challenges to attaining post-secondary education. At this time, the Pell Grant program was serving approximately three million students (Kane, 2004; Thelin, 2004). The financial aid policy debate of merit- and need-based aid programs was intensifying with voters, politicians, and policy makers as families with a wider range of economic resources were demanding financial help to address rising tuition rates. (Longanecker, 2002). The discussion was about to take a new direction.

A New Type of Merit

With a growing number of poorly educated high school graduates and the exodus of qualified graduates to out-of-state colleges and universities, the State of Georgia formulated and implemented the HOPE (Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally) Scholarship program (Creech & Davis, 1999; Finken, 2003, DTAE, n.d.). The program began in 1993 under the leadership of Governor Zell Miller (DTAE, n.d). It was designed to provide families from middle class economic backgrounds better affordability and access to post secondary education (Creech

& Davis, 1999). This new merit-based program was directed at students with good or average academic standing, who may not qualify for other need-based financial aid, and were at risk of not attempting college work. The state proposed that with the possibility of financial aid not otherwise available, students would work harder in high school. It was also believed that the program would entice students who could afford college tuition rates, to stay in-state and attend public institutions for the tuition benefit (Creech & Davis, 1999; Finken 2003). The program is funded by the Georgia Lottery for Education (DTAE, n.d.) Since the implementation of the Georgia HOPE Scholarship program, 12 states now have similar programs (See Table 4). These merit-based scholarships are the fastest growing financial aid programs.

These new merit-based programs provide financial assistance that does not consider student need. They also carry more average merit requirements for grade point averages and college entrance exam scores. These requirements often include B averages upon high school graduation and above average scores on state or national standardized tests (Cauchon, 2004; Creech & Jones, 1999; Dynarsk, 2001; Heller, 2002). Since the Georgia Hope Scholarship Program began, the amount of money now spent on various types of these new state merit-based programs has tripled, while need-based funding has remained relatively unchanged (Finken, 2003). In 2001-2002, the total amount of money spent on these new merit-based programs was \$863 million (Heller, 2002). The proportion of state financial aid awards based on merit rather than need increased from 11 to 24 percent during the 1990s. Although Pell Grant funding now exceeds over \$6 billion and need-based financial aid is still the largest aid program that states fund, spending for merit-based programs has significantly increased (Creech & Davis, 1999, Kane, 2004).

Table 4

State Merit-Based Scholarship Programs

State Program	Year Implemented
Alaska Scholars Award	1999
Florida Bright Futures	1997
Georgia Helping Outstanding Pupil Educationally (HOPE) Scholarship	1993
Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship	1999
Louisiana Tuition Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS)	1998
Michigan Merit Award Scholarship	2000
Mississippi Eminent Scholars Program	1996
Missouri Higher Education Academic Scholarship Program (Bright Flight)	1997
Nevada Millennium Scholarship	2000
New Mexico Lottery Success Scholarship	1997
South Carolina Legislative for Future Excellence (LIFE) Scholarship	1998
West Virginia Providing Real Opportunities for Maximizing In-State Student Excellence (PROMISE) Scholarship	2002

(Heller, 2002)

These merit-based aid programs with more average academic requirements all have similar goals and objectives. They include:

- 1) Addressing rising tuitions costs with special emphasis of giving access to students from middle income backgrounds.
- 2) Encouraging high schools to better prepare students for college and for colleges to better support the academic needs of students once they begin attending classes.
- 3) Students who are better prepared out of high school will not need remedial classes and these costs will be saved.
- 4) Encouraging students to attend college in their own states, keeping the best students at home. (Cauchon, 2004; Creech & Davis, 1999; Finken, 2003; Longanecker, 2002; Perna, 2005)

These programs also have the shared characteristics of helping families by encouraging better school participation and financial support, improving the skills of state citizens, using easy to understand criteria for qualification, and a simplified application process (Creech & Davis, 1999; Finken, 2003; Perna, 2005).

With the wide-spread implementation and popularity of these programs among voters across the nation, critics and proponents of the programs have lined up with their respective arguments for and against these new merit-based programs (Nelsen, 2003). While this debate rages, other higher education stakeholders remain concerned about the affordability of post-secondary education in the United States as tuition rates continue to rise (Creech & Davis, 1999). College educated citizens improve our economy and society. Citizens know that education after high school can lead to a more lucrative career. The income gap between 25 to 34 year old males who graduated from college and those who did not increased from 19 to 52 percent from 1980 to

1985 (Kane, 2004). Figures such as this intensify the already heated debate as both sides of the argument lobby for a greater share of available financial aid funding.

The Debate over these New Merit-Based Scholarship Programs

In defense of these new programs, supporters quickly point to the increase in college enrollments in states with these new types of merit-based programs (Cornwell & Mustard, 2001; Dynarsk, 2001; Longanecker, 2002). Students who would have previously attended community colleges are now applying to four year institutions. Community college enrollments have also increased as students who would not have previously attempted college work are now applying for admission (Binder & Ganderton, 2001; Finken, 2003). Proponents also point out that the states with these programs are keeping their best students in the state (Binder & Ganderton, 2001; Cornwell & Mustard, 2001; Dynarsk, 2001; Longanecker, 2002).

Research conducted by Henry, Rubenstein and Bulger (2004) indicates that the Georgia HOPE program has accomplished other goals in addition to increasing college attendance rates. Students who have earned the HOPE scholarship appear to perform better on college level work according to indicators such as credit hour accumulation, college grade point averages and graduation rates. The study also shows that students, who earn the scholarship by barely meeting program requirements, perform slightly better than students with similar academic backgrounds who did not receive the scholarship. If these same students become ineligible for the program, any benefit received from the initial scholarship acceptance appears to dissipate. Supporters believe the results of studies such as these are clearly evident; students are working harder to get into college due to the availability of these new merit-based programs (Cauchon, 2004; Creech & Davis, 1999).

Critics of these programs present a different picture of the effects of these scholarship programs. In 2002, the Harvard Civil Rights Project compiled seven research papers from a 2001 symposium on "State Merit Aid Programs: College Access and Equity." In the forward of this compilation, Dr. Gary Orfield, Co-Director of the project, states why these programs have not only been ineffective, but have also increased the inequities of accessibility to post-secondary education efforts. Orfield's (2002) reasons include:

- 1) Students from higher income families generally attend better schools and perform better on standardized tests that help determine merit-based rewards decisions. Family income should not be the basis for accessibility to post-secondary education.
- 2) Since the recessions of the 1970s, higher education budgets have been cut at the state level which has helped lead to the steady increases in tuition rates. As tuition rates have drastically increased in the past twenty years, so has the unequal division of wealth among families. This has made financial aid a critical aspect for lower income families attempting to send their children to college. The lack of available aid to students from lower income homes has prevented these students from attending college. Parents cannot pay the costs.
- 3) Efforts to remedy social injustices have been undermined as financial aid resources have been shifted away from non-white students, rural and urban students, and students from single parent and other non-traditional homes.
- 4) Politicians find these merit-based programs extremely popular with middle class voters who vote in high numbers at the polls are reluctant to make changes.

Orfield (2002) states in conclusion, "Now we have high and rapidly rising tuitions, affirmative action has been banned in some of our largest states, institutions have increased their entrance

requirements, and gaps in college participation are growing by both race and income” (p. xi). He (2002) also poses this question: “Are we spending a rapidly growing share of our inadequate student aid budgets to pay for programs that actually make college opportunity even more unequal” (p.xiii)? Many critics agree and are attempting to make the case that these programs do not provide greater access, but rather greater choice for the affluent at the expense of educational opportunity for the most needy (Cauchon, 2004; Cornwell & Mustard, 2001; Dynarsk, 2001; Heller & Rasmussen, 2001; Longanecker, 2002; Nelsen, 2003).

Concerns of specific state programs have also been cited by critics. In Georgia, a higher percentage of lower class income goes to fund a scholarship program more utilized by middle and upper class families. This occurs because a higher percentage of lower class income goes to lottery type gambling that is the primary funding source of the program (Cauchon, 2004; Cornwell & Mustard, 2001; Creech & Davis, 1999; Finken, 2003; Longanecker, 2002). A similar program in Michigan has been charged by the American Civil Liberties Union as being in violation of the Civil Rights Act because of discrimination to lower-income, mostly minority students and families (Finken, 2003; Heller & Rasmussen, 2001). There is also a belief that wide-spread grade inflation is occurring as a result of parents pressuring classroom teachers to ensure their children maintain average qualifying grades (Creech & Davis, 1999).

Other critics point out that many of the states that have implemented the new merit-based programs are dealing with serious funding issues, or will in the near future (Shoichet, 2002). They emphasize that as tuition rates continue to increase, so must the funding of these programs (Finken, 2003). Because of the popularity of these programs with voters, politicians are often hesitant to change the programs even when faced with severe shortages in resources to pay for these programs (Finken, 2003; Heller & Rasmussen, 2001; Longanecker, 2002; Shoichet, 2002).

Ultimately, these critics are concerned that need-based programs will lose the funding priority battle with the newer merit-based programs (Heller & Rasmussen, 2001).

Supporters of these programs counter that many of these arguments are not valid if the possibility of the support they offer encourages students to work harder and be better prepared once they enter college, as well as keeping outstanding students in state (Cauchon, 2004; Longanecker, 2002). Creech and Davis (1999) state that "the non-need based grants may not enhance access or choice for affluent recipients, but they will increase overall participation, which is the goal of these programs" (p. 135). Others emphasize that if lower income students are underserved by these programs, it does not necessarily mean they are being harmed by their implementation (Longanecker, 2002; Redd, 2002, in Selingo, 2002). To support their arguments, they point to highly funded need-based programs such as the Pell Grant for lower income students and the research indicating that regardless of how a lower income student funds post-secondary education, if adequately prepared, all other barriers diminish once accepted (Creech & Davis, 1999; McPherson & Schapiro, 1998).

Federal and state financial aid funds cannot meet all the needs of our citizens (Creech and Davis, 1999). There is evidence that when the cost of attending college is reduced for lower income students, more will attempt post secondary work (McPherson & Schapiro, 1998). Do the traditional need-based programs or those that are merit-based serve as better catalysts for attempts to increase accessibility? Some maintain that one program does not have to thrive at the other's expense. They point out that financial aid policy should include efficient use of both programs (Nelsen, 2003).

The West Virginia PROMISE Scholarship

In the late 1990's, West Virginia legislators began looking for answers to the high rate of outward migration of West Virginia students after high school graduation. Many of these students were considered to be the state's best academically prepared for successful college work. This exodus of state talent was consistently emphasized as legislator attempts to attract new industry to reform the states struggling economy were often unsuccessful. With only 14% of the state population over 25 years old possessing a bachelor's degree compared to the national average of almost 25%, the lack of a skilled workforce was often referenced. State legislators were concerned over the belief held by national business leaders that West Virginia's workforce did not possess the modern skills necessary to work in today's technology based-industries (L. DeFrank-Cole, personal communication, April 24, 2005; US Census, 2000).

State research during this time indicated that students were 73% more likely to remain in the state after graduation if they attended West Virginia colleges and universities. To address workforce qualification concerns and keep West Virginia college graduates home, State Senator Lloyd Jackson led an initiative to formulate and implement a merit-based scholarship with average GPA and test score requirements. It was believed this strategy would entice more West Virginia high school graduates to attempt post-secondary work and for better students to attend in-state institutions if given tuition benefits. The educational opportunity such a plan would offer students would also provide economic opportunity for the state (L. DeFrank-Cole, personal communication, April 24, 2005).

West Virginia's program was modeled after Georgia's HOPE Scholarship program (L. DeFrank-Cole, personal communication, April 24, 2005). Educational stakeholders in Georgia reported conditions in 1993 similar to those in West Virginia, with top high school graduates

leaving the state to pursue post-secondary education in other states (Creech & Davis, 2003; Finken, 2003). The HOPE program was chosen as a model because early Georgia state college attendance statistics indicated a steady increase in the number of students attending state institutions since its inception in 1993. According to the 1990 United States Census, 19.3% of Georgia's over 25 year old population had earned a bachelor's degree or higher. This rate is now 24.3%, just below the national average of 24.4%, and ten percentage points higher than West Virginia's 14% (United States Census, 2000). Limited data on other aspects of the program were unavailable during the PROMISE program's formulation in 1999 because it was still relatively new. Today's information on the HOPE program is still limited primarily to statistics on acceptance and retentions rates, as well as demographic data.

In addition to Senator Jackson's facilitation, West Virginia's proposed scholarship program was also supported by State Congressmen Bob Wise who made funding and implementation of the program part of his successful 2000 gubernatorial election. In 1999, the scholarship was passed by the West Virginia legislature and entitled the West Virginia PROMISE (Providing Real Opportunities for Maximizing In-state Student Excellence) Scholarship Program. Funding for the program would come from state video lottery proceeds. This presented an initial challenge to the new program from supporters of other state policy efforts that relied on this same money as a funding resource (L. DeFrank-Cole, personal communication, April 24, 2005). Although the PROMISE Scholarship program was approved during the 1999 legislative period, the program was not funded until 2001. The program became effective on April 9, 2002 under West Virginia Code §18C-7-6 (WVHEPC, 2002).

Today PROMISE offers yearly tuition and fees at a state public university, or \$3,326 at a private institution, for a maximum of 4 years for a bachelor's degree or 2 years for an associate's

degree. Eligible students must graduate from a West Virginia high school with a minimum “B” average overall, as well as “B” average in the core classes of English, math, science, and social studies. Each student must also achieve a 21 composite ACT score or 1000 on the SAT and an average score of 21 on the subject area tests or 480 on the math section and 490 on the verbal section of the SAT. Funding for the program comes from various appropriations designated by the West Virginia legislature. These funding sources have included the West Virginia lottery, taxes on various entertainment devices, and video lottery proceeds (PROMISE, n.d.).

The PROMISE website (n.d.) reports the following reasons for establishing the program:

- While West Virginia has 74% of its students graduate from high school only 59% of the graduating seniors go to college.
- According to the United States Census Bureau, only 14.8% of West Virginia residents over the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree – compared to 24.4% in the United States as a whole.
- Several other states have found that the quickest and most effective way to motivate students to study harder and to achieve in school is to offer good students the opportunity to attend college with a reduced tuition rate.
- Too many West Virginians do not think college is affordable.
- By putting forth a reward for achievement, we're saying to students that working hard and playing by the rules and meeting tough expectations will earn them opportunity to attend college. That's a lesson that should ring throughout our educational system.
- Getting more students into college is the best thing we can do to turn around the economies of our communities, to attract energetic people to the state and to keep our best students in West Virginia.

- Middle-income students often do not qualify for need-based aid. Often they borrow large sums to attend college. The average loan burden carried by our college graduates in West Virginia has increased by more than 50% since 1994. (Information, Facts and Figures)

A qualitative study on the PROMISE Scholarship program was conducted in 2004 at West Virginia University (McClellan, 2004). This study consisted of interviews with six randomly selected West Virginia public high school counselors who worked directly with students and the PROMISE program at his or her school. The focus of the study was to generate information on the PROMISE Scholarship program from the perspectives of school officials most responsible for implementation of the program. The protocol for these interviews was based upon the goals of the PROMISE Scholarship program. The findings of this study included:

- More Students are inquiring about, and applying for acceptance to college.
- Students are working harder in their classes to meet the eligibility requirements for the PROMISE Scholarship.
- Parent involvement in planning student educational programs has increased as a result of the scholarship program.
- Counselors are spending an increasing amount of time on the PROMISE Scholarship related issues.
- School improvement has resulted as school officials have developed and implemented creative programs with limited resources to help students meet PROMISE Scholarship academic requirements.

Regardless of school counselor background, school size, or school community all six participants believed the PROMISE Scholarship Program was beneficial to students at their school and needed to continue (McClellan, 2004).

The PROMISE Scholarship program is educational policy attempting to address West Virginia's challenge of an inadequately trained workforce. It attempts to facilitate state economic opportunity by providing educational opportunity through greater access to post-secondary education. State reports demonstrate that college attendance rates have increased each year since the implementation of the PROMISE Scholarship program (See Table 5). The percentage rate of students attending in-state institutions has also increased during the tenure of PROMISE (WVHEPC, 2004). The anecdotal evidence claims that students are working harder to earn the tuition benefit as evidenced by yearly increases in the number of PROMISE Scholarships awarded (McClellan, 2004).

The high utilization the program has also proven to be costly. It is now in its fifth year and has exceeded budgeted costs each year of its existence. The 2006 state appropriation of \$27 million to fund the program will again be exceeded if no legislative changes are made. Under the current scholarship requirements, the program is estimated to cost over \$40 million for the 2007 fiscal year and \$51 million by 2010 (PROMISE, 2005). These figures have also made the program controversial as state legislators' debate each year over the most effective use of limited state dollars.

Because of this unanticipated expense, information is needed that does not yet exist about the value of this young program to the West Virginia and its citizens. State educational stakeholders and policy makers need as to know if the availability of the tuition benefit the PROMISE Scholarship provides is enough incentive to change the state's culture of not attempting college work, and can also keep our best students home for postsecondary study. This information is needed to analyze if the program implemented to address Georgia's needs is able to address the needs of West Virginia, immersed within its unique Appalachian identity. Through

Table 5

West Virginia Fall College Enrollments 2001-2004

Year	High School Graduates	Number Attending College	Percentage Attending College	Percent Attending West Virginia Institutions
2001	19,142	10,791	56.4	44.7
2002	17,833	10,081	56.5	46.6
2003	17,971	10,673	59.4	49.8
2004	18,027	10,928	60.6	50.9

(West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, 2004)

this study aspects of Appalachian culture may also surface that impact the college decision-making process. A preliminary explanation of these possible cultural influences that hinder attempts for post-secondary education must also be identified.

Appalachian Culture

Figures show that 16.3% of Appalachian seniors complete post-secondary degrees after high school graduation as compared to the national rate of 24.4% (WVDOE, 2004). Higher educators report that students from this area are often not adequately prepared for academic success in college. The students who do choose to attend institutions of higher learning also encounter many cultural conflicts. Children from Appalachia often share accounts of being ridiculed when traveling to areas outside Appalachia (Sohn, 1994). Students who choose to attend colleges outside the region report nightmarish stories of experiences on campus and in residence halls. These accounts of bad experiences discourage students from attempting college, or cause them to leave college and return home untrained with unfulfilled academic goals (Howley & Harmon, 1996).

Culture can be defined a set of meanings and beliefs shared by a group of people. Appalachian culture is co-dependent upon many aspects of Appalachian life. People, geography, and education are intertwined in describing this region and its people. Mountain culture is a great source of pride for its people, but also reflects the isolated existence of their communities. It is a culture deeply embedded in its own history and filled with tradition (Keefe, et. al., 1988). The culture, however, can also create great barriers for these people to overcome, and have negative effects on the educational outcomes of their school experience (Donohew & Singh, 1969; Keef, et. al., 1988). Some (i.e. DeYoung and Lawrence, 1995) believe the structure of American

schools serves as the actual barrier to student achievement because they conflict in philosophy with Appalachian beliefs.

DeYoung and Lawrence (1995) provide insight into the educational systems in rural areas such as Appalachia in *On Hoosiers, Yankees, and Mountaineers*. Survey research was conducted to propose theories of educational failures of rural areas. They proposed that current educational models emerged as a result of the Industrial Revolution. They are rooted in the premise that an urban existence, economically, socially and culturally, is superior to one that is rural. An urban environment was perceived to be more advanced. Educational objectives prior to the industrializations of America centered on the needs of the local community. Industrialization, however, created a need for a new type of trained worker. It also created new social problems within fast growing urban areas. "The common school movement was an attempt to solve city problems of immigration, social disorganization, and child labor abuses which were rarely issues in the countryside" (Perkinson, 1991, p.4). Public education models not only attempted to address urban social issues, but also resembled the assembly line production of factories in their structure. As these models developed and were implemented in the urban environments they were eventually exported to rural areas (DeYoung & Lawrence, 1995).

Modern educational systems still prepare students with skills necessary to migrate to urban environments where life is perceived to be more sophisticated and advanced (DeYoung & Lawrence, 1995). These educational systems prepare students with skills for work in information and technology related fields. The dilemma this causes in areas such as Appalachia lies in the cultural contradictions it creates. Appalachian people possess strong family ties (Keefe, et. al., 1988). These people do not necessarily regard urban living as superior to rural life. The Appalachian parents surveyed did not collectively desire children to venture far from home. It

was reported that higher-level education qualifies one for a wider variety of career opportunities that may not be available within small rural communities (DeYoung & Lawrence, 1995). A majority of Appalachian parents surveyed felt that education did little to help them, and will probably do little to help their children. De Young and Lawrence (1995) concluded from the study that many residents of Appalachia find little relevance in public school education to their own personal existence.

Jonathan Sher (1989) conducted research that revealed Appalachian parents, who were also students in the region's schools, "came away from their experience feeling poorly served, if not just plain mistreated by the schools" (p.7). Appalachian children are placed into educational systems which conflict with their cultures, thus making education seem irrelevant. Only basic education has traditionally been needed to work in industries such as coal mining. The education offered in their schools does not seem to pertain to their existence, thus leading to low motivation and achievement. Conflict within the school social structures can also make the environment uninviting to students.

The Appalachian cultural experience is unique to the people that live in this region. It is a region plagued by degrading images and suffers greatly as a result of negative stereotypes. As members of the region's communities, children are greatly affected by the stereotypes placed upon them and their way of life. Often these demeaning stereotypes create barriers, preventing these children from achieving their dreams (Keefe, et. al., 1988; Sohn, 1994). Within Appalachian communities and schools can exist another social structure divided between those native to the area, and those who have transferred from areas outside the region. Those who transfer in from other locations are initially not trusted and regarded as outsiders by natives. This labeling has emerged as a defense mechanism for Appalachians because those not from the

region have historically brought negative stereotypes from the outside with them. Being native to the community or region serves as a refuge to Appalachian people, but emerges as a reluctance to venture outside the community. This creates a strong sense of community identity, but also fosters a decline in educational pursuits at the secondary and college level for Appalachian children (Howley & Harmon, 1996; Keefe, et. al., 1988; Sohn, 1994).

In a study involving three families from Appalachia, Keefe, Reck, and Reck (1988) found that conflict exists within many Appalachian schools that inhibit academic success. These researchers used three case studies to explore ethnicity and education within Appalachian schools. The studies involved three separate families from different socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. Each family had roots in Appalachia of at least three generations. The children from each family attended schools that contained large populations of students native to Appalachia, and students not native to the region. What emerged from their work was the common identity these three families shared as *mountain people* (1988). Each family expressed a sense of conflict with *outsiders* living within their communities. Outsiders were defined as “people born outside the mountains” (p. 5). All three families described the stereotypes brought in by outsiders, as creating hostility between natives and outsiders. One family leader stated, “The place I’m from is worth as much as where they’re from” (p. 7).

Some Appalachian educational leaders compare the characteristics of Appalachian students to those of minority students in mainstream America. Sohn (1994), upon entering Appalachian schools as a teacher, attempted to relate the study of multiculturalism to her students. Upon researching multiculturalism, she found that the Human Rights Commission had classified Appalachian people as official minorities because of high dropout rates in school, and discrimination in housing and employment. Sohn (1994) also researched other work done on this

concept. She found that “Appalachian students have problems similar to people of color: a distinct dialect much removed from the standard and an essentially oral culture, both of which are subject to social stigma” (Grabe, cited by Villanueva, 1993, cited by Sohn, 1994, pp 2-3). Sohn (1994) identified these dialectic differences to be cultural, and resulting from a high degree of illiteracy within the region. She also provided evidence that “they share problems of a non-mainstream culture: poor educational opportunities, high unemployment, and low self-concept” (Grabe, cited by Villanueva, 1993, cited by Sohn, 1994, p. 3). Sohn (1994) eventually taught the idea of multicultural education to her students by demonstrating that the Appalachian region is dominated by stereotypes and is often ridiculed by mainstream America. She promoted this discussion to analyze and breakdown stereotypes with the hope of building self-esteem within her students.

Summary

Whenever America has needed a plan to initiate societal changes, whether in the name of economics, social concerns, or to ensure national security, policy makers and politicians have proposed increasing the accessibility to college as a possible solution. Today's financial aid policy attempts to yield these desired outcomes demanded by educational stakeholders at all levels of government. When implementing the newer types of merit-based financial aid programs, policy makers and politicians must weigh both the benefits and consequences of these programs. These programs should increase access to post-secondary education for all, not simply greater choice for the affluent. These programs must be formulated and implemented to help more students realize their potential. They should not harm equal educational opportunities to the most needy of our society as some critics claim. The direct and indirect effects of these issues

can cross all aspects of our society. This range includes effects upon economies, societies, and schools themselves.

The more moderate merit-based programs such as the West Virginia PROMISE Scholarship are relatively new, and little research exists that explores the positive and negative long-term effects of the programs. Sizeable research exists to document the effectiveness of need-based financial aid programs on providing accessibility to post-secondary education (Heller, 2002; Longanecker, 2002; Marin, 2001). Educational policy makers must initiate this needed research on these newer programs so they can be more efficiently analyzed for their strengths and weaknesses.

Creech and Davis (1999) wrote that "State leaders have to implement student aid programs and policies that most effectively and efficiently enhance participation in post-secondary education for as many citizens as possible" (p. 134). Because of family resources, colleges, and available state funds, today's financial aid programs need to be unique and efficiently address the needs of individual states as well as the nation at large. As tuition rates continue to increase, these financial aid issues will also inspire more heated debate among the public and educational policy makers. Political leaders will face increasingly difficult funding decisions with voters paying special attention to their actions.

The PROMISE Scholarship program attempts to provide greater accessibility by making post-secondary education more affordable for West Virginia high school graduates and their families. Does the program address or account for the unique context that is West Virginia? If the state's Appalachian culture influences the perspectives of parents with no college experience when deciding to encourage their son or daughter to attempt post-secondary education, programs such as PROMISE must recognize their impact. If there are local cultural effects, these must to

be addressed by educational policy makers during policy formulation and implementation. State policy makers are betting that the availability of the tuition benefit will override any negative cultural influences. This study will attempt to generate new knowledge to the concepts of affordability, accessibility, as they pertain to West Virginia's unique Appalachian setting.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

Making the Case for a Qualitative Study

To discover the perspectives of 12th grade students, their families, and school officials related to affordability and accessibility of the West Virginia PROMISE Scholarship program at Logan High School an intimate descriptive study of five families and their reflections was used. The research method I selected to acquire and analyze this data was chosen to reveal, describe, and document factors influencing these five families when making college related decisions and the effects that the PROMISE Scholarship program has in the decision-making process. The research design was built upon the following guiding research questions:

1. What perceptions do students and parents or guardians have about attending college?
2. What factors influence student and parent or guardian decisions about attending college?
3. How has the availability of the PROMISE Scholarship influenced the student and family college decision-making process in West Virginia?
4. How has the availability of the PROMISE scholarship influenced other factors such as student effort and achievement, parent or guardian support, and overall school programs?
5. How can the perspectives of students, families, and school officials inform policy maker attempts to increase post-secondary educational access and greater economic opportunity for West Virginia High School graduates with programs such as the PROMISE Scholarship?

To answer these questions I selected a basic interpretative qualitative design. Merriam (2002) writes that by using a “basic qualitative study, you seek to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, the perspectives and world views of the people involved, or a combination of these” (p. 6). This qualitative design was also an emergent study as each data

collection phase informed the next. Krathwohl (1998) writes that in an emergent study “the intent is that the researchers are instructed by the phenomenon as to what is important rather than imposing some framework on it that determines what is presumed important (p.238).

Face-to-face interviews were the primary tool used to collect the data needed to address the research questions. Patton (2002) states, “we interview to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind, to gather their stories” (p.341). He adds, “qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit” (p. 341). By telling the stories of the student participants and their families, and validating their perspective as valuable, this study helps provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon West Virginia leaders are attempting to address through the PROMISE Scholarship program.

All forms of qualitative research require the researcher to be the primary data collection and analysis instrument (Merriam, 2002). As a native of Logan, West Virginia, I brought an understanding of the area, its people, culture, and challenges. But because I too call this place home, it is also my bias because I care about this place and its people. I viewed the stories told by study participants using a different filter than would a casual observer. My perspective and knowledge as the researcher about this place provided greater access to information and yielded a more in-depth understanding of the meanings reported by the data. Observing a study as it developed and analyzing the emerging data from an insiders’ perspective gave the findings more in-depth meaning (Patton, 2002). My bias and cultural understandings of Logan and its people were a strength when analyzing how families perceive the PROMISE Scholarship program within the contexts of affordability and accessibility in a West Virginia high school.

Studying this phenomena in a small, limited context yielded a rich, deep meaning of this complex decision-making process. Piantanida and Garman (1999) write “inquiry centers on a

phenomenon as it manifests within a specific context” (p. 133). This study described the college decision-making process of the participating families within the contexts of affordability and accessibility in an Appalachian setting. It can help educational stakeholders better understand the educational, economic, and social challenges of West Virginia and its people when attempting to formulate, implement, and assess educational policy such as the PROMISE Scholarship program. Merriam (1998) writes that the “key philosophical assumption. . . upon which all types of qualitative research are based is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds” (p. 6). What was reality for these Logan, West Virginia families as they consider post-secondary education?

Piantanida and Garman (1999) describe the search for this reality as “generating knowledge through portrayals” and contend it can be effectively studied within the interpretive nature of the qualitative research paradigm (p. 131). They also believe this type of qualitative study should be framed and designed to progress from the situational aspects of the actual data to the more conceptual notions after analysis. To accomplish this transition, they suggest portraying the study in four ways to aide in the dissertation research design process.

The first portrayal requires the researcher to create “a picture that allows others to experience vicariously the phenomenon and context under study, and thereby come to understand the complexity of both” (p. 133). When beginning to generate new knowledge, “the researcher strives to capture and convey the essence of what is under study” (p. 133). In this research, I described the experiences of five high school seniors, their families, and school officials, with the college decision-making process in the context of affordability and accessibility as influenced by the West Virginia PROMISE Scholarship. To generate the description of this experience, I selected multiple families to be used as the participants. The

review of the literature focused on the financial aid issues of affordability and accessibility, the West Virginia PROMISE Scholarship, and documented cultural effects of an Appalachian existence on educational outcomes. I included this to give the reader a basic understanding of the contexts in which the study is being conducted.

Piantanida and Garman (1999) state the second portrayal of the study is to identify the “salient features of the phenomenon” (p. 135). This involved connecting the data that emerged from the study of these multiple participants within the Logan High School learning community to the more universal themes such as the contexts of affordability and accessibility. This begins the process of making meaning of the data when “researchers connect specific features of the core portrayal to more general/abstract issues within the relevant discourse” (p. 135).

Highlighting the similarities and differences of this new information to existing literature enables the creation of new contextual knowledge. Piantanida and Garman (1999) identify this as the third portrayal, or “implications or lessons learned” (p. 136). I believe the conclusions of this analysis will be relevant to the educational policy debate and development within West Virginia around efforts such as the PROMISE Scholarship program.

The final portrayal described by Piantanida and Garman (1999) is “the inquiry.” This is the actual description and explanation of the study. This includes the dissertation as a whole, describing such aspects as the purpose of the study, relevant literature, design, and research method. This study is framed within the four portrayals as described by Piantanida and Garman (1999), who also emphasize the relationship among the portrayals. “These portrayals build upon each other. Without a descriptive portrayal of the phenomenon, interpretation is not possible. Without an interpretive portrayal, it is difficult to warrant the implications drawn from the inquiry. . . the portrayals build upon each other” (Piantanida & Garmen, 1999, p. 136).

The relationships among these portrayals enable the study to be viewed by a variety of audiences. This nested approach of portrayals also lends itself to various philosophical approaches to qualitative research (Piantanida & Garmen, 1999).

A cornerstone of qualitative research can include an interpretive, critical, or post-modern philosophical approach (Merriam, 2002; Patton, 2002). Identifying the use of such a philosophical lens is a necessary component of a qualitative research design (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Patton, 2002; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). I designed this study to allow the reader the flexibility to view the results through the philosophical lens that he or she decides is most useful to his or her own needs. On the surface, the study was designed to generate new data about what influences families in one West Virginia county to attempt college work and the role the availability of the PROMISE Scholarship program had upon the decision-making process. Merriam (2002) describes this approach as "Learning how individuals experience and interact with their social world and the meaning it has for them" (p. 4).

Using my own motivation and bias, the study was designed with a critical philosophical approach. This perspective is also referred to as "emancipatory" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Merriam, 2002; Patton, 2002; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Tashakkori & Teddlie (2003) agree, "This paradigm is characterized as placing central importance on the lives and experiences of marginalized groups such as women, ethnic/racial minorities, members of the gay and lesbian communities, people with disabilities, and those who are poor" (p. 716). I felt this philosophical perspective was appropriate for this study because the PROMISE program is directed at students from one of the nation's poorest states who have not traditionally attempted college work (PROMISE, n.d.). As a researcher, I am interested in providing new information for analysis that

will facilitate further discussion and research of the complex phenomena affecting the State of West Virginia and its people socially, educationally, and economically.

Method

Setting and Time Table

This study occurred between the months of April and August of 2006 with students who eventually graduated from Logan High School in Logan, West Virginia. I selected this time frame because PROMISE Scholarship acceptance letters were mailed during April 2006. The time period between these months was filled with crucial decisions such as whether to attend college, what college to attend, what program to study, as well as actual enrollment for the fall semester.

Logan High School was selected as the study site because its student college going rates were similar to state averages (See Table 6). As a result, I believed the school's students were representative of the PROMISE Scholarship program's target recipients. Logan County was also in need of the economic opportunity that state policy makers were attempting to facilitate by implementing the PROMISE program. As a native of Logan, I had access to information and resources that I would not have in another setting. Logan High School graduates also had access to Southern West Virginia Community College in Logan County, as well as universities in Huntington and Charleston, less than two hours away.

Choosing the Participants

Patton (2002) refers to choosing *units of analysis* for study comparisons. This study used a people-focused approach that studied individuals in depth. I also used *stratified purposeful sampling*. Patton (2002) reports that "this approach will illustrate characteristics of

Table 6

Logan High School College Attendance Information

	2003-2004 High School Graduates	Fall 2004					
		Students Attending College		Students Attending In-State Institutions of Higher Learning		Students Attending Out-of-State Institutions of Higher Learning	
		#	%	#	%	#	%
Logan High Senior School	133	72	54.1	70	52.6	2	1.5
Logan County	370	191	51.6	180	48.6	11	3
West Virginia	18,027	10,928	60.6	9167	50.9	1761	9.8

(West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, 2004)

particular subgroups of interest; [and will] facilitate comparisons” (p.244). The participants to be studied were recommended by Logan High School officials as students and families attempting to earn a PROMISE Scholarship.

Because the high school had 28 PROMISE recipients in 2004 and 25 in 2003, I initially asked these school officials to identify ten students and families to provide in-depth case descriptions and who met the following criteria. The student participants were to be 12th grade students at Logan High School who were native to Logan County. The participating students also had to meet the PROMISE Scholarship eligibility requirements. The parent(s) or guardian(s) of these students would also be participants in the study. These participating parent(s) or guardian(s) had to express to school officials that they were concerned about the affordability of college, and the PROMISE Scholarship was the primary financial resource for their son or daughter to have access to higher education. It is important to know that I did not request personal information such as actual family income. Family *concern* over affordability was the criteria, which was stated as a reason for the need of the PROMISE Scholarship program. I worked with Logan High School officials to verify if family financial concerns could be considered *reasonable* based on parent or guardian occupations. For example, if parental occupations included such positions as waitress or office clerk, family financial concerns were viewed as *reasonable*, as opposed to occupations such as a doctor or lawyer.

Logan High School officials were able to identify eight families they believed met the study requirements and sought family consent to release their information to be contacted. I then selected five families for telephone interviews. These selections were made based on gender, family occupation and family characteristics. I chose to include three female students and two male students to keep a balance among student participants. Two of the students I did not select

were additional female students. The third student not selected was from a family that owned several businesses. I did not believe this validated the parental expressed financial concerns.

Four families I initially selected agreed to participate in the study. The fifth family I had selected declined. These four families represented a single-parent home, two two-parent homes, and a blended family. Their family occupations included a waitress, plumber, fast food restaurant day shift manager, disabled machinist, homemaker, truck driver and state social service worker. Five of these seven parents or guardians actually participated in the study with two having personal experience with post-secondary education. Both had taken classes through the local community college. Only one student participant was an only child in his or her family. The three female students and one male student had recently been notified as PROMISE Scholarship recipients and represented a range of grade point averages and ACT scores.

I selected a new fifth family from outside the initial eight presented by Logan High School Officials. This fifth family was chosen from outside the initial selections to add more variety to the characteristics of the participant pool. The family was headed by a single mother of two children who actually worked within one of the Logan County high schools. She herself had received post-secondary education from the local community college and a nearby university. I asked this family to participate in the study for her perspective of working within the school system. Her son was a recent PROMISE recipient and fell within the academic range of the other four selected students. With the addition of this family, all six participating parents, and four of the five students were native to Logan County. The fifth student was born abroad, but had attended Logan County Schools for her K-12 education.

This qualitative study was an emergent study. As the study progressed, additional participants emerged and were asked to participate. They included those school officials who

were identified during interviews with students and family participants, and who were willing to provide me with additional information through the interview process. This sampling method was defined by Fraenkel and Wallen (1996) as a “nonrandom sample selected because prior knowledge suggests it is representative, or because those selected have the needed information” (p. 587). This use of snowball sampling enabled the acquisition of an unlimited number of perspectives of those school personnel who were relevant to each family participant's college decision process.

Data Collection

The data from this design emerged from student conversations, as well as those from family, peers, and other adults that had influence on the student and impacted the process. I collected this data through the use of document analysis, including tape recorded interviews. Additional data could also be gathered through observation of family or school activities if they were deemed to be a possible source of additional information to the study. My only observations other than family interactions during conversations, however, were the Senior Class Award Ceremony. An observation from this event is reflected in the account of one participating family.

Document Analysis. Document analysis was used initially in the study to verify information and to gather additional data when it was needed. School records were used by a Logan High School counselor and administrator to help select the student and family participants for the study. Electronic data sent to me from any participant in the form of on-line journals or e-mail could also have been used for analysis if needed as the study progressed to address the research question. This data collection strategy, however, was not used.

Interviews. The main source of data collection was provided from interviews. Patton (2002) states, “the purpose of qualitative interviewing is to capture how those being interviewed view their world, to learn their terminology and judgments, and to capture the complexities on their individual perceptions and experiences” (p. 348). Face-to-face interviews supplied the more human aspects of observation and perspective to interpret the meaning of the numerical data (Patton, 2002). They also provided the flexibility I needed to ensure that the proper questions were being asked to solicit needed information. Interviews supplied a large amount of data that could be analyzed for emerging themes and later interpreted for meaning (Patton, 2002).

The protocol used for the initial interviews with participating students and parents or guardians are included as Appendixes A and B. These interview questions were built around the study research questions. I developed this initial protocol for standardized open-ended interviews. Patton (2002) states, this interview method “consists of a set of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the same sequence and asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words” (p. 342). The standardized approach to gathering data facilitated the analysis and identification of common themes.

I conducted additional interviews with participating students and their families, as well as other individuals who were identified as resources during the decision-making processes. These additional interviews followed an informal conversational format with protocol unique to the purpose of each interview. Patton (2002) states, “the strength of the informal conversation method resides in the opportunities it offers for flexibility, spontaneity, and responsiveness to individual differences and situation changes” (p. 343). Using this format enabled the gathering of

more detailed data unique to each participant based upon his or her individual perceptions (Patton, 2002).

By using different interview methods, I was able to collect a wider array of data for analysis. The two forms complemented each other by providing consistency and flexibility to better understand the phenomenon of perception in the college decision-making process. Patton (2002) states, combining strategies “offers the interviewer flexibility in probing and in determining when it is appropriate to explore certain subjects in greater depth, or even to pose questions about new areas of inquiry that were not originally anticipated in the interview instrument’s development” (p.347). Using this approach, I was also able to identify additional school officials to interview and school programs that served as important resources.

Observation. Observation could have been used during selected times as the study progressed if needed. Opportunities to observe the participating students could be conducted during school and non-school times. The observation times could be selected based on upon opportunities that arose to provide information on relevant research questions and topics of the study. These observations could have included counseling and college mentoring opportunities, extracurricular events, and family happenings. Observations can provide opportunities to learn things that participants may not discuss in an interview or that occur within the cultural contexts of the participants surroundings (Merriam, 2002; Patton, 2002).

Protecting Confidentiality

Five families were selected for participation in this study. These families expressed to me a various degrees of concern about their anonymity in data presentation. Some parents were comfortable with the use of their actual family names. Other participants had greater concerns with their confidentiality at their place of employment. To protect the confidentiality of study

participants name-masking for all participants was used. If requested, the family place of employment and/or position was masked. This was requested of me by only one parental participant and has been concealed to this individual's satisfaction. The following pseudonyms were used for each of the family participants:

Family 1: Tammy (mother) and Melanie (daughter) Taylor

Family 2: David (father) and Dova (daughter) Leary

Family 3: Josie (mother), Richard (father) and Chad (son)

Family 4: Judy (mother) and Nathan (son) Potter

Family 5: Sarah Mason (mother) and Shelly Jennings (daughter)

All data collected from document analysis and observations during the study were recorded in my field notes. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed using a transcription machine. A dated record of interviews and any observations with their contexts was kept and documented. The data is kept in a secure location and in a manner that will protect the confidentiality of every participant in the study. (This data is available at the request of any committee member.)

Triangulation

Triangulation is needed to enhance the legitimacy of this study's findings (Patton, 2002). Because of my bias and subjectivity as a member of the community being studied, triangulation also ensured credibility. This study used methodological triangulation that occurs across interviews with multiple participants. The use of methodological triangulation can "increase the confidence in our interpretation..." (Stake, 1995, p. 114). This also occurred using other data sources such as document analysis and any additional interviews. Member checking was used by participants to verify the validity of their transcribed recorded interview responses (Stake, 1995).

No study participant indicated concerns to me with the accuracy of their transcribed interviews. Triangulation also occurred as information was constantly compared as the study progressed and data was analyzed.

Data Analysis

Merriam (2002) states, the use of such (qualitative) data collection techniques will generate information that can be “inductively analyzed to identify the recurring patterns or common themes that cut across the data” (p. 6). All data I gathered was analyzed using the Constant Comparative Method. This method included the following four-step process:

1. Inductive category coding and simultaneous comparing of units of meaning across categories.
2. Refinement of categories.
3. Exploration of relationships and patterns across categories.
4. Integration of data yielding an understanding of people and settings being studied (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p.135).

As common themes were revealed through data analysis, I organized these themes through the use of charts or other appropriate visual data representations. The final product from the analysis of data from this study is reported in this written report. The following chapters of this study also report any additional documented procedures that emerged from necessity over the course of the study.

Data Presentation

The data in this study is analyzed and presented in Chapters Four and Five. A sixth chapter presents information from data analysis to address the study research questions and

suggest implications for stakeholders, as well as possible future research directions. Chapter Four presents the interview data of the five participating families based upon the initial interview protocols for students and parents or guardians. I analyzed the data and reported it as five separate stories. Each story contains the perspectives of student and parent participants based upon themes that emerged from using the constant comparative method of data analysis. It is important to note that due to language patterns, there are consistent places where *[sic]* would be ordinarily added but is not. I believe the use of this data analysis term would clutter the passage, and that the passage should be expressed as is.

Because the study used an emergent design, an additional round of data collection took place after the family interviews. School officials or programs identified by student or parent participants were selected as the participants in this next round of data collection. Chapter Five presents the analysis of this data. I selected some of these participating individuals for interview based upon their unique perspective on the PROMISE Scholarship within their role at Logan High School. These roles included school administrators, counselors, and teachers. The remaining participants were identified to me by school officials as the person responsible for implementing any referenced school program. This information is also presented in a narrative form.

In the final chapter, I present the discussion of the study research questions based upon the analysis of the acquired data. In this section, I initially focus this discussion around the study research questions using emergent themes. After this focus on actual questions, the discussion evolves to implications for any interested educational stakeholders such as school officials, state legislators, and state policy makers. In Chapter Six I conclude with directions for possible future research based upon study findings.

Reflections

As Appalachians, West Virginians are subject to discrimination and stereotyping from outside misinterpretation of our people and our culture. Our state's rural existence has historically been harshly judged by those who perceive it as inferior to an urban existence. I believe Appalachians in places like Logan are *marginalized* people because of their shared history. As a result of industrialization, our ancestors were asked to leave their farms and agricultural existences to work in the coal mines and live in company towns. These people and their descendents answered these calls only to be betrayed by the coal companies. After decades of profiting from the land's natural resources, the companies eventually closed the mines and left the state, leaving behind scarred land with gapping holes and scarred people unemployed and untrained to do anything else. I am concerned about the economic conditions in which many of my fellow state citizens live as a result of this history.

As a native West Virginian, I am interested in how we view our world and how that influences our decisions and educational policy efforts. I am also interested in this world view from a different perspective. By using Logan High School as the site for the study, my research focuses on a specific region of West Virginia. The community served by Logan High School is representative of the economic plight of the southern coalfields. Not only do these families and school officials face the region's economic challenges with great intensity, but also the negative and positive effects of their Appalachian heritage. By expressing my personal connection to this particular West Virginia locale, I again reveal my motivation for the study as well as my personal bias and subjectivity.

During my data collection efforts in Logan, I became keenly aware of my own personal experiences with this place. It gave me a deeper, more intimate perspective about the concept of

researcher bias and *subjectivity*. The reader will find my personal reflections during data collection embedded within the introductions to each family story told in Chapter Four. They were initially recorded in my researcher field notes. I will more thoroughly explore and analyze these reflections and my perspectives in the study conclusions and implications presented in Chapter 6. Chapter 5 presents data analysis as *School Personnel and Programs* that emerged and were collected from family stories.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction from My Field Notes

While driving from Charleston to Logan on US Route 119, I was overwhelmed by the beautiful night. Without a trace of a cloud, the stars glowed brightly through the night air. I was also reminded of how narrow the sky is in this part of the country where the mountains rise high on both sides and serve as a natural frame to this scenic view of the sky. It was a sky that I knew went on forever, but seemed to be limited and even dominated by the mountains. Even though our family moved from the area decades ago, I am always amazed at how these images fill me with pride. They embrace me like warm arms, reminding me I am home and that I belong. They always bring on a sense of pride in being Appalachian and of anger and frustration when thinking of the challenges that often prevent these people from realizing their potential.

How fitting this scene was as I began thinking about the work that lay ahead of me the next day in Logan. I was going to interview West Virginia students about a scholarship program designed to entice more of them into earning a college degree. I was proud to think how bright their futures could be with the blood of generations of mountain people running through their veins. I also realized, however, that the very concept of belonging to these same mountains creates a sense of isolation and despair in addition to the strength instilled by its people.

These mountains that provide so much comfort and a sense of protection, also serve as a barrier, a boundary to these same children as they aspire to realize their hopes, potential and dreams. A poem I once read told the story of a mountain man that spent his life's journey striving to climb to the top of a mountain to see the rest of the world on the other side. My data gathering experience over the next few days was one of many emotional highs and lows. There

was a unique range of dichotomies throughout the experience of alienation and belonging, anger and pride, and those with the most impact upon me, despair and hope.

The Taylor Family: "I've lost all hope for this community"

While waiting to talk with my first family, I realized the interview setting held a special place in the history of Appalachia. Next door to where I sat waiting was the former location of The Smokehouse. Until its later years, The Smokehouse had been for decades an exclusive male-only restaurant in the heart of downtown Logan. During the presidential election of 1960 the notoriety of The Smokehouse was forever embedded within coalfield lore as the center of the John F. Kennedy Appalachian election strategy. Kennedy used the gathering spot as the headquarters for his election efforts that many would argue convinced Appalachians to vote for an Irish-Catholic Democrat, thus helping carry Kennedy to The Whitehouse in a close election with Richard M. Nixon.

War was declared on poverty and promises were made to Appalachians of social, educational, and financial support that was deemed necessary to help Appalachia catch up and compete with the rest of the nation. The irony of that scene hit me as I looked at pictures hanging on the walls of this restaurant from that era of Logan's history. Black and white photographs of crowded streets and thriving businesses from a time when West Virginia coal was king and towns like Logan were recipients of the spoils. What a different scene it now was forty-five years later as I looked out the window and saw deserted streets and boarded up buildings while whispers of promises still echo forty-five years later from where Kennedy delivered his speeches of hope and change.

Melanie Taylor was a lively and friendly Logan High School Senior. Not only was she a top student, but was also involved in school activities as a Logan High School Wildcat

cheerleader. She seemed very at ease when talking to me about her goals, dreams and the PROMISE Scholarship. I was impressed with the self-confidence she seemed to emit. She admitted to me at the end of the initial interview, however, that she was very nervous at first. Although Melanie had grown up in Logan, she was born in Germany where her father was stationed in the military. I learned this from her mother Tammy. Prior to the interview I observed the interaction between Melanie and her mother Tammy and was struck by the informal and caring appearance of their relationship. Melanie never mentioned her father over the course of the interview except to tell me that her parents were divorced.

Tammy Taylor reported to me that she and Melanie are more like friends than mother and daughter. She expressed a commitment they have to each other and the resulting relationship that has emerged.

Melanie is here to please me . . . she thinks . . . and I'm here to please her I think.

You know . . . and I've never had a friend like her ever in my life. Maybe I shouldn't be her friend like I am. Maybe I should be more of a Mom, but we've been together so long...I mean there's been no separation from us at all.

Her mother also informed me that "We make all our decisions totally together on everything."

Tammy was a waitress at a steakhouse restaurant located in town and owned by one of Logan's well established families. She stated that "being a waitress is the best job I have ever had."

Tammy has also worked in the health care field and owned a restaurant. She replied that she did not like owning her own restaurant. "I didn't like controlling people and telling them to do this and do that, so...I came here."

Tammy was the single mother of Melanie and her 20-year old brother Todd. She explained to me that she was born in the nearby Logan County town of Man and graduated from

Man High School. After her divorce, she spent most of her adult life living and working in Logan. Tammy reported having worked hard to raise her children with little help or support. She frequently expressed her pride and frustration with her older son who lives at home and “lacks direction” but believed watching Melanie was helping him “find his way.” She expressed to me that she had “paid her dues in Logan” and dreams that one day when Melanie graduates from college they can move somewhere warmer. She emphasized throughout our discussions that “college for Melanie would be impossible without the PROMISE Scholarship.”

Both mother and daughter viewed the opportunities that college can provide as a means to greater economic opportunity. Melanie and Tammy both expressed to me that this economic opportunity will then lead to economic independence. Melanie reported it is a “money issue” and sees a college degree as a way to “make sure that my kids and my family have exactly what they need money wise.” Melanie informed me that she had once held a minimum wage job while in high school.

I worked at a shoe store all summer last year at the beginning of the school year. That was the only job I had . . . making \$5.50 an hour. It's not good at all.

Working with the public making just that much is not what I want.

She also believed that a college degree was necessary for the economic stability she wanted to achieve in today's world. She commented, “Going to college, I know especially now, you have to have a higher education than let's say high school to get a good job and to get paid well.” She did not go on to elaborate why she believed this.

It was apparent to me that Tammy shared her daughter's belief that college degrees do result in greater economic resources. I quickly realized that Tammy not only wanted what she viewed was best for her daughter, but also saw her own future tied to Melanie's. She described

collective plans for the two of them after Melanie graduates from college and indicated, "We've been planning this for three years." Tammy also revealed that she does not envision this possible future occurring in Logan. When I asked her to explain this, she proudly described her perception of her daughter's potential and what she believes are the possible pitfalls facing those high school graduates choosing to stay in Logan.

I just want big things for her. She is just a super smart person and she has a level head on her. She's not like most . . . I mean . . . I'm not putting down Logan or anything, but she's not like most people around here. She is classy. She does things and thinks about them before she does it. She thinks about what the repercussions are after she does it. She just doesn't do it like a normal 18-year old would do something and then think about it tomorrow. College is for her. She needs to get away from here for awhile before she changes and becomes one of those teenagers that don't care about anything except for partying and she's ready to do that. I really want to leave and give her a better opportunity and I don't know, I just can't see us staying here. I see four years. I do. I see four years.

Throughout the interview Tammy expressed to me this frustration she had with the possibility of Melanie staying in Logan.

There's nothing here for a young person. There's nothing here except for clubs. There's no youth centers . . . there's nothing here. I mean, and their going to Choose . . . their going to go to a club. I mean that's all there going to do. It's just not going to happen with Melanie. I'm not going to let her fall into that situation.

At only one time during our discussions did Tammy leave room for other possible scenarios as she ended once with the statement "You never know what will change though."

Melanie was unsure of what career path she will follow upon enrolling in college. "I was going to go into veterinarian school but since there is not one in West Virginia . . . then I'm not going to do that." "I was [also] into pediatrics and stuff, that's what I did my senior project on." Senior projects are a graduation requirement at Logan High School completed through 12th grade English classes. Tammy explained that she wanted Melanie to be "whatever she wants to be."

I don't know what she's going to go into now. She's changed it like three times in the last two months. First it was a pediatrician, now it's she don't know . . . but she can do whatever she wants. She will accomplish whatever she wants.

Tammy would like her daughter to be a pediatrician because it is lucrative and she is good with children. She believed that because that was Melanie's first career choice, she would eventually return to that path.

I would like her to be a pediatrician. She's talked about it for three years. We've talked about how long she'll have to go, but I still think she'll do that. I do.

It's not like she's not going to work for a living for 10 years or however long its going to take for her to do that.

I found Tammy's career choice for her daughter interesting considering Tammy herself had once worked in the health care field. Tammy completed the requirements to be an LPN in a high school vocational program. She explained that she "loved the job in the beginning," driving around Logan County providing home health care. She also reported, however,

I was losing patients every week and it just got to me. I took it home with me

and I just said I was going to try something else. I can't do this anymore, so I started waitressing. I make more money waitressing . . . I do. It is something. I mean...here, this is the best job I've ever had, and that's sad knowing I have a degree in nursing. You don't make enough money to support your family.

Tammy admitted to keeping her nursing license up to date. "Every two years I'll renew it in case I decide to do it, which I don't ever see happening unless I'm in Florida or somewhere else maybe, but here I don't see it ever happening."

I commented to Melanie and Tammy during both of their interviews that a college degree does not always equate with wealth by giving them examples of careers that require degrees such as nursing and education with modest salaries. Melanie responded that she did not think she would want to do those things and stated:

I know that I do not want to stay here and make as much...even teachers I don't think make enough, you know? I'm not putting down teachers because teachers are great, I mean I loved everyone of my teachers almost, but I just think I want to go to college to make money. I mean I need the experience of going to college and of being on my own so I can be independent. I don't want to have to rely on anybody anytime in my life.

Melanie again repeated and reinforced this same economic independence theme by finishing, "but as long as I can provide for my family, I'll be alright." Tammy responded that she just wanted Melanie "to have something to fall back on and that made her happy."

Melanie wanted to attend Marshall University. This decision was a recent one because she had originally planned on attending West Virginia University.

I had everything figured out to go to WVU but I think I've changed my mind. I guess because I'm so far away from home. I'm really nervous. At first it was OK because it seemed it was way far away in the future, but the closer it got the more nervous I would get, so I think I'm going to go to Marshall. I went back [to WVU] in the winter for an orientation thing they had, not to go to classes or anything but to show us around the campus. WVU is not for me. I might go up there after a few years at Marshall, you know, like a few years to get myself away from Logan. For right now I think I'm going close to home.

Tammy explained to me that she believed this change was the result of an argument that occurred between she and Melanie. The disagreement resulted in Tammy leaving home.

We had a fight. Did she tell you about that? We had a fight a couple of weeks ago, and I left...and I've never left her . . . never. I left her my cell phone and everything. She could not get a hold of me for two days. When I came back she said I switched from WVU to Marshall. She said I'm not going to be that far away from you.

This sudden change concerned Tammy because Melanie had a cousin attending West Virginia University. She seemed assured and comfortable with her daughter moving to Morgantown because of her niece's presence. "She's been there for five years and she just bought a house up there. I would like her to go up there." Tammy was frustrated with her daughter's decision not to attend WVU in favor of Marshall.

She said she would go nowhere if she didn't go to Marshall. It may be for her. [The smaller, nearby Marshall] That may be what she's thinking. I just can't comprehend it now because we went through months of getting all this

stuff straightened out and her...she already has her dorm, she already has her roommate, and then she just started switching everything over. I mean in two days it's done.

Sensing that she was not only frustrated that her daughter did not want to attend WVU, but also with Melanie's choice of Marshall I asked her about this. "I have no respect for Marshall. I never hear good things about what goes on at Marshall." I asked Tammy what bad things she had heard about Marshall and about college life in general. She quickly explained her perceptions of Marshall as a party school and college partying in general.

I know what I'm sending my daughter into . . . parties. I do. I know that that's going to happen. I hope she keeps the level head that she has had and she knows she has to balance her time of partying and her studies and she has to keep her grades up. I know there's partying everywhere. I know there's going to be drinking everywhere, there's going to be drugs everywhere. It's going to be her head that tells her not to do that. Everything was set up at WVU and my niece is up there, and she wouldn't have to be by herself if she would get sick or something. I hope she likes it wherever she goes. She may like Marshall and I may end up liking Marshall, but well, I left it up to her. There's no need for me to push her to go somewhere that she doesn't want to go because she'll be miserable there, and it's not going to work out. So I might as well let her make her own decisions, make her own mistake if that's what she's going to make and then I'll back her up on her mistake and we'll figure out something from there on. I can't push her. I could push her to go to WVU, but she'd be miserable.

Tammy and I discussed the possibility of Melanie being homesick after leaving Logan to attend college. Tammy stated that she has known several good students that returned to Logan after only a few weeks of college due to missing family and friends. She fears this could be a possibility for Melanie. She stated, "I can see her getting homesick too, but I'll go down there for her to stay down there. I will move there. I can waitress anywhere." Melanie did not mention a fear of getting homesick. She expressed a desire to remain in-state for college to receive the PROMISE scholarship and that she was "not really up to being away from home this soon." She explained, "Even though Morgantown is pretty far away...it's still not out of state."

I asked Tammy what else she envisions college life to entail besides partying, Tammy admitted being unsure of other aspects of college.

I really don't know what to expect when she gets there by herself. She makes friends really easy though. She is really outgoing. She's a really popular person. I hope she gets with good people and does what's she's supposed to do. I don't know what to expect though, I really don't know how to perceive it. I don't know. I really don't. I just gotta hope. But when I think about college, that's what I think about...party people.

Tammy had a strong perception of college partying. She believed that Melanie was strong enough to handle the pressure that she would face to participate. She hoped that she will keep her priorities in line and succeed in her school work.

Because with most of the people I do know, girls are different than the guys.

The girls that I know are really trying hard to get through college, but the guys are totally different. They just flunking out, and moving back home. They hate it. I hope that shows her not to be a party person that everybody

turns into once you go to college. I know she's going to do that little bit because she has never done that. I know when she gets there, she's going to. But I hope, knowing that she has to keep a three point.

Logan is home to Southern West Virginia Community College who locals often refer to as simply "Southern", "the Branch", or "SWVCC" (pronounced "Swivic") from the school's acronym. I asked both Melanie and Tammy if either had ever considered SWVCC? Melanie replied that she had considered the local community college because it was close to home. She ruled out the option, however, and explained:

It really don't work for a lot of people because I think they have way too much of a choice to go to class or not to go to class. Where it's so close they're just like, well, I can pick up on it next week or whatever. I just don't think it would work for me because I don't like to go to high school now and I live in Logan. I think I need to get out. I'm ready to get out of here.

Melanie believed college life was about freedom. She explained to me, "My mom's not really that strict on me but having freedom to be on my own and taking care of myself" is an aspect of college life. She also believed that college will be about "studying a lot" and working to keep her PROMISE Scholarship. "I have to keep my GPA up because money-wise I wouldn't be able to go unless I keep PROMISE...I have to keep that in order to stay in college so I know I'll be studying a lot."

Tammy believed that Melanie was capable of doing college work because of her academic success at Logan. She did, however, express concern to me about her daughter's study habits at home and believed Melanie would have to make some adjustments to a more

challenging academic environment. Through her explanation to me, her concerns with college partying again surfaced.

She's never had problems with keeping her grades up, but you know Logan is different than college. She makes a four point and she never studies. She never studies. And I don't know if it's because she's so smart or the work's just so easy that she doesn't have to study. When she goes to college she's gonna have to study. And it's going to be a big change for her. Just like it is for everybody. It smacks people in the face. People that are . . . that graduate first in their class then they go start partying and flunk out of college and they come back here. I know 10 or 15 people that have done that out of my son's class and now they're here, going to SWVCC or doing nothing.

Like Melanie, Tammy also believed it was important for her daughter to get off to a "good start" in college and was aware of what she must do to keep her PROMISE Scholarship. As quoted earlier about her concerns with college partying: "knowing that she has to keep a three point." Tammy also emphasized this by telling me, "She couldn't go without it [PROMISE]. There is no way she could go without it."

Neither Tammy nor Melanie knew the rationale behind the PROMISE Scholarship program. Melanie stated, "I know how I qualified, but I don't know much about it." Tammy responded, "I just know if you make a certain score on your ACT that you get a PROMISE Scholarship and your grades I guess?" Tammy was also under the assumption that after two years Melanie could "switch with somebody in another state and they can come to West Virginia on her PROMISE Scholarship and she can go on theirs to a school like Florida State." When

asked where she received this information, she replied, "Someone explained that to us, I think it was a doctor."

Both mother and daughter believed that the PROMISE Scholarship was a good program for students. After an explanation of the purpose and goals of the program, they also believed it was a good program for West Virginia. Melanie replied:

I think it's a great program. I just hope it stays around. I mean if it can't stay here then I would still go to college but I would probably have to take so many loans out and everything that it would be ridiculous. PROMISE is my ride to college financial-wise because my mom's a waitress and my parents are divorced so PROMISE is like the big thing to me.

Tammy echoed her daughter's opinion with this explanation:

I think the PROMISE Scholarship's great. She would not be going into everything that she is if she didn't have that. She'd probably be taking a few classes here [SWVCC]. Because you don't have to pay anything back, I don't understand Why they [other students] just wouldn't try at least.

She additionally noted that PROMISE motivates students as she expressed, "See that's another thing too, it makes you want to keep your grades up or you are going to lose it." As with other topics we discussed, her disillusionment with Logan again emerged. When explaining to me the lack of options that currently exist for high school and college graduates in Logan and how one of the goals of the PROMISE Scholarship program is to help address these challenges in West Virginia communities, she replied:

I don't know if it's unique to this area or not but this is where I am. I can't say anything about any other place. I just know Logan County . . . drugs are terrible.

Drugs are terrible [emphasized]. I've lost all hope for this community. We've buried four people from my son's class due to drugs in the past month. Four out of five people that I know are on drugs.

Through out my discussions with Tammy, she was adamant about not wanting her family to remain in Logan. After our discussion of the goals of the PROMISE Scholarship program she reflected upon the intent to keep West Virginia's young adults with college degrees in-state after graduation and in places like Logan. After this reflection Tammy replied:

I cannot understand how people can say that I want my child to be here forever. I want my child to graduate and come to Logan and live forever. I don't understand that. I mean, what kinda life is that? Even after she goes to college, I can't see us staying here. I really can't. We have two options, Florida or Hilton Head. Those are definitely the only two places. Hilton Head is where I would really like to live. It is low key. It's mostly retired people and it's just so quiet . . . not so party everything and that's where I would like to live.

She continued:

Even after she goes to college, I can't see us staying here. I really can't. I could see us living in West Virginia. I don't want her living in Logan all her life. I want her to travel, I want her, I want . . . I'm ready to go. I mean, I've been here for 40 years. It's time to go somewhere else. I don't know . . . she's the same way as I am. She may not have said that, but she is. We are ready. I hope something changes . . . or I don't even know if I hope something changes for us to want to stay here.

Melanie did not reveal a desire to leave West Virginia. Although she was ready to leave Logan to attend college, she did not rule out the possibility of returning home after graduation if a job existed. "I know I want to strive for something more than what's in Logan. Not that I'm not going to come back to Logan with my job...just that after my college education, then I'll come back to Logan." She expressed a different opinion to me on remaining in West Virginia after college graduation than did Tammy.

I guess I would want to stay in state just because . . . I don't know, I just think once you get attached to West Virginia. Even when I go out of state for vacation, the first couple of days is great, but like over a week you kind of get homesick. So I guess you could get over that, but I don't know. It just feels good to get back to West Virginia.

Even though Tammy wants her family to leave West Virginia, the availability of the PROMISE Scholarship was enough of an incentive for her to encourage Melanie to remain in-state for post-secondary education. She expressed several times how she could not understand why other parents and high school graduates would turn down or not take advantage of the opportunity that the PROMISE Scholarship provided. She asked me, "Who would ever? I mean, has somebody turned it down for a reason? I mean, I would like to know a reason why somebody would turn that down...because they don't want to stay in West Virginia?" She again emphasized how economically crucial the Scholarship was for Melanie to attend college.

She has to have this PROMISE scholarship because I can't afford to pay for her to go to college. I mean . . . her Dad does nothing for her. I raised them for the last 5 years. If she didn't have this, I couldn't afford it. I would try to figure out something, but it would be really hard.

Melanie also reinforced this importance of the availability of the PROMISE Scholarship. She laughingly stated, "Oh Lord, I don't know why I wouldn't accept it. I mean, that's my ticket out of here." She consistently expressed awareness of what would happen if it was not available or if she would fail to re-qualify for the Scholarship after her first year of college work.

I guess just take out a lot of loans. I couldn't come home. I couldn't quit college.

I would just have to . . . I plan on working anyway. I would just have to get, I don't know . . . I just hope I can keep it.

Tammy expressed this same commitment to finding a way economically to support Melanie's continued enrollment in college if the PROMISE Scholarship were no longer available. She replied that if Melanie lost the scholarship, "I'll just go from there and try to figure something to do. Never give up the ship. Never on her."

Melanie gave most of the credit to her mother as the greatest influence on her goal to attend college. She explained:

Me and my mom have a relationship just because we're always had just me and her that's pretty much all. All my decisions go through my mom, not that she don't let me make my own decisions but she has a big impact on every decision I make. She definitely wants me to go to college, it's really not a choice. I don't want a choice, I'm going.

She also credited "pretty much everyone" and explained, "I think a little of everybody influences me because I know I want to strive for something more than what's in Logan." These influences included her teachers and programs at Logan High School. As mentioned earlier, Melanie's Senior Project helped her consider different career options.

She also mentioned the ACT workshop that the High School has developed to help student raise their ACT scores to meet the PROMISE Scholarship eligibility requirements. Melanie reported meeting the qualifying ACT score early and not needing to take the workshop. She stated that it had helped other students. Tammy also credits school officials and their relationships with Melanie. Tammy reported to me that Melanie was close to school administrators because they “push her” and that her counselor was good to “get her to do things.” She added that “I only know her counselor through this scholarship thing. She’s not one of the people around her I’ve known all my life, but she seems like a good person.” Tammy also believed that teachers naturally “attach to [Melanie] for some reason.”

She’s just such an outgoing person that whatever you ask her to do, she’s going to try it. She may not succeed in it, but she’s going to try it. And all her teachers were like that . . . I mean all of them.

Tammy additionally stated, “Hopefully all schools have somebody who kids bond with. That’s the whole purpose.”

When I initially asked Tammy why she wanted Melanie to go to college, she replied “Why would I not want her to go to college? I don’t know, she is just super smart and super intelligent and she’s my best friend.” Melanie left Logan in August to begin her pursuit of a college degree at Marshall University in Huntington. Tammy reported that Melanie comes home often and has “gotten off to a good start.” Tammy also informed me, however, that she misses her daughter and looks forward to her trips back to Logan to visit. Melanie has yet to declare a major.

The Leary Family: "If everybody leaves, nothing's going to turn around."

Unincorporated Mud Fork was my next stop. I was meeting another family, a father and his daughter at Southern West Virginia Community College (SWVCC). I thought this was an interesting request that the father had made and just assumed it was close to their home in the unincorporated area known as Ethel. I always wondered what "unincorporated" meant as a kid because it seemed to be on the sign announcing every little area of habitation throughout the coal fields. While driving, I again experienced a range of emotions from my discussions with the Taylor family. Listening to Tammy especially affected me with her obvious pride in her daughter and hopes for her future, as well as the hopelessness she consistently expressed for Logan and West Virginia in general.

My surroundings in Logan have always sparked childhood memories. From the back of a West Logan hotel wall where I scratched my name, to the coal camp smells of Yolyn where my father grew up and where now absolutely nothing remains but a road, these images remind me I am home. On my short trip to SWVCC, I passed the June Montgomery Harless Children's Home. It was named for the wife of Buck Harless, a Logan County native who made his fortune in lumber and coal. Unlike many owners of businesses that historically took so much from the region's people and natural resources, Mr. Harless is known for putting resources back into the region.

The Children's Home was a large, modern, but ominous looking place where Logan High School officials had expressed "kids that nobody wants get dumped there." It was explained to me that children here had the variety of abuse problems often associated with being "unwanted." One Logan High School official expressed frustration and commented, "just as soon as we get to a place where we can help them, they leave and go somewhere else." With all respect to the

work they do at the Children's Home, I am sure it is often a place where hope can be scarce. This sadness, however, subsided as I arrived at SWVCC. It too was a new modern looking campus, but was much more inviting than the Children's Home appeared to be. I went inside and waited for the Leary family to arrive and sat beneath the sign for the college library where we were meeting. The sign read, "June and Buck Harless Library." In contrast to the children's home, this facility bearing the Harless family name was a place where hope and dreams have a better chance of coming true.

My initial perception of David Leary and his daughter Dova was one of self-motivation. David seemed to be as driven to earn his own college degree as Dova was to make cheerleading at Fairmont State University while earning hers. When I initially asked him if he would participate in my study, he immediately replied "yes" and informed me "there is something special about our people." Unlike Tammy Taylor, David sees Logan in a more hopeful light. He quickly brought up Logan High School with what appeared to be a great sense of pride. He gave great credit to Logan's faculty and staff for helping his family and other students. "I know that we probably get a bad rap for the high school, but there are a lot of smart kids over there...a lot...especially graduating this year. It's unbelievable." He believed that Logan County itself "has an unfair reputation being in the coal fields." He laughingly stated to me that part of this perception came from "how people talk about our conduct at sporting events." When asked if he believed the coalfields have a separate image from the rest of the state he replied, "In West Virginia there is the stereotypes of the coalfields, but out of the state the stereotypes of the whole state." David then became more serious and explained he believes this region of the state and its people are perceived as "less than those in Charleston."

When I initially spoke with David, I was unaware that he was working on an Associates Degree in Accounting at SWVCC. When I asked if he was just attempting a career change, he replied:

Well, not exactly. I actually worked in a machine shop for 20 years as a machinist. I wound up with two ruptured disks, so I ended up having to have surgery. They put a titanium plate in front of my spine so they afforded the opportunity for me to go back to school. I took that opportunity and tried to make something out of it.

David and his wife Tonya have two children, Dova and her younger brother Jeff. David informed me he was "born and raised here" and had always lived in the area of Logan County known as Ethel. He also emphasized, "I haven't been off the creek yet." David's wife Tammy was raised in Ohio. But he further explained that "her people are from here and she was actually born here." He laughingly finished, "She's not really a Buckeye."

Dova Leary appeared to be a friendly, more serious personality. Like Melanie Taylor, she was also a Logan High School Wildcat Cheerleader. She consistently stressed throughout our discussions her desire to continue cheerleading at the college level. The only college that Dova had applied to was Fairmont State University. She had already unsuccessfully tried out for their cheerleading squad, but planned to try out again at the earliest possible opportunity. When I asked her why she limited her college choices to Fairmont State she replied:

Well, it started with I wanted to make their cheerleading squad. But then I went up and I visited and everyone was really nice. The professors were nice, the students were nice, dorms were nice and I just fell in love with it. It's in an enclosed place, it's not spread out. It started out with

cheerleading but then it completely turned into something else.

David informed me that she had also applied to SWVCC. He stated, "If she doesn't go there she's going here, and that wouldn't hurt my feelings either. If she went here for a year, that would be good for her." David was aware, however, of how much she wanted to cheer in college. He and Dova had visited several schools to look at their cheerleading programs. He explained:

West Virginia State, Concord and Bluefield actually offered her scholarships for cheering. We saw Bluefield's cheerleaders. That was enough for her not to come [laughing]. They were kind of like the cheerleaders on the [movie] Waterboy. Not the way they behaved, but how good of cheerleaders they were.

He further explained:

Well, that was at the crux of it...the cheerleading, because they have A . . . their cheerleading program is the best athletic thing they have at their school. Their football team's no good, basketball team's no good, but their cheerleading squad, they compete nationally. She tried out and didn't make it, but she still wants to go and try again. The coach likes her. I would almost be willing to bet that she'll eventually make it. And you know, we went up there, and met all the people and she just really liked it there. And a lot of her friends and a lot of people from Logan are going there which is also kind of an extra benefit for us because we won't have to drive up there and pick her up. She can ride home with her friends.

David's first reference to the PROMISE Scholarship program came as he gave the program credit for Dova's access to Fairmont State University. He told me that without the PROMISE Scholarship, Dova would have to remain in Logan and attend SWVCC. He explained:

She would not be going to Fairmont State if it was not for the PROMISE Scholarship. In our particular situation, our income is very low. She could go here [SWVCC] without the PROMISE scholarship. But there's no way she could go to any other school besides here without the PROMISE Scholarship. There would be no possible way for her to do that. I would even go as far as to say, even if I hadn't got hurt . . . and I was still making what I made then, which was between 35 and 40 thousand dollars a year she probably still couldn't go to Fairmont State.

Like the Taylors, David and Dova believed that a college education can lead to better economic life. Dova replied, "I want to further my education so I can get a good job, so that in the future when I have a family, if I have a family, I can help support them." David explained this theme to me in greater detail based on his own experiences. He also believed that a college degree does other things than just yield a better pay check. He stated it can make a better person and ultimately a better West Virginian:

Well you know, I grew up, and like I said, I went to work at minimum Wage and worked hard my whole life really for not much . . . not much wages. And even though she's a good student, even if it wasn't for that, even if she was a mediocre student I would still want her to go so that she can be better than I am. I don't want her to leave the state. I want her to

be here, but I want her to get an education that will allow her to get a job that will be a career, not just a job. It's just very important that she gets a education and becomes a well-rounded citizen and hopefully change... help to change the stereotypes that we have and are unfairly given I might honestly say.

Dova perceived that a college degree is "better" than a high school degree. When asked why, she said "Because most jobs now-a-days, you need a degree to get the highest job possible. I think that if you go to college, you will be picked over just a high school graduate for any job." She added, "It probably has to do with training too. The more trained you are the better job you'll get."

Dova is both excited and leery about going to college. She replied that college is about "growing up" and meeting new people. She explained:

Meeting people outside your community, so that you know how all the parts of different states are instead of just the people in Logan. When I think of college, I think of making long-term friends from other states so you'll always be friends with.

Dova informed me that meeting new people scared her the most and added "I get nervous around people I don't know." She also perceived that college life will be "very different from what I know now." She compared her present high school life to the perceptions she has about college as an example.

I usually wake up at 6 o'clock in the morning; go to high school 8 hours of the day, going to cheerleading practice for 4 hours. That leaves me with an hour awake and then going to bed. That's what I'm used to. When I think

of college, I think of not as many classes a day. But a lot more work. You'll have your own free time to do your own work at your own pace. Instead of in high school you're always on the go running around, rush, rush, rush.

David had a different perception of college, and set of concerns for his daughter. He was more comfortable with Dova's decision to attend Fairmont State University than one of the larger state universities.

If it was Marshall or WVU, I would be concerned. Fairmont State is where she's going and Fairmont State is a lot like here except it's bigger. I feel a lot better about her going there than maybe a bigger university so there certainly is concern there.

Like Tammy Taylor, David also worried about the partying that goes on in college. He explained further why he would be concerned if his daughter was going to attend Marshall or West Virginia University:

The partying [laughing]...you don't get those awards for nothing. I've known people here [SWVCC] who went to Marshall and just didn't make it. They went down there and just didn't get it done. A lot of the reason they didn't get the work done and ended up flunking out.

He also added:

Well, you know, it's only a perspective of mine. More than likely, it's just the few people that I've known. Maybe it was the people...just the people I run around with. They go down there . . . a lot of people . . . wherever down there is, and they really probably never really had in their heart that they were going to college and graduate. They probably thought they were

on vacation. I see it here. They come to class, or they skip class and they wonder why their grades are bad. I don't think it's as bad as it used to be.

I think there's a lot more that the young people and young adults are probably striving a little bit harder to pass. Maybe seeing that there's a lot more advantages than there used to be. I thought the few people that got degrees, they couldn't get a job. I think it's changed. Now you can't get a job if you don't have a degree. That's what I think.

David again expressed to me his current experience as a non-traditional student at SWVCC and revealed his worries of what would be facing Dova when she began college. He expressed some of the fears that he had about the difficulty of college level work and course requirements that his daughter may encounter at Fairmont State. David again reinforced his newly found belief of how being liberally educated can make one a better person. He explained:

. . . when I knew I was going to have to go back to college, I was scared of that. I had a . . . maybe I just wasn't too sure about it. It was a little bit tough at first. Actually I think this makes a person a better person for the most part. There may be some classes that I wouldn't recommend, but I think that it really just . . . it gives you a different perspective. It really kind of makes you into a different person. I think it's a good thing because I kind of went through it myself. It's a lot better than I thought it would be I guess is what I'm trying to say. I had my doubts about it, but there's something to be said for economics or whatever it might be, or Sociology. There is certainly a need for that kind of understanding and just general learning.

I asked David to think how he believes attending college when he was had recently graduated from high school compares to Dova's experience. He quickly mentioned his own perceived lack of access to affordable post-secondary education upon high school graduation.

When I was getting out of school there was no way that I could have gone.

I wouldn't have anyway probably, because there was no incentive to go. I couldn't have went anyway, just due to that there was no financial aid available, even though I certainly would have qualified for it. I just don't think there was anything then as there is now.

He then contrasted this with the opportunities that Dova has because of the availability of the PROMISE Scholarship. His initial explanation of why the Scholarship was important to his family was simply, "For the finances." His further explanation, however, gave a much more descriptive picture of challenges that working class West Virginia families face in terms of family resources and perceptions of their power and influence within their community school.

That [PROMISE Scholarship] would be the only way that she could go to college. Now I say that my son, who had a hard time, his grades are not nearly as good, he won't earn it. I can tell you right now [laughing].

He would probably be a C student at his best probably, you never know.

We'll have to work something out. But Dova, her grades were good.

She should take advantage of that because she has worked so hard and her grades are unbelievable. I believe that there's a connection. A lot of kids, maybe their families are more wealthy is one of the reasons they tend to do better in school. I don't know if the teachers don't want to give them a bad grade [laughing] . . . they probably just have more of an opportunity. Dova

has excelled in the face of adversity when she, we didn't have a computer until 2002 . . . the first computer we ever had. So she got by. She would always do really good. Straight A's . . . she makes A's in Calculus and all these really hard classes. She's smart, but I know a lot of kids that are smart but they don't apply themselves. It was imperative that she got that PROMISE Scholarship. The only way she would get a four year degree would be if she got the PROMISE Scholarship.

Like Melanie and Tammy, David and Dova knew little about the rationale behind the PROMISE Scholarship program. Dova knew the basics of the requirements she had to meet to earn the scholarship and explained:

I know you have to have a 3.0 GPA and at least a 21 on your ACT. I don't know what you need on your SAT, I never took it. I know it pays for all of your tuition at like a . . . not a private school, it only pays so much if you go to a private school. You have to keep a 3.0 in college to keep it.

When asked if she knew why the PROMISE Scholarship was implemented, she shyly replied, "So that you try harder?" David openly stated, "I probably really don't know a whole lot about it. Just what Dova has told me." David's version of the requirements like Tammy Taylor's, was not as accurate as his daughters, listing a 3.3 average and up to six years of tuition support. After again admitting that his understanding may be incorrect, he finished his explanation with, ". . . that's all I know about it, other than they don't have money for it!" When asked about the rationale, he smiled and replied, "I could guess."

As with the Taylors, I individually explained the rationale of PROMISE to David and Dova. After the explanation, Dova responded, "I think it's an honor to get it. If you can excel in school, then I think that you should be awarded with something and I think that the PROMISE just sums all that up." David's response was more in-depth as he again expressed his perception of the importance of the PROMISE Scholarship program and his concern for, and pride in his home state.

I think that it is great. Governor Wise was right. We have to find a way to fund it. That should not be a problem. We should do whatever it takes. We have to do that. I think that there's a lot of industry that probably would love to come here for our employees. My brother-in-law, he's one of the managers over at Toyota [outside Charleston]. He was in there when it first started. When something happens in California and there's something wrong with their motors my brother-in-law is the guy they send out there. He didn't know anything about cars, but he was smart. They hire a lot of workers. They love West Virginia workers. That's the best plant Toyota has in the world. I think there's a lot more of that out there. I know that if you leave this state and go try to get a construction job in the south somewhere, they'll hire somebody from West Virginia before they'll hire from their own state, because people from West Virginia will work. I think it's a real good thing that they did that PROMISE Scholarship and whoever come up with it should get credit for it, but they've got to find a way to pay for it.

Dova informed me that she was going to study engineering in college, but like Melanie admitted she was uncertain about her career path. She believed that her talents would be a good match for engineering.

I'm not sure, but I'm thinking that I want to go into some type of engineering.

Because I'm really good in math and you have to have good math skills for that. In any type of engineering you need to be creative, you have to be social.

And math, that's what I'm good at mostly.

She also mentioned her perception of how a lack of females in a profession that offers "good money" could serve as an advantage. She stated, "...women don't go into that very often. So that would help me in the long run." David admits influencing Dova's career direction toward engineering.

I have been nudging her towards engineering. She's strong in math. She has an analytic mind, and I just think that's where her strength is at. And there's good money in that. There's jobs in the state in that. That's what I would like for her to study. She hasn't yet made the decision.

David expressed strong feelings to me about his daughter remaining in West Virginia after college graduation. Although he was initially unsure about the rationale of the PROMISE Scholarship program, he now expressed support for the program's mission. He believed the goal of the program to create more college graduates for West Virginia to be an important one for the state. He explained:

I would want her to live in the area. I certainly would not have a problem with that. Wherever, I want her to live in the state. I want her to be in the state of West Virginia. That's what I want. I want her to have a good job,

more than anything, that's in the state. I'm for the state. If the job takes her to Martinsburg, then Martinsburg. If it takes her Charleston I really don't have a problem with that. If she has to go out of state, I won't have a problem with that either. I'm for the state of West Virginia. I would like to see our graduates do well, and stay. That way the next group of PROMISE Scholarship kids will have a chance to do that. If everybody leaves, nothing's going to turn around.

He later continued this theme:

The first group graduating, it would be good if you had a good percentage of them staying here. They may not because of the economics of it. But as the industry comes in and they have those opportunities in the state. I hope they'll stay here. It's like a diesel engine, once it gets started it will run by itself. You gotta feed it the fuel, you gotta have fuel. I hope that the industry comes in so they will have that opportunity. I believe if they have that opportunity most of them will stay.

Dova would also like to stay in West Virginia, but does not rule out a possible future in neighboring Tennessee or Virginia. She remembered family vacations to these other states and said:

Because when I was younger we used to like go to Gatlinburg and stay, and I just think that the people there were so nice. They remind me of people in Logan because everyone knows each other. Then we used to go to Virginia Beach and stuff and I just like the beach. I'd like to live close to Virginia Beach.

David and Dova believed that the faculty and staff at Logan High School had helped influence her decisions to attempt college work and provided assistance in the process. David praised many of Dova's teachers at Logan High School, but did comment when comparing Dova's teachers to her brother's, ". . . it seems like that the kids that had the better grades get the better teachers." Dova mentioned her actual teachers by name and cited specific examples of their help with explanations such as:

My [subject] teacher. Peggy Cooper. I had her last year for [subject] too, and she's always encouraging us about all kinds of different colleges. She brings us information from colleges all around West Virginia. She's been to three different colleges. Her oldest son went to Marshall, and then she went to WVU and her husband went to West Virginia Wesleyan. She has a lot ties in with a lot of the colleges. They send her information and she just supports us with all the decisions that we make.

She also gave another example with another subject area teacher.

She . . . well if you get on her nerves she doesn't help you that much, she's just like, you want to treat me bad then I'm not going to help you, but if you treat her good she would do anything for you. She would write any recommendation letter that you wanted, call up anybody for any college that you needed. If she needed to put in any good words for you.

David also credited other Logan High School staff members in addition to teachers, but mentioned one official in particular:

Yeah, I think the world of the [school administrator] at Logan High School, Mr. Dyer. He certainly didn't have anything to do with Dova's grades, he

has always been there when I needed him. If I had a problem with whatever it was about, that guy was always there to help me.

David then expressed to me what he perceived was a "bad rap" that Logan High School received from others in West Virginia. He again explained what he believes was a poor perception of the southern coalfields by the rest of the state. In his response were stereotypes that he believed exist within the state as opposed from those outside. He also noted how school officials at Logan High School attempt to counter these notions:

Well, there's a perception that we pay our basketball players or whatever and that's just ridiculous, they don't. Just 'cause were below Charleston, I think you get an automatic reputation inside the state. Automatically people think that people from Logan probably aren't too smart . . . and the people from Mt. View, which is another thing that's also ridiculous. There's just a perception out there. Logan High School has been drastically trying to improve that. I would rather my kids be going to Logan High School than any other school I can think of really to be honest with you. I'll give you an example, you know, you're from this area. Everybody thinks Logan's fans, basketball, football, whatever . . . they're just terrible. We go to Charleston schools, this isn't helping your research a bit this is just extra [laughter]. They are allowed to violate rules, the staff of their schools to just act so...and the principal don't do anything about it. You're not allowed to act like that at Logan. The [school officials] would not allow it. I take that there is great strides at Logan High School, and the schools in the area to rise above that.

David did laugh as he ended this explanation stating, "I know we've been bad in the past, but that's another conversation." Neither David nor Dova mentioned any helpful college resource programs at Logan High School. In fact, Dova laughed and replied, "They don't do a lot at the high school."

Dova told me that "financial reasons with my family" are the only factors that could prevent her from starting college in the fall. She explained some of the family money concerns that could prevent or delay her enrollment at Fairmont State.

Well my Dad is on disability and comp was paying for his college. So he'll be in the process of trying to find a job. And then my Mom...I have a three year old sister. My Mom can only work 2 days a week and she's a secretary, so she doesn't make a lot of money. With bills and everything, if something was to happen and I didn't get the scholarship money then I would choose not to go Fairmont.

If she did not accept the PROMISE Scholarship, Dova simply stated she would attend college at SWVCC. When asked what she would do if she no longer qualified for the PROMISE Scholarship after her first year of college, she replied:

Well I would beg my Mom and Dad's forgiveness [laughs] and then I would probably transfer to SWVCC for a year to get myself straightened up. Then get a job and save up money so that if I wanted to transfer out to bigger college that would cost more I could help pay for expenses too.

Throughout this theme of attending SWVCC in our discussions, I sensed that Dova would be satisfied with this option if it became reality. When asked if she would have any problems

attending SWVCC, she smiled and replied, "Anywhere is fine with me." I responded "really?" She again smiled and answered "Yeah."

David believed nothing would keep his daughter from starting college in the spring because she had already faced several challenges such as a hometown boy friend and not making the cheerleading squad at Fairmont State.

Knowing my daughter . . . no. When she didn't make the cheerleading squad, I had already pretty much decided, that she probably wouldn't go to Fairmont, she was going to SWVCC. Her boy friend is going to SWVCC, and they've been dating for about two years. She's going to Fairmont State. That's where she wants to go. I believe she'll do OK. She's pretty grown up. We'll see.

David also expressed how he could not understand why any parent would discourage their child from attempting college work. When I asked if he had ever encountered any parents in Logan that discouraged their children from seeking higher education he replied:

I can't say I know anybody like that, but having sociology and stuff, there's no doubt that's true. It's the humanity in us that if I can't move ahead, if I can't move on to a higher life style, then all I can do is keep people around me back. I'd say there's a lot of truth to that. There are people that don't want their kids to go off, but that really doesn't worry me. If she winds up in California, all I want her do is do her best. It doesn't really matter. I would prefer she stay here, but...

At the Logan High School Senior Awards Ceremony, Dova received several unanticipated awards that resulted in additional financial support for college. With the largest award being \$300, David and his wife Tonya smiled at the conclusion of the ceremony and

frequently expressed pride in their daughter. David quietly replied to me, "I sure didn't see that coming."

Dova began at Fairmont State University in August. She remained anxious about meeting new people but was ready for the new challenges facing her. David believes his family has done what it could to help his daughter get off to a good start in college. David wanted to express his family's appreciation of the PROMISE Scholarship program:

I am just tickled to death my daughter earned the grade point average or whatever, and all that that goes with it to receive it. I believe that she will use it. I believe that she will really . . . she'll go through with it. She will go through and get her degree in whatever it is she decides to go in, and I believe she'll be successful. I'm glad the state has it, I'm glad for the people who put it in and we just need work and make sure we keep it.

Dova also wanted to express similar sentiments:

I'm glad I got the PROMISE because that means I'm going get to go somewhere to college. Because if I didn't I would probably have trouble going anywhere. I think it's really a good thing.

Dova made the cheerleading squad at Fairmont State University.

The Johnson Family: "Somewhere close to me."

While waiting on the Johnson family for my next interview, I sat on a picnic table where I would be conducting my next round of interviews and looked around Middleburg Island. The Guyandotte River splits in this area where land exits between the branches before it rejoins down stream. The first area created is Central City, or "Slab Town" as locals refer to it and is full of modest homes. Middleburg Island is the second section of land surrounded by the Guyandotte.

“The Island” as it has been referred to for decades, has long been a home for Logan athletic facilities before the current high school was built during the mid-fifties.

The Island was now home to not only Logan High School and its athletic facilities, but also to Logan Elementary School and the much newer Logan Middle School. The Island and athletics have long been a source of pride and hope for Logan, as with most small communities in the coalfields. Logan High School is home to a rich athletic history of state championships in baseball and basketball. The athletic facilities housed here reflect this tradition and success. The baseball field had chair-back seats acquired from the closing of Atlanta's Fulton County Stadium. Construction was taking place to give the football field a new home locker room and concession complex.

This place also held many personal memories for me. I smiled as I looked at the football stadium where my father had built the first track surrounding the field and covered it with locally acquired coal ash. Logan Memorial Fieldhouse, the basketball facility, was recently re-named in honor of long-time basketball coach Willie Akers, who was also a member of the 1959 national championship runner-up West Virginia University Basketball Team. The Fieldhouse also held personal memories as I thought of my father coaching on the Fieldhouse court early in his career. My mother always dressed me in school colors whenever we attended one of my father's games. Unfortunately, my mother's much younger sister was a Logan Junior High School Kitten Cheerleader at the time and would bring me onto the court to cheer as a mascot. Even though I was very young, I still listen to family ridicule about this.

Although the Island was a center of pride and hope for the community, it was also evidence of the decline of the coal industry in Logan and in West Virginia. Logan High School's enrollment was half of what it once was at the height of the coal boom during the 1940's and

1950's. The Logan community itself still reeled from a drop of AAA athletic classification to AA due to declining enrollment. The newer Logan Middle was the only school that now sent students to Logan High School. Through the forties, fifties and sixties, junior high schools not only existed in Logan, but also in neighboring Aracoma, Holden, Omar, and Sharples. Several years ago, I attended the closing of the last two junior high schools, Logan and Logan Central, with pride and sadness as my father was honored as a Logan Junior High coach prior to the closing of the school.

This place was central to the town of Logan in both location and activity. Not only was the island the center of school activities, but was also a hub for other social activity. The Fieldhouse could hold several thousand people and also served as the community's civic center for concerts and other events. The Island itself had been rented for the last several years as home to the Massey Energy employee appreciation day bringing thousands annually into Logan for a day. I watched as cars of young people drove around the island as one of Logan's main cruising spots. I was continually reminded of this as cars would randomly pull in to speak with the Johnson's during our conversations! Several days later I learned that a rumor was spreading around Logan that the Johnson family and their son Chad had been seen speaking to a football recruiter on the Island. (I, of course, was the football recruiter.)

Chad Johnson was one of Logan High School's top graduates in 2006. He applied to schools such as Harvard, Johns Hopkins and West Virginia University. Chad identified himself to me as an overachiever and referred to his modest size and his selection as an All-State athlete in a major high school sport. He was very humble when speaking of his academic ability with statements such as:

It's nothing I've ever had to try for and I feel kind of bad because I'm not the

best student, things just come. I could study a night for a semester test or some comprehensive test and I'll think I don't know any of it and as soon as I get in there I see something and everything comes flooding back. It's always been like that, so I've just been a naturally good student I guess. Maybe not a good student, but naturally smart or something, I don't know.

He also stated that he, "took all the hard classes he could." Chad was a very friendly and easy to like young man. He participated in our discussions with a wit that kept the conversations serious but light hearted. Chad credited "sports as the number one thing" that kept him focused and avoiding some of the pitfalls that other Logan teenagers fall into. When specifically asked if the drugs were bad, he replied "Oh God."

Chad's parents, Richard and Josie were both born and raised in Logan. Josie Johnson was a friendly, jovial person who laughed a lot during our discussions and seemed to enjoy the opportunity to talk about her son and college. She was a daytime manager at a busy fast food restaurant in town. Josie was one of eight of children and grew up in Logan. When talking about her experiences about growing up and school, she replied:

I was like the middle one, so I just really didn't know that much about [college].

As far as school, I hated school so I didn't really apply myself. So you know,

that's just the way it was for me.

His father Richard Johnson was a plumber who quickly stated "I don't know where Chad gets his brains from." Richard was very friendly and relaxed through our conversations and seemed willing to let Josie do most of the talking.

Josie and Richard both wanted Chad to go to college and earn a degree. Josie explained to me, "he has the ability to do whatever he wants to do. He's got a chance that he and my

husband hasn't had." Richard agreed stating that he wants his son to "get a better job than we have and not have to work as hard." He then smiled at me and added, "well, work smarter, not harder." Both parents admitted not knowing much about college. Josie stated:

I really don't know because we . . . I didn't even know there was opportunity when I graduated that I could even go to college. It didn't even enter my mind. As soon as my kids was talking, they was talking college, so I really don't have no concept of what college life would be like . . . would you? [to Richard].

Richard responded, "No, I wouldn't know. When it was time for me to go to college, if you didn't have money you didn't go to college." Josie agreed, "Yeah, basically that's the way it was for us." Richard finished, "The only people that went to college was the people that had money . . . at least that's what I thought anyway."

Chad's parents wanted him to choose a career path that would make him happy and economically stable. Josie expressed to me that all jobs have good and bad aspects and has tried to explain this to both Chad and his sister Amy.

I'd like for him to go into something that he's going to be happy. Which jobs now a days, I try to tell my kids, you get bored with any job you go into. You're not going to be 100%. You just gotta work through it. Everybody's gotta make a living, ya know? I just want them to do something not as hard like me and his Dad's done. There's nothing wrong with what we do, I've always taught him that. But just, you know sometimes it gets tough and hard and you don't really make the money that you really deserve in what we're doing.

Richard simply stated, "Just whatever he likes and naturally [laughing] something that can make good money." Josie then again responded, "But mainly I just really would like for him to get into something that he's going to be happy doing and satisfied in life. After Chad graduates, both his parents would like to see him come home to Logan. Josie laughed and said "somewhere close to me." Richard laughed and said, "Mud Fork, West Virginia." Both parents admitted this could be difficult depending on what Chad chooses as a career. Richard more seriously added, "Somewhere close...fairly close anyway, you know?" Josie said "That's kinda what we've been worrying about. He might have to go far away to get a job...get a good job that pays."

When I asked Chad why he wanted to go to college he smiled and replied, "I want to make a lot of money." When asked doing what, he again laughed and replied, "I don't know, you tell me." More seriously, Chad referenced his parents and how he has perceived their working lives. He again described his work ethic to me, but this time compared it to a job rather than athletics. He also expressed his belief that his goal of financial stability can best be reached with a college degree.

I've seen basically how my parents . . . what they've had to go through, and although I consider myself, just by my work experiences, I consider myself more of a laborer type person anyway. I think if I had a degree, I could labor in something a little bit better and make more money. Everybody's . . . the whole consensus is if you got a degree you're going to make more money and that's a pretty fair assumption I guess.

Chad's love for athletics was evident in the career path's he discussed. He explained that he had attempted to link his interests and talents to something that could prove economically lucrative. He explained:

The whole thing is I am big sports fan I always thought I'd be better suited for some type of business or athletic related job just because I know health. The health field just isn't for me cause I've taken a lot of health classes in anatomy and health care fundamentals classes and things like that. The whole idea of open bodies and stuff like that's not for me. I found that out. And plus math, I'm better at math anyway. It's something that's just come more naturally to me. So I feel working in the business world or with people...people actually talking to me [laughing] would be a better suited field to me.

As Chad expressed his mathematics ability, the topic of engineering emerged in the discussion. This also seemed like a natural discussion point because Chad scored very high on the mathematics section of the ACT. When discussing other mathematics related programs of study he replied:

I thought about it, and again being good at math I thought it would be a good opportunity, and there's lots of job opportunities I guess. Maybe the fact that I like to deal with people a lot. Like last year I was in the program called Eagles Nest. It's where you go and kinda like mentor one day a week to a group of students in grade school. I guess just the fact I love dealing with kids and people more, I guess I've always tried to stay clear of just a job that you're just going to be sat down, figuring stuff up all day by yourself I guess. I like the person to person interaction.

As I listened to Chad explain his interests, I smiled because a career in education immediately came to mind based on my own experience. I could not help but say, "You may end up being a school teacher one day." Chad laughed and said, "Yeah I know. I've heard that."

I did not sense the apprehension of leaving home in Chad that Melanie and Dova expressed. He did not seem worried about making friends or falling into the college party scene. Like Melanie, he also believed that college is about being independent. Chad believes the way he grew up has prepared him for this independence. He emphasized how he enjoys new experiences and explained:

Well I think I'm ready for it just because of the way I was raised. I was kinda raised by my parents . . . I almost say I was raised to raise myself in a way. Me and my sister both were raised to be very independent people. We were taking pretty much care of ourselves when we were 10 and 12, not though like negligence, it was just the way my parents taught us. We taught ourselves to wash our own clothes. I can't remember when mom washed my clothes the last time. I went to a college visit out in California. And just the life that I see where it's free and you have your own choices excites me a lot. I'm not really very scared about it. I guess I'm just waiting to actually experience it myself.

When asked about leaving Logan and his family he replied:

It doesn't bother me too much. Like I said, I'm very independent and I feel like I can handle it myself. I've never really been a very attached person to my parents. Not that are were indifferent to each other, just like, we've been able to get along without each other like, I don't have to call home a lot when I'm on trips and things like that. I actually kind of get jumped on to, my parents get a little bit worried. They get more worried than I do I guess [laughing]. I guess it's just where I like to experience new things all the time so I think that's the main thing about my

personality that kind of makes me ready to go to college, just liking new experiences.

About partying he responded:

Yeah, well I've never been that anyways. In high school your parties are already set up. You know who your parties are going to be in college by the time you're a senior in high school and I'm not one. Just being in athletics has kind of steered me away from that just because where I've not been physically gifted. I have had to try to take every advantage I could get and I knew substance abuse and things like that wouldn't help me in sports so I just never had any notion to even try it. It never really entered my mind, so I think I'll be alright with the freedom as far as the choices you have to make. I think I'm pretty good at it.

When asked where he wanted to attend college, Chad indicated that he wanted to go to a school with a good academic reputation. He explained:

I knew I wanted to go to a really good school, just because I'm one of those people that's kind of . . . just where I have that workman's mentality . . . its got to be over the top, you got to go 100%. With me, why have the opportunity to go someplace like Harvard or Johns Hopkins and not take it I guess, instead of going to like settling for Florida State, you know? It's not really settling, it's a great school, but I couldn't see myself not going for the big deal.

Harvard was his first choice. He responded, "I probably would go to Harvard. I would just test it out for a year. It'd be cold up there [laughing], that's the only problem I have with it. That's why I applied to one California school." Chad had the opportunity to be placed on the

waiting list at Harvard, but chose not to follow through with it. He explained his application experience with Harvard:

I got to the . . . I guess interview round sort of, and the guy that interviewed me was from Charleston and he said it looked good. He couldn't give me any indication because the formula they go on for admissions is different every year and things like that. But he said, just from the interview, that he thought there would be no hindrances I guess if I were to attend Harvard. Possibly, I could actually be accepted at Harvard by now. I just didn't continue with the waitlist process, because it goes all the way up to June 14 and you have to send in stuff if you want to continue to be on the wait list. I didn't really want to put a lot of energy into that if it wasn't going to be a sure thing. So I just kind of had to go with a sure thing.

The college visit he made to California was to Occidental College where he was also offered the opportunity to play football. Chad explained to me that he was initially excited about this possibility prior to the visit. He described how the actual visit, however, changed his thinking:

It's a small school, Occidental College. Only 1800 students. They're a Division III school and I was going out there to possibly play football. They're usually nationally ranked in Division III every year. I thought about doing some study in Chemistry and possibly coming back to West Virginia and getting a Dentistry degree because I job shadowed. That's like what we did our Senior Project deal on and I like it a lot because it's not the whole open body, its just a little bit of blood. I figured I could do that and it's obviously good money to do Dentistry and stuff. That was kind of a plan, an idea. But when I got out to the school, the

school just wasn't what I expected. I was hoping it would be that... Oh my God, I have to go here feeling, and it wasn't that. And it being that far away, I kind of really didn't want to take the risk of going out there. It's a very prestigious school, even though it's not well known, it's very prestigious and it costs a lot of money.

Chad finished the explanation by saying, "... and California is long way away."

Chad was also waiting on some additional information from Johns Hopkins University where he was also offered the opportunity to play football. His admission to Johns Hopkins had been held up because they had not received all the necessary financial paperwork for Chad's application. He explained:

I'm basically just waiting to see if I'm going to get enough money to go there in 2007, because, like for West Virginia you have to fill out the FAFSA and you're set basically. That's all they really even preach at our school is FAFSA, and get it in.

During his explanations of his college application experience, he noted several times that he had completed all the required paperwork himself. He stated that the paperwork necessary for schools like Harvard and Johns Hopkins was different than what was required at West Virginia University. He explained the process that he encountered and mentioned that Logan High School staff was not very helpful in providing assistance with the application process at these out of state schools.

It's kind of a bad thing, because they're so focused on getting kids into a West Virginia school. It's good and bad I guess, but like for those other schools you have to have the CSS profile that the college board does, and it's like a... it's like a FAFSA on steroids. It's like 150 some questions, and it's pretty awful. I did

all that hard stuff and they didn't get my tax return, so I mean, it was kind of a bum deal . . . just a mix up really.

When asked what happened to his tax return, he replied:

See the CSS profile has this other program in it called IDOC and you send them your documents and they send them to the schools you apply to. And that school (Johns Hopkins) didn't deal with IDOC like Harvard and Yale did. So I sent them, and they sent them to those two schools but they didn't send them to Johns Hopkins and I thought they would. Just because...you know, they are the kinda same caliber schools. It was just a mix up.

When asked if officials at Logan High School had been of any assistance to his application process or in his college decision-making process he responded:

If I was wanting to go to any other school, no . . . like out of state schools. Other than getting into a West Virginia school, no I didn't really have any help besides the fact that the counselors had to know about sending transcripts and things like that. And they asked about applications, have you applied yet? Have you applied? I mean that's about it

He continued:

They stayed after you for like making sure you at least apply somewhere, especially to a West Virginia school, at least one. Also the FAFSA and all those deadlines. Other than that, if I was to want to sit down and meet, they were really busy trying to get some of the students who are borderline into a school like West Virginia. Its just...I guess tough.

He did identify the ACT Prep Class at Logan High School as a resource for students attempting to qualify for a PROMISE Scholarship, although his already high ACT score did not improve after he completed the workshop. He also mentioned three dual credit classes he was able to take through Logan High School and SWVCC. He hoped these classes would transfer wherever he decided to go, but admitted he had not checked into this. When his parents were asked if they received much help from the high school, Richard responded, "A little bit, but they just go over the basics and then there ya are." Josie then stated, "Honestly, not that much I don't think."

When asked where he would likely attend school with so many things pending, Chad responded, "I'm going to WVU definitely my first year." Chad also told me, however, that he was unsure of what he will study at West Virginia upon his enrollment. His parents echoed this plan. When asked if he would be attending WVU, Josie replied:

For the first year. And hopefully he'll get into Johns Hopkins. He's already in. His financial aid got messed up because he thought he was gonna go to California. He went out there to that school and he end up not liking it. Things just got messed up with his financial aid through Johns Hopkins so he's gonna defer a year.

Josie also suggested another option to her son:

I even told him he could just stay here for year, but I think his counselors advised him of going to WVU, and who knows, he might get up there and like it and decide to stay there. It just depends on what he wants and what he thinks best for himself.

When asked about what Chad would be studying and if they had ever considered attending SWVCC, she replied:

Well, he wasn't really sure what he wants to be. He's struggled with that

decision mainly, and I thought well maybe give him a year to relax and not have much on his mind might take a load off his mind. Then he could figure out what he would want to be because he just don't know what he wants to be right now. And we got a daughter, she's 2nd year in college and she goes to SWVCC. It took her til like her second year to, and she's still not quite sure what she wants to do either. And he's just not had no free time since he started school cause he always been real busy with ball and this and that and just staying real busy. I thought, well take a year off and just try to relax and see what you want to do.

When asked to confirm if officials at Logan High School had advised against this advice, Josie said:

Well (a school official) advised us, because when I talked to Johns Hopkins they told me that he couldn't go to [Johns Hopkins], that the thing of it was he just can't declare a major, he can go, but he can't declare a major his first year is what it was. So they advised him to go to WVU and you know, and go to Johns Hopkins the following year.

Because the PROMISE Scholarship program had not been referenced by any member of the Johnson family, I took the opportunity to raise the topic amidst the discussion of financial aid. Chad did not know the qualification requirements for PROMISE as well as Melanie Taylor and Dova Leary did. He reported the ACT and SAT requirements and then ended with, "I don't recall the actual numbers, but I know you have to do decent." Josie also knew the ACT score requirements then reported "I do know they changed some stuff and they don't pay the full tuition." She was aware that PROMISE did not cover room and board costs. When discussing the

academic requirements, Richard interceded, "We was lucky he was pretty intelligent. He could probably get a education somewhere with different opportunities. It might have been harder though."

Each member of the Johnson family expressed to me the importance of the PROMISE Scholarship tuition benefit. They also emphasized the financial burden it would place on their family if Chad did not have access to the scholarship or was unable to qualify after his first year of college. Josie explained:

It would've been hard for us financially, but I would have made sure . . . I would have done whatever it took for him to go. But as far as financial, yes it would have been hard for us. Maybe, meaning me having two jobs, I don't know, but I would have done whatever it took for him to go.

Richard simply stated, "It's just nice to have when you got a kid that can make it . . . that it's out there for the opportunity."

Josie also took the opportunity to talk about her older daughter who attended SWVCC and did not qualify for the PROMISE Scholarship. She expressed a frustration with the required ACT scores and believed the scores were not indicative of a student's efforts or ability to succeed in college. She also expressed to me that her daughter's inability to meet the required ACT score denied her access to other state colleges because of family finances. She explained:

Just like our daughter for instance. She's not like a straight A student. She's gonna be A, B, C student. But she's a student that would take every opportunity she would have . . . she would make the most of it. Now she didn't get the PROMISE because she couldn't score high enough on her ACTs and stuff. She's not a test taker, but she does apply herself in other areas. It didn't stop her from going to

college and stuff, she went ahead and done it. As far as financially, she would of liked to been able to go to Marshall or to WVU, but she knows that we just couldn't swing it now. I think some kids, it depends on the factors, and I know they have to have stipulations to how you get in and stuff, but just for instance, when she was in the 8th grade or the 7th grade and it was the thing with the Spanish. She couldn't get into Spanish because she didn't score high enough on her Stanford-9. That's when they used that test. But she's not a good test taker. That doesn't mean that she don't apply herself. There's other kids that got into the programs and stuff and didn't apply their selves. Sometimes there's kids out there that will take advantage of the PROMISE Scholarship. They have a disadvantage because they can't pass the test. But it doesn't really mean that they won't make that opportunity count.

I think that's just where kids has been raised different. I think it's all in the raising.

When asked if they had inquired about other funding opportunities for their daughter such as loans, Josie replied:

No, and again, like you hear all this money being out there. I'd like to know where it's at. Because the [school officials], some of the [school officials] at the schools don't really inform the parents where to look and stuff. We never did know. He's basically filled all his stuff out basically his self, as far as his financial aid forms and all that. We was totally screwed up on my daughters and then he's done it too.

Richard expressed his frustrations to me with many of the application processes such as FAFSA because "You have to do everything on-line." Josie explained her experiences of filling out the FAFSA form for both Chad and Amy:

When we filled hers out, we was kind of misinformed too about certain things. And this time I had called because there was the question on there about what money we had in the bank and we had like a CD and it was worth like 20,000, but we got it all covered up in payments. Well we put \$21,000 down that we got in the bank. To this day, until we done his this year, I said well that's crazy, we won't get that money. We don't have access to \$21,000. So I happen just to call the financial aid government herself and she explained to me that if you was to turn that CD in today, cash it in today, what it would be worth? And that's how I knew. She would of got more money which we didn't know it. The second year she didn't go the first semester of the second year where we had hers totally screwed up. I really don't know why. She got it for this coming year, and I really don't know why.

Richard and Josie both expressed that if Chad did not continue to qualify for the PROMISE Scholarship they would support him and find other financial resources so he could continue his education. Richard stated that although they didn't really want to, they would "Take out a lot of loans." He also admitted to me that they did not "know a whole lot about loans or anything." Josie added, "We would tell him he would have to work harder and get the grades or else he would have to help, get a job, and help to go to college if that's what he wants to do." Chad stated that if he lost the scholarship he would find a way to do better because he was aware of the sacrifices that his parents had made. He explained:

It would be something that would be very difficult. I don't think it would be a problem to go back to school at all, just because my parents have sacrificed a lot and I know they'd sacrifice more. It would just be a matter of getting myself back

on track for school work and I would probably have to take a summer job to try to save money. My parents would have to make cut backs, I guess at home. They would, I know they would. So I don't think if I lost money from the school, I don't think it would keep me from going back for my sophomore year if I was to attend WVU.

Chad reinforced his commitment to succeed in college by saying, "nothing can keep me from going."

The Johnson family continued the theme of not knowing the rationale behind the PROMISE Scholarship program. Chad was aware that one of the goals of the program was "trying to make students raise their standards." I could not refrain from telling Chad that it was also designed to keep young people like him at home in West Virginia. He smiled and replied, "Yeah, I know." After more thorough explanations to Chad and his parents, Richard stated:

I'd say if they want to keep people in school in the state and they want to help the economy, I think they need to do more in the way of the PROMISE Scholarship. Have more for them, get more kids in if they want to help the economy and keep people in West Virginia. Because if they don't that's just more people that are going to leave.

Josie again referenced her daughter Amy's inability to meet the required ACT test score and how this was not an indicator of her ability to succeed in college.

I would say not make it higher [laughing]. If anything make it lower so some more can go. I don't know how they would even go about it. For instance, my daughter, that really tries and really wants to make something of herself. Like I said, the test taking, I know that they have to have it because it shows where the

kids is at, but sometimes that don't show them nothing.

Another pattern was also emerging from my conversations with these Logan families. Although they did not know the exact rationale behind the PROMISE Scholarship program, many were aware of the funding issues the program faced. Chad also commented on the need for continued funding and even provided a few suggestions:

. . . they need to try and solve the money issues with the schools and raising the money for it anyway possible. Maybe even do something like a deal with the schools if that's possible. I don't know what could be done. If I was to say you could do a deal with the colleges or university as far as just giving a reprieve from tuition, which is basically what it is, the schools need to be paid. I don't know, maybe even just a reduction in the costs from the schools. Just maybe work out a deal to where tuition's not as much for in-state students just in general.

When asked about returning to Logan after he finishes college, Chad did not completely share his parent's enthusiasm. He talked about what he perceived as the advantages and disadvantages of growing up in a small town like Logan. He specifically mentioned a low crime rate as he explained:

Honestly, when I first thought about what I wanted to do after high school as far as just living, I wanted to get as far away from home as I could. Just growing up, experiences with your social life in town and things like that, it made things in Logan seem so awful. This is a horrible place, who would want to raise a kid here? And then growing up and being older and actually the place where I live at, it seems like its . . . it's not the best place, no place is. It seems like an OK place because you could raise a kid because it's safe for the most part. There's hardly any crime and

things like that. I'm not so certain I want to go too much far away. And even out of West Virginia at all if I want to leave Logan at all.

Chad told me that Logan has the disadvantage of a severe drug problem. When explaining illegal drugs and Logan he took an economic approach and described the problem as a lack of job opportunities. He said:

Again, it's the lucrativity, I guess you could say, of dealing drugs...because there's not a lot of other opportunities for jobs. Dealing drugs would be a good one, so if you bring it in somehow, someway, someone is going to find it because they need it.

Chad also identified the problems with what he called "small town politics" in Logan. This concern was actually one of social class in Logan and his sense of powerlessness in the system. He explained a perception of being an outsider in a small town, but then expressed that the good parts of growing up in Logan have outweighed the bad aspects:

Of course West Virginia is known for its politics and Logan is known [laughing]... I guess being the kid from the lower echelon of the social scale I got the brunt of The . . . I didn't get the good side of the whole politicking thing so I guess I've seen that...and it kind of deterred me from wanting to be around here. But just knowing if that's the worst thing you got to deal with, you're really not too bad off I guess. It's not like you got to worry about your kid even playing outside you know? As opposed to a big city is what I'm talking about. I just like a small town.

Chad left Logan and began classes at West Virginia University in August. He is still interested in possibly attending Johns Hopkins, but has adjusted well to WVU. His parents miss him, but Josie explained, "as long as he is doing his best and is happy, I'm happy."

The Potter Family: "Not in Logan"

The next morning, I drove back into Logan from my Aunt's house in Omar where I was staying while doing my research. Omar was several miles north on Island Creek from the unincorporated community of Sarah Ann. Sarah Ann was home to the Hatfield family cemetery where William "Devil Anse" Hatfield of the legendary Hatfield-McCoy feud is buried. I could not help but think of this as I was making my way back to Logan High School to interview my next family. Logan High School's mascot, the Wildcat, was not directly named for the animal as one would assume. It was instead the term used by General Robert E. Lee to describe the men from Logan County who fought in his Northern Virginia army during the Civil War. Devil Anse Hatfield was in command of the men from Logan County who fought for the Confederacy.

I was again struck by a sense of pride and hope as I thought of the unique history that belongs to this place and its people. As was the trend during my work, however, this was quickly overcome by despair. I had read recently that the cemetery was in jeopardy because the family member who had been maintaining the cemetery was growing old and unable to continue. There was no one to take over for her and the site has not been declared any type of landmark to receive funding assistance.

The Potter family lived in a section of Logan known as Middleburg. It lied across the Guyandotte River from the actual Town of Logan. I was again reminded of Logan's economic decline as Middleburg was once where the wealthy families of Logan resided. Forty years ago, Judy Potter and her family of two children could not have afforded a home in Middleburg. Although still an impressive place with well kept homes and sidewalks, houses in Middleburg were now affordable and plentiful as was most real estate in Logan. The only visible sign of change in Middleburg was a gaping cut in the mountain that overlooks the neighborhood made

for a new road to nearby Man. Construction of this badly needed road was at a standstill because funding had run out for the project.

Judy Potter was a single mother and worked at a Logan County school. Her two children, Nathan and Tina were in the twelfth and eleventh grades. She herself was a graduate of Logan High School. Like Tammy Taylor, Judy wanted Nathan to have the opportunity to leave Logan one day. Although she was not as determined to follow Nathan, she did laughingly say, "I want him to go somewhere else so I can move out to wherever he is." Judy informed me I may have problems getting Nathan to say much. I, however, found Nathan Potter to be very well spoken and willing to provide thoughtful responses. He seemed more serious natured or perhaps shy, than the other students I had spoken with.

Again like Tammy Taylor, Judy expressed frustration with life in Logan and what she perceived as a "lack of things to do." She was concerned that Nathan could be one of the young people who do not want to leave Logan. When asked where she wanted him to live after college, she replied:

Not in Logan. I really don't. He likes Logan and I think he'd be happy.

I've never really been that happy in Logan. It's just kind of . . . there's too many weaknesses around. I'd like to see him somewhere, maybe in small community that has a little bit more opportunity for him and his kids. Just little things like better restaurants, better shopping, you know, things like that. When I'm at the beach, I can just go anywhere I want and I'm happy there. Here it just seems like . . . we're doing better though, we actually have a theater now [laughing].

She compared how the area was during her childhood to what now faces Logan's youth. She explained:

...when we grew up in Logan it was wonderful. I wouldn't want . . . I really wouldn't want to grow up anywhere else, but now it just seems just working here, I know that a lot of our kids, even some of our really good kids that have good families . . . they turned to drugs . . . they turned to alcohol.

Also like Tammy, she expressed to me her concern over the availability of illegal drugs in Logan combined with her perception of a lack of things for young people to do. When I asked if she believed drug problems were worse in Logan than in other areas, she explained:

I've asked a lot of kids and the main thing they say is there's nothing better to do. Kids are pretty....they'll tell you what they did on the weekends. I'll say . . . what'd you do this weekend? Well me and my buddy were out on 4 wheelers and got drunk, this and that, and I'll ask, well why would you want to do that? Well . . . nothing better to do, and I was bored.

Nathan and Judy both related a college degree to better individual economic opportunity. As with the Johnson family, there was also a desire to be happy in ones' chosen career. Nathan responded:

I want to go to college so I can make a lot of money for one. But, I want to do something I'll be able to enjoy my whole life and be able to support my family and I won't be able to do that if I don't go to college . . . not the way I want to.

This theme of being able to support one's family again emerged as something that comes as a result of economic opportunity. Judy stated, "The main reason is, so he will be able to support his family, and have pride in his work and his self . . . things that he's accomplished." She further explained:

I'd like him to be happy in whatever he does. My main goal for him is to be able to support his family and be able to make enough money to do things he wants to do. To travel . . . he's very interested in . . . he can tell you every place there is to go to in Africa and Australia, and he loves geography and things like that.

Judy informed me she wanted Nathan to attend SWVCC for his first year of college. I thought this odd after she explained her frustrations with life in Logan and her perceptions of the lack of positive social activities. When I asked her to explain her choice of SWVCC she replied, "I'd like him to stay here for a year or so . . . maybe just a year. I don't want him to get too comfortable here." She further explained:

I think he's the type of kid . . . if I did just kind of let him stay here for two or three years that he would. He's going to be one that I'm going to have to make go on out too.

Nathan supported his mother's assumptions by telling me, "I'm comfortable here. I have a lot of family here and friends, and a lot of them are staying around here." He also referenced, however, students that just "hang around Logan." He explained, "I have a few friends, but they've already dropped out and they don't have much of a future. They're probably going into the Army or something." Judy explained that at one time Nathan did not want to return to Logan after college. She explained, however, how this had changed:

Before, it was I'm never living in Logan, then he and a bunch of his friends went to Chicago for about a week. When he came back he said I don't think I want to live in a big city. They went for a sporting card show and after they went he said I don't want to go, I had enough of that. So now he is thinking maybe, even if not Logan, somewhere little. He's just different now.

Nathan also explained this change to me in where he wanted to live after college. This change was also reflected in his possible career choices:

When I was first coming up through high school, I didn't know what I wanted to be. I wanted to be a doctor. I wanted to be somebody on Wall Street or something like that. I wanted to live in the big city. Going up to big cities like for vacations and stuff, I just didn't like that. I'd like to live in a town like Logan or pretty much just to stay around here if I could. If I had a job where I had to move then I would, but preferably around Logan.

When asked if he now knew what he wanted to study in college, he replied:

Not exactly, but I'm headed towards law. Become a lawyer or something like that. I'm not really interested in science or math so anything with medicine...I'm not even worried about. I've kind of looked at my strengths and decided what's best for me and something I'll be able to enjoy.

He echoed his mother's sentiments about initially attending SWVCC and then transferring to a state four-year institution. He reported that the only school he applied to was SWVCC. He told me, "we had applied to Marshall originally, but we didn't go through with the whole process because we decided that SWVCC was just the school for me right now." He continued:

Well, I'm going to go to SWVCC a year, maybe two, then I'm going to transfer to either Marshall or WVU. It's more practical. I'm not sure if I'm ready to be out on my own yet. I don't know if I'm mature enough and I know that so I figure SWVCC is more practical. It doesn't cost so much money. It's down the road. I'll be able to mature, be more prepared when I'm ready to leave.

Listening as Nathan explained that he was not ready to leave home, I asked about his perceptions of college life. He emphasized a new level of responsibility that students face in college and how he believed he was not yet ready for this. Nathan replied, "I have a tendency to slack off every now and then and I can't do that because college is nothing like high school. That's what I've been told." He explained why eventually transferring to Marshall after completing work at SWVCC is his preference. Nathan stated:

Marshall is closer and I'd be able to come in. I think that's what would best suit me as far as that goes. I think the college life and socialization will be available anywhere. The education is what would be better, or prepare me better for law school.

Nathan expressed some concerns about the social life that he perceived existed at colleges and universities. He explained, "I know it can be wild." He also told me he was not sure how he would handle those distractions. He replied, "I haven't been real exposed to that stuff." I haven't done a lot of partying."

When discussing where she would like Nathan to attend college after SWVCC, Judy referenced several West Virginia colleges with Concord University as her first choice. She also

alluded to her son's plan to eventually attend law school. When asked if she approved of his decision to attend Marshall or West Virginia University she replied:

Yes, or WVU or Concord or any . . . I would really like to see him go to Concord. For the first two or three years he was always interested in law, criminal law. And he talked to this man from Concord that came to speak to the kids. Nathan really thought that guy was wonderful. Ninety-nine percent of their people that apply to law school are accepted. It's a phenomenal rate Concord has. He told me he thought Concord would be too remote for him. He wouldn't want to go off in that direction. He'd rather go to Huntington or WVU. He doesn't want to go to Beckley or down that way. Who knows his reasoning? But that's what he said and he doesn't really know a whole lot of people that are going to Concord. Now a lot of our kids are going to Fairmont, but he's never had an interest in going to Fairmont.

Being a parent and working in a school, Judy described to me her beliefs about the issues of expectations and work ethic among Logan's high schools students as their biggest challenges to being successful. She explained:

I'm around them everyday and a lot of them think everything should be easy and I don't know if that is everywhere in the world, I don't know. They think that everything should be easy, including my own. And we have a few that they want everything to be handed to them. If it's not, then I'm not doing it. I think that comes unfortunately from our generation of parenting.

She added that she hears high school students say, "Well I'd like to go to college, but they don't want to put forth the effort. They don't want to work for it. They want it to just be handed to

them.” Although Judy expressed these concerns about Nathan and teenagers in general, she was also quick to point out what she believed to be her son’s abilities.

His strengths are his academics, his intellectual abilities more than hands on.

I don’t think he could excel in a training program. I don’t, just from knowing him all these years. He would rather sit at a desk or boss somebody around than do that.

She echoed her son’s sentiments that he did not care much for mathematics:

He does not like math. He’s never cared about math. Every since he’s been able to think about going to college, he’s always said I will not take anything that requires a lot of math. I think there’s some things you’re never really going to have to deal with like Algebra II and Geometry. I don’t know if he’s ever really cared about them. He’s one of those kids that if he cares about it and is interested, he loves it. If he’s not interested, or thinks he doesn’t need it, he doesn’t try.

Judy admitted being worried that her son will eventually be an educator because of her own work experiences in the schools. She said, “He would like to be a college professor in History.” She has warned him, however, that being professor is different than being a school teacher. Nathan is aware that his mother would like him to avoid a career in education for something that makes more money.

Nathan wanted to earn a PROMISE Scholarship for the tuition benefit. He explained, “So it would help my Mom pay for college and so I wouldn’t have to worry about getting loans or anything.” When I asked what else he know about the program he added, ‘I know it pays for my tuition for four years and there are requirements you have to have because they pound it into you

around here.” Judy believes the PROMISE Scholarship program is “invaluable” to her family and added:

If I didn't have the PROMISE Scholarship for Nathan, and he was going to Marshall or WVU, the money I have wouldn't cover his tuition. So myself, I don't know what we would . . . I guess I would have gotten another job.

She continued explaining her knowledge of the Scholarship's academic requirements:

I know the requirements. Working in a school you have to know the requirements of what to do with grades and test scores. I think it's wonderful. In Nathan's case, the GPA was no problem, that was always there, but he had to take the ACT three times. And that's the first time he's ever had to work for something that he had to get. I never said *if* [emphasized] we qualify . . . you *will* [emphasized] get the PROMISE Scholarship. And the very next time he took it he finally passed, he had like a 29 on the English and 27 in the science and 16 in math the first time...then an 18 in math...and then finally 21.

But he really had to work for that.

When asked what she thought about the Scholarship program in general, she replied:

It's really good. Kids in the middle can get it. It provides them with a means to get out. Some of them may just want to go SWVCC, but with the PROMISE Scholarship, they can go to Marshall or WVU or somewhere like that. They don't have to care about extra money for tuition.

Although like other student participants, Nathan had no knowledge of the rationale behind the PROMISE Scholarship program, Judy had more understanding than did the other families with

whom I had spoken. She explained how PROMISE makes college more affordable for families because families don't like to take out loans to send their children to college.

Because so many of our kids, the main reason they're not going on to college... one our highly talented kids didn't have the money to go and the parents make a little too much money, and I mean a *little* [emphasized] too much money. For him to go, they were having to take out loans; well people don't want to do that. I have probably discouraged my children from ever taking loans. It's just a monkey on your back.

She also believed that more students should be given access to other types of training besides college level work after graduation. She proposed extending the PROMISE Scholarship program to help non-college bound high school graduates learn trades.

It would be like a PROMISE Scholarship that would help some of these kids learn how to work on coal trucks things like that, a vocational type of PROMISE Scholarship. Because a lot of our kids don't want to go to a two or four year college, but they do want to go somewhere. Most every one of these kids, they want to learn. The shop kids and those boys want to learn. They'll go on. If there was some type of training we could go ahead and offer them and say look we can send you to such and such for a year with a PROMISE type of scholarship. That would help. Because a lot of our kids don't want to go. They just can't wrap their mind around going to college for two full years at Marshall or WVU.

Judy also discussed special education students and her perceptions of their limited opportunities. She stated, "... you're a 2.5 student who never even thought about taking the ACT, where do

you go? Service? Wal-Mart? Drugs? Those are the kids we need to do something with.” She believed that the schools should help students set goals for themselves before they get to high school and help them think about their futures.

Everybody needs to do that because some kids, until they are asked those questions, they've never been asked in their life. What are you going to do when you graduate? They look and go . . . well? Even our valedictorians, they don't know. Like (a student's name), he just can't tell you what he wants to do yet. But his options are open. These other kids, their options aren't open.

Judy believed that helping places like Logan change is a complex issue. She referenced the PROMISE Scholarship informational meetings held in the evenings at Logan High School and the parents who do not attend. She did not believe these parents do not care about their children and their futures, but rather they simply do not realize why they should go.

Every time they walk in, somebody's saying, well your kid did this, your kid did that. And I know a lot of my friends told me, I hated school and I just wanted out. I don't want to come back for any activities. They don't want to be there.

When asked if she thought some parents did not want their child to go to college because they did not want him or her to leave home she replied, “Probably if it's instilled from day one. I want you to stay here; I want you to work in the mines.” She further explained:

If they don't want them to go anywhere, most parents would like them to go to SWVCC. And you know they are offering more and more to the kids.

We're getting new programs in everything, like the dental hygiene in this year. It's really awesome. Way more for our kids than what we had when we were

coming up. Nursing is about all you could get at SWVCC. I know a lot of our kids are going because I heard from SWVCC . . . that's good. I think that other parents don't know better. Some parents want their kids to stay home and work little jobs so *they* [emphasized] don't have to work. The mentality is there, we don't want to admit that they're there, but they're there. They don't really want them to go anywhere.

She also expressed to me her belief that school staff members could do a better job of informing parents and helping them with processes such as college and scholarship applications.

I think the counselors need to do the word of mouth. To let the kids be aware of the scholarships. I think being in schools for my work, I can find out this information. If I didn't, my child would never know. It just seems like something else could be done. I don't know exactly what it is, if it would be more counseling time with these kids or going into classrooms.

When asked if anyone at Logan High School had been helpful to Nathan's application process, Judy and Nathan referenced several Logan High School staff members who were helpful in providing assistance and advice. Judy commented to me that the English teachers played "a big part in helping our kids." Nathan also referenced his English teachers, in addition to his counselor and the ACT workshop.

Well my last three English teachers have really been supportive of all the kids. And Mrs. White, she does this workshop for the ACT, trying to help people improve their scores so they can get more scholarship money. She really wants to see people do good, that's why she does the workshop.

He credited the program with helping him raise his ACT math score to the PROMISE Scholarship requirement.

I took it three times and it's helped me go up around four points. There's all kinds of practice tests we take for the ACT. That's what they're really concerned about, getting the ACT score because that's the hardest part about the PROMISE is getting all the sub scores.

When I asked who he gave the most credit to for supporting his college application decisions, Nathan stated:

Well, my mom of course. She's always telling me about how, I was brought up with the idea being a school worker. She didn't want me to be staff, a teacher or a counselor, but something that made a lot more money. She's always just showing me, we live comfortably, but if she would have chosen a different occupation by going to school for about six years or so. She wants me to have more opportunities and she said college is the only way to really get opportunities. If you don't go to college after school, there is just not much for you except minimum wage jobs.

Judy and Nathan both emphasized that, short of illness nothing will keep him from beginning college in the fall. Nathan explained:

It would have to be something really major. No, nothing because I've pretty much prepared myself for college my whole life, especially the last four years. I've made sure I haven't done anything stupid, or let it get in the way of me starting college like having a child.

Judy responded, "He has never ever wanted to do anything but go to college." They both also

explained the burden it would be on their family if Nathan did not qualify for the Scholarship after his first year. Nathan stated, "I mean it would be awful. It would mess up my life probably.

It costs a lot of money for college." Judy overheard this response and later added:

Well, he goes into it with knowing, here's what we have to pay, he knows it.

His answer when I heard him say (laughing), it would ruin his life, it wouldn't ruin his life, we'd find something for him to do. He's like one of these kids that's he so smart he thinks he can bounce back and get into something else, even it would be just to stay at SWVCC and go to a two- year program or something. And like I said, I never could see him at a vocational school or anything like that, that's not the type of kid he is.

When I asked if he had any final thoughts about college or the PROMISE Scholarship, Nathan replied, "Hmm . . . well I guess I'm as ready as I'll ever be to go to college. My mom's prepared me for it pretty well." Judy, however, somehow aware of the other families I was talking to offered this insight:

You've interviewed kids whose parents didn't go to college, and they didn't know how to help their kids go about it. If that kid hadn't been bright and ready to go and somewhere, and down the line someone said look, this is what you need to do. They wouldn't be going. Smart or not, they just wouldn't.

Nathan began classes in the fall at SWVCC, enrolled in the radiology program. Judy informed me that he was "not excited about school" and "just wants to finish so he can work." She still believed they made the right decision for Nathan to stay at home and attend SWVCC. She said most of his friends were going there and she believed, "This is where he needed to be."

The Mason Family: "Trapped"

My conversations with Sally Mason and her daughter Shelly Jennings once again took me past the June Montgomery Harless Children's Home in Holden on my way to their home on Whitman Creek. This time I found myself looking at the facility a bit closer. I noticed aspects of the facility in greater detail such as the large fence that surrounded the facility and its grounds. After passing the Home and driving into the community of Holden, another structure caught my attention.

An aging building from the early 1900's had been the company store of the Island Creek Coal Company. The building now showed its wear and the structural signs of serving many functions over the decades since its closing. This scene again struck a range of emotions in me as I thought of pictures I had seen of the building, and Holden itself, during the boom of the coalfields. This Company Store had been the center of Holden for generations. The embattled structure was still located in the center of the declining community, but no longer looked as stately as it did in the photographs I remembered. I wondered what function the five story building now served, if any, when I noticed a name on the front. White homemade letters were attached to the top of the building that read "Appalachian Dream Center." I learned later that the Center was operated by the Church of God as an outreach center. Where the old store sold products in a time of prosperity, this new store provided a different set of services selling hope amidst despair.

When I arrived at the Mason home, I was greeted by many friendly family members, cats! Sally Mason and her daughter Shelly came to the door smiling and Sally said, "We love our animals." Originally, her husband Tom was also going to participate in our conversations. She informed me, "I want to include him because he took both of us on." Tom Mason, a truck driver,

was unable, however, to adjust his travel schedule and participate in the interview. As this interview progressed, I was moved listening to Sally's story of her own journey through life and her positive, but realistic outlook on West Virginia and the southern coalfields. I also realized how Shelly Jennings was very lucky to be the recipient of her mother's wisdom and self-made identity.

Growing up in neighboring Mingo County, Sally explained the culture shock of moving to Logan County as a teenager. She very willingly shared her own story of growing up, school, her desire to attend college, and how marriage and being a mother altered her own educational goals.

Actually, I was born in Logan County, but we originally are from Mingo County. We didn't move to Logan until about '85, I was getting ready to go into my junior year. Being from Mingo, and then hitting Logan was culture shock in and of itself. A lot of people who aren't from around here don't understand that. I was raised in Tamcliff, a little community, and then on One Cliff or Ben Creek, however you want to call it. There was a one and half lane road. We moved up Buffalo Creek and they have signs that say Mulberry Lane and we were like...they have named roads. We couldn't believe it. So it was a big culture shock moving from the Gilbert area to Man. I actually ended up graduating from Man High School in '87. I was one of those who wanted to go to college, but ended up meeting her Dad. So at 17, I was married, he was 22, I finished high school, but then after that we left the state for awhile. That didn't last long; I got homesick and had to come back. When I came back I was pregnant. So college you know was kind of out of the question. I

had my baby, but we ended up going through a divorce, so I was a single parent up until probably about 6 years down the road after that. I tried to go to college and raise my kid, it was just really difficult. I would go for a little while then I'd quit...then I'd go for a little while and quit. So I'll probably have the record for the longest running college [laughing] timeframe. She's 17, so I've been working on it for that long.

Having been unaware of Sally's own experiences at SWVCC, I wanted to learn more about her own college and work experiences. She stated:

I have taken as many classes as I can at SWVCC. I am currently enrolled at Marshall, very difficult when you work full time. They don't offer for non-traditional students, like on-line, so . . . I'm taking what I can, one class here and there, trying to work and it's just been real difficult.

Sally was seeking her own college degree to advance her own career. She explained her line of work and why she felt she needed a college degree.

I work for the state. I'm a health and human resource senior specialist which means nothing. But, I've come as far as I can go with the state, not legally . . . I can be promoted, but technically nobody wants to promote you after so many years unless you have that degree. So I'm at that point now where I can't go anywhere. I can't advance any farther without a degree, because you're looking at program directors, program managers, the commissioners . . .you know those jobs that are up there. There's nowhere to go without a degree. But I do auditing for the West Virginia Works Cash Assistance Program. I go to each county office and make sure that

they do what they are supposed to be doing correctly. I started on the bottom and worked my way up.

Hearing her own story, I felt I knew why Sally wanted Shelly to attend college, but I anxiously inquired to hear it in her own words. Sally explained:

So that she would not be in that trap of working in certain jobs and be held back because of not having that higher education. Because like I've known for...it's taken me . . . she was born in '88 . . . it took me til '97 to find a job that provided those things that I needed...that I got into by the skin of my teeth, because I did not have that degree. So I knew that was something that I did not want her to have to deal with, that hurdle. That was the thing...that if I could get her to excel academically, I may not be able to afford it...I knew I may not be able to afford college, but if she could excel academically, then maybe she could get scholarships to go, so I've been working with her since she was...well, in the womb.

Shelly emerged from another room of their home on her way to her bedroom. Upon hearing this from her mother, she held up two fingers, indicating to me "since age two." Sally did not see her daughter make this gesture and again repeated as if thinking to herself, "In the womb . . . yeah . . . trying to get her to excel." She also explained how difficult it has been for her to help Shelly with her school work as she grew up and it became more advanced.

And I hated math! I hated math with a passion and ended up getting a job with a word problem everyday . . . every customer that came in. Because I started as a food stamp and Medicaid worker, so every family that come through the door was a word problem. I hated it. I hated math so I was like "how

did I get this job?" I made her excel in math cause by the time she was five she was doing all this stuff and every little thing that I had done I tried to imprint on her. What little bit of French I knew, what little bit of German I knew, what little bit I'd learned in college . . . what math I couldn't do, I was like, *you've* [emphasized] got to learn how to do this. So she's like doing logarithms and all that now and I don't even know what it means . . . [laughing]. So that was one thing I was very happy that I did that helped. Then I knew when I married my husband we were at that spot to where seven years ago I'm thinking...college is coming up. And then when she hit the eighth grade and you know we're taking those advanced math classes its [college] getting a little more realistic. But still yet, you get up, you go to work, you come home. There's no money to put aside because you're paying a house payment and a car payment, and then you're driving to Charleston everyday to get this decent job and paying out medical bills and insurance . . . you know, just living. Trapped in this middle class little world that we didn't know how we were going to pay for it, but we knew we would somehow. But if she did not . . . God forbid, get some type of scholarship, we would do the loans, get a second mortgage on the house, do whatever to make her go, or to give her that opportunity to go to college.

Shelly was very well aware of her mother's own struggles and efforts to support her and her education. This was evident in her explanation of why and where she wanted to attempt college work. She stated:

Basically I want to make something of myself. I'm really the first person

in my family to go and hopefully finish college with the normal four year period. My mom was married and had me in her early 20's so she didn't get to finish college like she would've hoped to. No one else on either side of my family has gone and I feel I've been blessed with....I'm pretty intelligent [laughs]. I really want to become a better person. I'm pretty disciplined as far as studying so . . . I've got big dreams and I just gotta get there.

Like David Leary, Shelly believed that earning a college degree can make you a better person.

The only school that Shelly applied to was Concord University. This was her explanation why:

I actually did pretty much the complete opposite of what they tell you in high school . . . apply everywhere. I did a lot of research before I applied anywhere during my sophomore and junior years of high school. The best program for what I needed was Concord with biology and chemistry. It's a small school, so it's more one on one with teachers which is what I like. I like to be able to go to my teacher if I got a question. At Marshall University, you know you're like one in 300 . . . just another face. That was a part of it. I've gone on several visits there and met a bunch of people. Concord seems to set higher standards as far as academics because it's a little more difficult in certain programs. Their pre-med program is pretty strict. I'm hoping to double major in chemistry and psychology and go on for psychology. Probably the biggest thing for Concord was the 100% pre-med acceptance into med school. They've had 100% the last two or three years that I've noticed for sure. I've looked. It's all been 100%.

When I asked why she did not want to attend one the state's larger institutions, she replied:

They're good schools, they're just larger and that's not really...I don't want to go far off, especially not to really big schools. They're pretty notorious for their parties. I wouldn't get into it, I would just be . . . if I had a room mate or people upstairs or whatever that . . . I want to focus and concentrate on my studies and be around people that are wanting to do the same. I'm not saying bad about those schools, I'm sure they have great programs. I'll be going to one of them either way I hope for med school.

When I asked her if she had ever considered attending SWVCC, she explained that she had but was ready to move on to a university.

Actually, I completed several courses in SWVCC over last year. I've taken about 15 hours from last Spring til now. I got a bunch of Pre-reqs out of the way like my Englishes and I'll have about a semester of credit.

Because partying had been mentioned in every family interview, I took this opportunity to inquire how Shelly thought she would fit into this perceived aspect of college life, as well as college life in general.

Being a teenager . . . to me college life is partying, which is why I don't want to go to one of the larger schools. I want to focus on my studies.

I'm not a partier. I'm not a drinker.

Sally supported her daughter's decision to go to Concord and stated she would do whatever she needed to do to help her go wherever she wanted to go. She explained:

I said for years that if she wanted to go to Harvard, I would find a way

to pay for it whether that was realistic sounding to anyone or not. If that's where she wanted to go I would fork over the money . . . two or three jobs, I was going to come up with it. And when she said...you know, I'm thinking of staying in state, I was like OK, we have good schools in state. The PROMISE even made that more applicable. I'm excited now because that might not take as much money out of our pocket or make us have to do two or three jobs. When she did a lot of research she kept going back to Concord, going back to Concord, so when she finally decided, I thought that was probably the best thing for her. We went up, we saw it, and I knew knowing her, she probably would flourish in that type of environment. Its small, personable, not necessarily a number as a student . . . not identified maybe by student identification. Knowing that she'd walk down the hall and a teacher could see her and say hi Shelly, and remember her, and she'd know a lot of the students and faculty. She's kind of shy so I knew that she would excel and they seem to have a good academic program, which she needs to be challenged. So the more personable you can be . . . you can be a little more challenging at times for your students. They know how to challenge them a little better when they know them a little better. I knew that she'd made the right decision.

She also supported her daughter's choice to pursue a career in medicine. Shelly wanted to be a psychiatrist. She laughingly reported to me that her family dynamics have "inspired" this career path. She explained:

I usually make jokes saying my family drives me crazy, and their all kinds of kookie, but they're not. They're all great. Mine just puts me over the edge. They say, well . . . if you're going to be with them the rest of your life, you might as well treat them.

Sally gave a more detailed explanation about her daughter's choice of a medical career path:

You know actually, I always wanted her to go into the medical field because that's something she'd always wanted to do, so I'm like . . . OK, go into the medical field. So we were thinking pediatrician, and I'm like, forget it, she wears her heart on her sleeve. You see I take in animals, well she's the same way. We're very caring, emotional people. When babies are hurt or old people are dying we can't handle that, so I'm like... no, no, you can't...medical might not be for you [laughing]. So, I told her if she wanted to go into the medical field she needed to maybe look into something like research, something of that nature. I wanted her to find a cure for cancer of course, or the disease that causes the children to look like they're 80. Every time I would see something on TV I'd be like... Ah....go to medical school and find a cure for that. So maybe I put a little bit of pressure on her by saying go to medical school and find a cure for that. But then when she wanted to take some courses at SWVCC, I guess maybe where I had taken some, I knew a lot of the teachers at SWVCC that are still there that kind of helped me to communicate with her as to maybe some of the classes she needed to take and how to do it. So that helped tremendously. She took a psychology course. That was her first one. That was it, she was bit by the

bug. I want to go into psychology. She couldn't decide though psychology or psychiatry, and the only difference was she had to go to medical school for the psychiatry, but at least she'd be able to write her mommy a prescription [laughing].

So I know that she probably would succeed with that type of career.

Shelly and Sally both praised the PROMISE Scholarship program and the opportunities they perceive is provided to high school graduates. Shelly was by far the most knowledgeable about the program of any of the students I interviewed. She not only knew eligibility requirements, but also the rationale behind the program.

Several years ago when I first heard about it, I heard it was an attempt that the governor of the state was trying to do to keep people in the state. Which . . . it's understandable . . . its great. I understood you had to work so many years afterwards in the state. Later when I started researching it, I discovered it was not entirely true. I know it pays for tuition [laughing], or its paying for mine. I've always thought that PROMISE was a really good opportunity. It's a great program and it gives a lot of opportunities for students that do have financial need.

Shelly explained why she wanted to earn a PROMISE Scholarship:

It pays for tuition and I kind of in my head thought, If I'm gonna work my butt off from pre-school up until graduating and being ranked in my class and stuff, I kind of want something to show for it so I'm getting my college paid for. To me, if someone's going do that for me, pay for my college, I'm going to probably stay in state to work and give . . . I know it's not a give back, but its gonna actually kind of inspire me to give back and to want to give back

to the state and help support programs like that so others can follow and go to college.

She also explained how the potential to earn a PROMISE Scholarship has removed the money burdens facing her family for her to attend college. It also motivated her to work harder in school and take advantage of school academic support programs. Like several other students, she referenced the ACT workshop offered by Mrs. White at Logan High School. She stated:

I always said when I was little and realized that compared to my kindergarten class, when I was saying my ABC's backward faster than they could say them forward [laughing], I realized that I had to make something of myself. I needed to go to college. I was going to go to college anyway, but this has really opened up more doors because I don't have worry about, oh my parents are going to have to pay for all the college. The burden's not on my shoulders anymore. Especially going to school, you don't want to have all that...which most people don't care if mom and dad are paying for it. I didn't really want them to have to have to pay for it if I could work really hard and get a free ride or some type of scholarship to prevent that. When I found out about the requirements my freshman year, I was like OK, you gotta have 21 on the ACT so I took the workshop.

As with most of Sally's responses, her perceptions of the PROMISE Scholarship program were very detailed and personal. In her account was a window into the day-to-day economic plight she believed faced many families in West Virginia and how she perceived the availability of PROMISE Scholarship had financially helped her family.

We are one of those that are trapped . . . trapped. And you know we are not

even middle class, because now I'm finding out that they call middle class doctors and lawyers and I'm like, What? No! They're not middle class. We're the working poor basically is what I'm learning. I'm like, I'm the working poor? My husband, he's a little bit older than me by 14 years, we'll be married seven years this October. He did not get a GED. He's worked since he was eight years old. He's from Ohio and had family in West Virginia . . . been a truck driver for almost 30 years. He's been trying to work on that. But we're trapped, we make just enough that she doesn't qualify for any type of financial aid that we'd have to take out loans, because like I said when she was born I ended up carrying her to term as a single parent. We separated and I got divorced, so you don't think in 17 years my kid's going to graduate and I need to put her through college. You don't think that way . . . you're surviving, as a lot of people within these southern West Virginia counties are doing. Get up, go to work, come home, go to bed. That's all we think, that's all we know. I knew I had to do something to survive, to take care of my child because running after an absent parent is not my idea of living. I did that for many years and finally in '97 I lucked out and got a job with the state. And that was like hitting pay dirt, ya know? A single parent getting a job with the state, you get leave and you don't have to work on the weekends. I was like . . . that's my dream job. Working for the state! Even when I started working in '97 my big drive was to get insurance, but when she was born, I knew that would not be what would happen to her. I would kill her if she didn't go to college. When I first heard about the PROMISE Scholarship I didn't know a whole lot about it because I was like . . . they're

going to pay for college? Surely they can't afford to do that, but when they started that, I just thought that was the greatest thing that they could ever do. I was thinking, man if I could have had that opportunity presented to me, my life would have been a whole lot different. Especially for those individuals that I knew, like my child was going to be, trapped in that not eligible for low income grants, but yet was going to be able to get the PROMISE if academically she was up to par to succeed in certain areas. I know a lot of kids who have worked really, really hard throughout their high school years to excel, they want to go to college and their only means of going to college is to excel academically. Those are the children who are trapped in this middle class circle that they're not going to get the Pell Grant. They're never going to get Pell Grant so they're in trouble and they know if they don't have some type of academic scholarship they can't go to college. You have those kids that have the money to go anywhere they want, and yet they still can get these types of scholarships. So, I don't know, raise the requirements? I don't know what to do, but if it hadn't been for the PROMISE Scholarship we would have been really struggling to get the loans, the equity mortgage, and take on second jobs . . . we'd had to do something. But that was one of my thoughts, don't knock down the amount. That would hurt students greater in the long run, but maybe up the requirements a little more or even have to sign a contract to work in the state to help refund some of that.

Sally was also the first participant to mention to me the work environments within West Virginia facing college graduates after graduation. She discussed issues such as work ethics and

the difference in job appreciation she saw between people like her self, older and with no college degree, and those younger, recent college graduates. Embedded within her explanation was also her view that paid wages are lower in West Virginia than in other states.

But you know working for the state, a lot of the jobs we have available . . . as long as you have that college degree, there's not a whole lot you have to do in an interview to be able to get that job, especially in Kanawha County. We're talking like at the welfare office. They want a warm body. The turnover rate is so extremely high in Kanawha County because you're under the light of dome at the capitol. The job market is expensive in Charleston. You have these kids that come out of college who've never worked before, and they come into this high stress job of being a food stamp and Medicaid worker because it's a job, and they've got this degree and they're a warm body so they're hired. And they come into a caseload of 1000 individuals seeing 15-20 people a day at a minimum, and the stress is so enormous and they're making 20,000 a year and they're like, why am I here? I didn't go to college for this kind of junk...ya know? They're being spit on and hit and cussed and they go home and they're exhausted for 20,000 gross a year.

Not even take home, that's gross. When I started in 97 it was 16 thousand gross and I drove from the head of Buffalo Creek up at Man to Charleston to take that 16,000 gross a year job and I was tickled pink to have it.

But I was one of those people who have worked the delis. I've done it all, so I was very appreciative of that job. But I see these kids coming in, they went to high school, they're in college, they never had a job, and they really

don't know what it's like to appreciate a job even if it is high stress. So we have a lot of turnover and you get these degrees and the only way you can make money is move out of state. If I have a degree and I'm working for the state, in my job right now, I can gross 33,000. I can go to North Carolina with the same type of requirements I have now and make 60 [laughing]. The only thing that ties us here is the family bond and that's what keeps us in West Virginia a lot of times.

Family relationships influenced Sally when she talked about where Shelly should go after her college graduation. Both mother and daughter wanted to stay near each other, somewhere within West Virginia. When Sally responded to where she would like to see Shelly eventually live and work she replied:

Very close to her mommy! So being as we're not going anywhere [laughing] ...not out of state anyway unless, God forbid, something horrible happens. There's always that bad thing where you may have to move and make that decision. If I don't ever have to make that decision I won't go far from West Virginia. I'll truck around in the southern part of the state maybe . . . maybe Teays Valley. I want a farm, so I told her when she gets out of medical school she can buy me a farm and I'll raise my animals and she can write my prescriptions.

Shelly echoed her mother's sentiments mentioning moving to the Teays Valley area. She explained:

Well, I go to the doctor for my knee up in Teays Valley. I really like it there because its kind of between Charleston and Huntington, and plus, gas is

like 15 cents cheaper. I got it for 2.81 and came back it was 2.99 [laughing].

I've considered like Charleston or somewhere kind of in between, I still kind of want to stay close to home.

When I asked about possibly leaving West Virginia Shelly replied, "No, I do not want to leave West Virginia unless something happens and I pretty much didn't have a choice, but I do want to stay in West Virginia." She also explained her perceptions of West Virginia and its people. She made comparisons of life in small towns to life in more populated areas based upon her own experiences.

I love it here. Not necessarily here where were at right now in this house, but, I've gone out of state and stuff for vacations. People, places, some of them are rude. Larger areas like the big cities where everybody usually wants to go live. I went to New York City and I could not live there if you paid me to. It's too crowded, but in West Virginia it's smaller. People seem to go to the same places every day, where there are just *some* [emphasized] people who may seem kind of rude or stand offish. When you go someplace else and you see how those people act, then I come home and kind of like . . . I'm pretty lucky to live here. Looking at it everyday of my life growing up, I never really thought West Virginia was all that great. I have friends in Bluefield, when you look around at the mountains and I think it's beautiful. I've lived here all my life and I don't want to go out. Again, like I said, if they're going to pay for my college...Its not that I feel obligated to stay here, but I don't really think I want to go out.

Like all the families I worked with, both mother and daughter said nothing short of major illness could keep Shelly from starting college in the fall. Shelly stated, "My death [laughing] would be about the only thing, and I really don't think I'll be one of the people that goes away and then can't really handle it so they come back home." Shelly continued explaining how some students she had known could not handle the new demands placed upon them when going away to college.

The people that work harder through high school make it because they usually do want to make something of themselves. But I seen a valedictorian that was very bright, he went to Marshall, couldn't figure out what she wanted to do, so she just came back and said she would just go to Southern for a few years. Some people maybe just can't handle the stress, which I understand college is very stressful. I'm about to lose my head now [laughing] just trying to get ready for it. I'm not really sure, hopefully I won't be in that kind of situation where I do want to come back.

When I asked if she was concerned about missing Logan and her family, she replied, "That would be only thing with me would be the homesickness. That's what weekends are for I guess (laughing)." Sally was even more determined to see her daughter to begin college. She offered this reflection of factors that might prevent Shelly from starting her journey for a college degree:

Not anything that I would say I would *allow* [emphasized] to keep her from going [laughing]...under my power. Even if I was incapacitated I would still make her go. Even if they come up tomorrow and say the PROMISE Scholarship is gone, we're broke, we've tapped into everybody's money, we're still gonna come up with a way to pay for it. I'm very thankful that

we have the PROMISE. I wouldn't want to have to come up with the money, but I would.

Sally expressed to me the challenges her family would face if Shelly did not continue to qualify for the PROMISE Scholarship, or if the program was somehow eliminated. She presented their options with the same resourcefulness she had maintained throughout our discussions.

I don't know, if they take away the PROMISE though, I tell you a lot of kids like Shelly who are trapped in that whirlwind of not being able to get grants are going to have troubles getting in school. I just hope they don't do that and they come up with some other way of cutting down the cost or appropriate more money.

Shelly expressed the personal responsibility she would have to take if she did not qualify for the PROMISE Scholarship program after her first year of college. She explained:

Well to me, if I don't re-qualify it should be a wake up call because I'm not really doing what I should be doing in college. I feel like if I do try then I shouldn't be too bad off. I doubt I'll ace my way through it, but hopefully, especially with a double major, I feel like I am there not to party like at some schools where they feel that is more important than studying. I think that I'm there to make something more of myself, to study and to make decent grades, so if I don't re-qualify for the scholarship, I don't think I would quit, I think that would just make me get my butt in line [laughing] because something is going on with me then. I don't think that will happen unless I start getting in with the wrong crowd.

Sally stated that her daughter would need to use the money she has saved from working while in high school to help defer the costs of any additional money their family would need to keep her in college. She explained:

Shelly's a good kid. I can't say anything bad about her. Last year she started working, helping out with my mom and dad, and she's been putting money away. She hoards her money but spends mine [laughing]. She has a lot of money. She's always been that way to hoard that money and save. I've been very thankful about that, so she has quite a bit of money stashed away. If we had to use that, we would just have to use it. That would help to pay for quite a bit. That's not going to hurt us as bad as if we have had to come up with the whole amount.

Sally referenced the on-line information and application for the PROMISE Scholarship as resources that helped with her daughter's college application process. Shelly gave credit to many Logan High School staff members. She praised the efforts of several of her teachers, counselor, and school administrators for offering advice, support and resources. She also mentioned several school programs that helped her in her college application process in addition to the ACT Workshop. She told me about one particular elective teacher on her schedule:

Well every teacher I've ever had, more so in high school because you're more focused on going to college, they've always taught me if that's what you want to go into, you don't want have a really poor background on it if you're going into college. Taking the more difficult classes helped and teachers helped. Especially, there's [elective] teacher, Opal Richards. She's absolutely fabulous. She doesn't spoon feed you as she calls it. She'll

say we're going to go over this chapter, outline it, will discuss it. There are very few people that ever fail tests or anything. Not because they're so intelligent, which they are, but she works with you. If you have a question, she doesn't hesitate to answer it. She doesn't look down at you or on you for not understanding something. She's also big on attendance, which I faltered there this year because of a lot of injuries. She actually helped work with me while I was out, on what we were going to be doing.

Shelly also explained how this teacher encourages students to attempt college work.

She's tried to motivate us to go to college also, which that class is primarily for people in the [career cluster] that plan to make something of themselves by going to college. She knows each person has to bring in a guest speaker. Someone in the [career] profession and then they talk to us. It gives us kind of a view on different careers, which a lot of the people that were actually going to drop the class before because they didn't think they would do it, some of the people that she brought in talked to them and helped them change their minds. She really wants everyone to go to college. She's really big on that...she's great.

She expressed her overall satisfaction with her experiences as a student at Logan High School:

Our school has a lot of programs that help you better yourself like clubs. Key club helps you with volunteering and community service. It helps you kind of strengthen your inner self. [The school administrators] . . . everybody in that school really tries to somehow inspire you. Our [school administrator], Mr. Dyer is very big on getting us all to graduate and not have 40 people not

being able to graduate, having them quit. He's very big on not letting you quit just by signing the papers off. He fights for it. [school administrator] Marilyn Terrell, again...she's a delight. If you have any problems she'll help you. I remember I told her when I got my PROMISE scholarship she was thrilled. She's really supportive of everyone there. She wants everybody to go to college who can.

When concluding our conversations, Shelly and Sally both presented me with thoughtful final comments on themes such as the PROMISE Scholarship, as well as the Logan and West Virginia economies. Like other participating families, concerns were expressed for fellow student Terry Echols, who failed to meet submission deadlines for the PROMISE Scholarship. Shelly appeared very sincere in her concern for Terry as she explained his situation within the realm of the PROMISE program.

I just think it's a really great program. The only thing is those deadlines. I have a friend that qualified for the PROMISE. He gave the papers to his dad to send out and his Dad forgot. He kept reminding him and he kept saying yes, he sent them out. He didn't send them out. He had just forgotten. Terry is very bright and he said he's not going to go to college now. He had a sister who graduated last year who is in college and his parents are paying for that and he don't want to burden them. It's expensive, especially having two kids one year after another. Everybody in the school, that's another thing about the teachers, every teacher is trying to be really supportive and motivating him to go to college. He can make something of himself. He said he's just going to stay in Logan in the mines.

Sally suggested to me that high schools should help students better understand career choices and the wages they offer employees. She believed this could be done by helping students learn to make budgets using real world living expenses. She explained:

You know, I really wish that somehow they would implement into our school system and academics realistic teachings that would show kids why college would help them to be able to succeed better than if they just graduated from high school or if they didn't have a high school diploma. You can take kids and say, what do you want to do when you graduate? Well I don't know, I'm just gonna go work at Wal-Mart. OK, how much do you think you're going to make an hour? They don't know. They don't know what minimum wage is. And then when they do find out what minimum wage is, have them sit down and calculate what 20 hours a week's gonna get them, 30 hours, 40 hours, and then pay for rent, utilities, groceries, gas, insurance...have them budget that stuff. I don't know of any class that makes you sit down and budget that stuff. Then when they look at it they're like, man, I can't live on \$5.15 an hour 20 hours a week. How am I going to afford that? So I always said when I taught down here and YPE at the church, we would try and get the kids and would say, what do you want to do when you . . . and although it wasn't religious or anything, we tried to help them with those things because they don't get that in school. I don't know of any class you get that in school except maybe economics. Do they offer economics anymore? You know, it's not like one of those things I've seen as an elective or class that you have to take. Even in high school sociology, I wish teachers would

try to teach these kids that so they understand what it means if I just graduate these are my options. If I go onto college, even if it's two years these are my options. If it's four years these are my options, and if I go farther these are my options. I think that would benefit, especially southern West Virginia far better than they could ever imagine because like I said, we get up, we go to work, we come home. It's a coal built industry and I have to say we shouldn't be a poor state. We should not be a poor state. We have enough money in the coal industry that we should be one of the richest states like Texas with their oil rigs. I don't understand why the monies have not been appropriated the way they should. Maybe it's a good thing that we're looking at tourism and different things like that. I think that is good to try to tap into some other resources that kids can do different things when they get out of school. As far as this coal industry, our life surrounds the coal industry. We are directly affected by how it goes.

Sally continued her reflections on the local and state economy:

We do have a lot of people, a lot of coal miners who either didn't graduate, or maybe they did graduate and they're going into the coal industry making \$17 an hour. And you got kids coming out of college that are lucky to make \$10 an hour if they're lucky. Most of them are probably making an average of \$8 an hour with that college degree. It just doesn't seem enterprising enough for them to put four years or more into college to make less money, but they don't understand that. When that coal industry is gone, then they have nothing to go to because they're aren't a whole lot of jobs out there in

construction and places like that. We don't have a lot of development going on close to home in Southern West Virginia so then they gotta leave the state. That's unfortunate, but I don't know. I just think the PROMISE Scholarship has probably helped greater than anything . . . well one of the greatest things they've done for this state . . . to implement the PROMISE Scholarship. If they took it away, I know a lot of kids who would be in dire need and they would see a great influx of people, instead of staying in state once again . . . ya know . . . turn the light off when you leave to go to North Carolina.

Shelly was registered for classes and living in the dorms at Concord. Sally said they had been in a "tizzy trying to shop and get ready" before taking her to campus. Mother and daughter both reported being sad. Sally said, "I have my moments when I break down and cry, then she cries and I try to encourage her." She reported that Sally liked her roommates, "both Christians from Maryland," and that everyone there seemed like "good people." Sally also reported that she thought Shelly would be fine "once she got her out the door" and admitted tapping into her daughters laptop to leave "notes, encouragement, and advice for her to find." She advised Shelly to "pretend it was summer camp" if she got homesick. That did not go over well since "Shelly never really liked summer camp." Sally said that after dropping her daughter off "she came home and just boo hooed, and warned her husband to not say anything for the next three days."

Summary

This chapter presented the analysis of data collected from conversations with five students and their parents about attending college and the PROMISE Scholarship program. Initial conversations took place in April and May in Logan, West Virginia, prior to student graduation. These interviews were conducted at the convenience of the family participants. They

were held at locations in Logan such as libraries, school grounds and family homes. Follow-up conversations were conducted by telephone or in person with parents and/or students in August and September after student participants had begun attending college classes.

This study was designed to introduce the reader to a phenomenon unique to a specific place and people. By telling the stories through the *actual words* of the participants, it gives the reader a *window* into their reality. Throughout these conversations, themes of the relationship between educational opportunity and economic opportunity emerged. There was also the lack of parental experience with the college application process among parental participants and the impact it had upon family decisions. The importance of the PROMISE scholarship program for each family was evident, as well as the role it has played in the family college decisions. Students and parents also identified school personnel and programs influential to this decision-making process. Chapter Five also presents data analysis from this emergent study as data collected from this phase informed the next phase of the study.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL PERSONNEL AND PROGRAMS

Introduction

From the responses of the family participants, factors emerged that influenced their college decisions. I presented this analysis in Chapter Four. Among the themes that emerged was the influence of Logan High School personnel and programs. By using an emergent design for this qualitative study, I selected these identified school officials as the participants for the next round of data gathering and analysis. From the perspectives of these school officials, I believe we can learn how the PROMISE Scholarship has affected schools and their programs. I also believe the perceptions of those most directly responsible for implementing the PROMISE Scholarship program at the school level are important when assessing elements of the program such as its effectiveness. In this chapter, I present the analysis of the data from interviews with Logan High School administrators Chuck Dyer and Marilyn Terrell, school counselor Janie Owsley, Senior Project sponsor Barbara Sammons, ACT Workshop sponsor Elizabeth White, and Opal Richards as a representative of Logan High School teachers.

School Administrators

School officials at Logan High School report being concerned about the educational and economic options available to their graduates. They believe getting more of them into college is good for the students and their families, as well as the Logan community. School administrator Chuck Dyer stated, "We always work at getting our students into college; it is the only way many of them can get out of the lives they are living." He also stated,

The coal industry is killing the college going trend right now because it is on the increase. They can't find enough workers right now to work the mines.

You can mine coal around the clock for seven days a week if you wanted work.

He added that with the new mine work, it only adds to the “non-college going culture that already existed” within Logan.

Like several families I spoke with, Mr. Dyer was also concerned about the challenges facing his students attending Logan High School. He expressed to me his frustrations with how these challenges deter their efforts as educators to get more students to attempt college work. He referred to the dangers young people face because of the bad decisions they are making and stated, “We buried more people under 50 this year than over 50 in Logan County.” He directly referenced the drug problems he believed exists, “Drugs are a major problem in our community. Pot is a cash crop. Thank goodness for the Hatfield-McCoy trail because it has moved some of the crop out of town.” Chuck Dyer added, “We try to nurture our kids at Logan High. When I see a kid in trouble, I believe it is a disservice for me not to try and help this kid.” He also explained that helping their students get to college is sometimes difficult because families know so little about college themselves. He emphasized to me, “It’s tough to educate people who don’t want education.”

Mr. Dyer informed me of what they have done at Logan High School to help students meet PROMISE Scholarship qualification requirements. He said, “I knew when PROMISE came out we were going to have to work on some things here.” The administrator believed the first thing that would have to improve was student ACT scores. To address this issue, they developed and implemented an ACT workshop for students. He explained, “We sent some teachers to [George Washington High School] in Charleston to study their program. We adapted it for our use. Elizabeth White runs that for us now.” They have also implemented a test taking skills elective program from work based at Concord University. Mr. Dyer added, “We could offer more programs like these if we had access to more money and resources.” Other frustrations Mr.

Dyer expressed to me in their efforts to help students centered on getting information to parents. College workshops for parents held after school hours have been poorly attended. To help students, school officials have had to offer support directly to students during the school day. He explained:

We are doing a lot of the PROMISE application process right in here in School. We have to. We fill out the applications through our English classes and offer help to families to fill out the FAFSA forms. We let families use our computers if they need to.

Mr. Dyer also informed me that improving student tardiness and attendance has also been a goal at Logan High School.

Mr. Dyer believed that the PROMISE Program is a good resource for his students at Logan High School. He also perceived it was helping change the "non-college going culture." He emphasized to me, "I've seen some real success stories for kids because of PROMISE." He believes that critics of the PROMISE Scholarship program should delay their judgment on the program. He explained, "The advantages of PROMISE won't be known until these students graduate from college." Like many, he is concerned about its continued funding and as a final thought replied, "I hope we keep the PROMISE; if we don't, we will go backwards."

Marilyn Terrell, another school administrator was skeptical of the PROMISE Scholarship program. She informed me that she was not convinced that the program was truly reaching the targeted middle class audience it was designed to help with college affordability. She explained:

I have no hard data on this, but it seems that the students earning the PROMISE Scholarship are from homes that really don't need the help.

Doctor's and lawyer's kids are getting the scholarship. I have heard people at the state level express these same concerns.

Mrs. Terrell, however, did credit their school staff efforts to get more students to meet the scholarship requirements. When informed that many students referenced the Senior Projects program, she replied, "Barbara Sammons organizes that for us. We do them as part of our senior English program. We got that program from the High Schools that Work project and SREB." Marilyn Terrell informed me that she was the school administrator initially responsible for implementing the project at Logan High School. In addition to this school program, she was also quick to credit the efforts of their school counselors and teachers. She specifically mentioned Opal Richards, a "state award winning teacher who has been a very good mentor for seniors at the school."

School Counselors

Logan High School Counselors were often referenced to me by parents and students for their efforts in the college application process. Janie Owsley informed me she was an avid supporter of the PROMISE Scholarship program, even though she has seen a significant increase in her work load. She explained how difficult it was during the first year PROMISE was implemented:

The first year this came out it drove us crazy. It was terrible for counselors because we had to do everything. We had to figure everybody's grade point average. We had to check their ACT. We had to give all the information to the PROMISE people and it was a lot of work. But they have changed it since then and put it all on computer. It's a lot better now.

Janie told me when she initially heard of the program she wished it had been available when she graduated from high school because she would have met the qualifications. She also thought it would give “kids something to work for.” She explained further:

I thought it was a good thing, that it would reach kids that otherwise wouldn't get money, because they wouldn't qualify for the higher education grant.

Middle class income level gets no financial aid. They can get loans, but as far... unless it's in academics, and rarely would you find a child that would get a full ride on academics; it's rare . . . so it's picked up a lot of kids.

Since its implementation, Mrs. Owsley believes students at Logan are working harder in school to qualify for the scholarship.

I think I see more kids trying to get it . . . that I think if it wasn't available wouldn't. They wouldn't work as hard on their ACT. They are doing workshops. They're taking a few higher . . . we're getting some of them into high level math and science. They are taking that 4th year of class. I see more interest in the college going rate, especially if they go to SWVCC, they can stay home. It won't cost them anything but books. They can basically go to school for \$400 a semester. Now if they go away, it won't pay it all. It just pays tuition. I've got more trying to get into the community college here because of it.

Janie Owsley expressed to me that the lack of parent understanding had been a problem in school efforts to get more Logan High School graduates to attempt college work. She explained how much they are doing at Logan High School to help educate parents about the PROMISE Scholarship application process.

They don't understand what it takes to bring up a GPA and how long it takes. But now they are starting to ask the right questions much earlier. I think it's directly because of the PROMISE Scholarship. I do get frustrated though sometimes because we have after school workshops to help families do things like fill out the FAFSA form on-line but they won't come.

Mrs. Owsley also emphasized to me that she is worried about continued funding for the PROMISE Scholarship.

I think it's a good program but there's a funding problem...so the state is playing with it every year . . . which I understand. They've got to do something because there's not enough money to keep it going. But they were talking about maybe putting an income cut off on it. . . . well that defeats the purpose because the puts it right back to being a higher education grant and that leaves out the kids in the middle who are benefiting from it so much.

Senior Projects

Barbara Sammons, an English teacher at Logan High School, was often referenced to me during the study by family participants and school personnel. Her responsibilities at the high school not only included classroom instruction, but also implementing other school initiatives. These included a state supported writing improvement effort, as well as the Senior Project program. The Senior Project program was often referenced to me by students in our discussions of their possible career paths.

Barbara explained the program to me and what her role has been in its implementation. She replied, "My understanding is that senior projects came about from the Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB)." She informed me they had been doing Senior Projects at Logan

High School for four years, and they wanted them to “be a culminating major project of their high school career.” She explained:

We want it to incorporate a variety of skills that we hope our students learn that target our content standards for the state of West Virginia. We want them to write a paper using MLA format, a research paper. We want them to do a fairly substantial oral and video presentation as part of this. We require that they do job shadowing as part of this [and] that they work with a mentor, someone who works in the career field but who is not related to them.

Mrs. Sammons then told me the students had to explain what they learned from their experiences through a presentation to a panel of judges or present “a project that they would like to implement and see completed.”

She also explained to me the heavy emphasis they place on the project within student English classes beginning in the eleventh grade when writing research papers. She described to me all the skills that students would need to complete the Senior Project. She continued:

When we come back from the semester break for the second semester, we start specifically targeting the senior project. And we give the kids a calendar, a schedule, things that should be accomplished by a certain time. We ask them to sign contracts. To define completely their research area we focus on careers . . . to narrow down who's going to be their mentor and what their project is going to be. We ask them to sign a contract. We make a deadline; we try to do it as individually as much as we can. And then we spend that time working and we work. The kids are working independently with the teachers working within whatever spot they're at in the process. Which looks very . . . from the

outside looking in, it looks very chaotic, but a good teacher is there monitoring and knowing what step their students are on. Not all students will be at the same place at the same time.

Mrs. Sammons confirmed that this project is a major second semester grade in each student's English class. She added:

They have to have it to graduate. Actually, that's one of the things they sign in the contract, they understand that they have to complete this project, the phases of the project, including the paper, the job shadowing, the presentation before a panel. They have to complete those in order to . . . in order to be able to pass second semester of senior English.

When I informed her that several students had referenced the Senior Project during my interviews as something that had influenced college and career decisions, Mrs. Sammons expressed how her own classroom instruction had been affected by the project. She responded:

When we started working with Senior Projects, I remembered thinking that I would be eliminating a lot of things I teach. I remember thinking, well I'll put this in because I'm being made to, but I'm not going to like it . . . now I would not go back to teaching without this project being the focal point of the senior year.

She also expressed to me her perception of the importance of the audience of judges.

Any kind of learning needs an authentic audience. I don't think any of us, not just students . . . I mean any of us learn or write or communicate just for the sake of doing it. I think that most of us need the motivator of an audience that's going to be a legitimate audience to hear what we have to say. I think that

all students need an authentic audience for their work. Senior Projects gives them the biggest audience of their life thus far. So, I'm going to be asking my students to learn to do major research, to have an audience that will be receptive and hear their research and want to judge it as important, because it gives them a reason to do it other than just doing it for me. I mean I'm not enough of an audience.

Barbara Sammons also expressed to me how important she believed the project was to student career exploration. She explained:

I would want my students to be examining career choices and thinking about what do you think you're going to get out of this career? It gives me a focus for doing it that ties into my curriculum. It gives me permission and a reason to have my students doing that. And I think some of the most powerful things that I hear from students is when I hear them say during their presentation, I really wanted to do X, whatever it is. I really wanted to be a pre-school teacher. I really wanted to be a lawyer or I really wanted to be a nurse, but I didn't know you would have to do this and that to get there . . . or I didn't realize that I would never have a weekend off . . . or I didn't realize that I would be on call or holidays. I don't want to do this job. That's a really powerful learning experience when a student can say why they want something, or why they think something is okay, and why they think it's not okay. And so either way they go at it, if they decided this career is not for them, then they have the skills to examine another career choice before they spend the valuable education dollars they have to get an education for a field that they are not

going to be happy with the rest of their lives, which is really something.

Melanie Taylor described to me how completing her Senior Project had influenced her career choice and choice of West Virginia colleges to receive the PROMISE Scholarship.

She also added her own unique perspective into the project judging process:

I was going to go into veterinarian school but since there is not one in West Virginia, as far as I know, I'm not going to do that. But I was into pediatrics and stuff, that's what I did my senior project on, that's the big thing at Logan, Senior Projects. It's pretty much your whole second semester grade. If you fail your senior project then you don't pass your senior English class. It's a big project where you make an oral presentation and a power point about what you want to go to college and be . . . or even if you don't want to go to college, like if you're going to go in the coal mines you would have to do a Power Point on that. That's what your senior project is and I did my senior project on pediatrics and I might look into that. You do it through your English Class. You have to do your senior project in order to graduate at Logan. We presented them a couple of months ago. We do them during school. They bring in like random judges . . . people who are I guess higher in Logan . . . important people in Logan, and they bring them in and they judge us on a scale and we get our grade. We usually have, probably about four judges, different people and I guess you usually know them because it is Logan.

Chad Johnson referenced his own Senior Project as something that had influenced his choice of a possible career of dentistry. He had chosen a Logan dentist as a mentor and for his job shadowing experience. Barbara Sammons smiled when I informed her of Melanie's description

of the panel of judges, and that each of the students who referenced their own project said it helped them with possible college and career paths. I then asked her if project choices were limited to those that required some type of a college degree. She replied:

No, they do not. It's completely open to them. And some of their better presentations this year were kids who are enrolled in vocational school; and who work through the vocational program. I have a young man who did his . . . he's enrolled in auto body at the vocational school. And so, he worked in an auto body shop and you know, he came back and said, I didn't realize that I could go to college. I didn't realize I could go to college and do this and there's a school in Houston that he applied to and got a scholarship for it. He's going to go down there and his goal is to be part of the NASCAR, whatever. He can do that through this school. So, you know, it was a major thing for him to figure that out.

She also added that the Senior Project program was a county wide initiative and all three county high schools were at different levels of implementation.

Because we were discussing post-secondary education, career choices, and the role that the Senior Project program was playing in the process, I took the opportunity to ask Barbara Sammons about the PROMISE Scholarship program. She responded:

As an educator, I'm incredibly interested in issues of rural education. I have worked at, and read and think a great deal about ways to help my rural students be more successful. One thing that I try to communicate to my students on a number of different levels is I want them . . . if they choose to stay in Logan, if they choose to stay in West Virginia . . . I want it to be that it's their choice

to stay here. You can make that choice and have a wonderful career and a wonderful life, and there's . . . and you can live a wonderfully full and rich life living here. But I don't want them to be here because they're trapped here for poverty, for lack of education, for lack of vision to see that people from this area can do things that take them out of here. I want them to have the vision of the whole thing and then choose, with knowledge, where they want to be.

She continued on this theme of students making decisions because of options rather than lack of options:

I think students in rural areas tend to think that they have to follow the family footsteps . . . do what the family wants because that's what the family's always done. We have many students who are, who will be, first generation college attendees. I hope they become first generation college graduates. But even if it's . . . even if it's not college, I want them to get post secondary education in a vocational field. In a field that allows them to have choices for where they go and what they do. And we talk about the difference between careers and jobs a great deal and we write about that. It helps us, senior projects really helps us to have a good focus for the learning and the other things that we do in the year. I think the PROMISE Scholarship has much potential to help our students. I think it's one of the best things that we could be doing, but I don't think it's living up to what it needs to be. And I say that, because I think there are other things that, other issues in our educational system that lack enough backbone to make the PROMISE really work . . . things like attendance policy.

We have no attendance policy in this state that has any kind of bite to it at all.

You know, you and I know as working adults that you don't get paid if you don't go to work.

Mrs. Sammons used her concerns about student attendance to address a broader topic, student work ethics.

I work with people who work in the mining industry here a great deal. I work with people who are not just in coal mining, but in related industries around mining. One of the biggest complaints I hear from business owners, and bosses and foremen, is that they don't have anyone coming into the field who has a work ethic. I'm reading articles about how they're expecting an influx of Hispanic people into our area to come work in the mines. It is largely due to in part, because they can't get our kids to come to work everyday. And I think that starts when we don't make them come to school everyday. Then we could have more kids achieving the PROMISE Scholarship, but we have to have them in the door. They can't learn if they're not here. We have no real attendance policy in this state that helps keep kids in school. There's no penalty. I'm required that a student can miss three or 30 days and ask for make-up work and I have to give it to them. They can miss three or 30 days, get placed in our truancy system and go to court and still they haven't gotten the education that they need to have. So even if we're getting them in, and then they miss 20 or 30 days of school in a year, they're not getting what they need. They're never going to have that ACT score. They're never going to have that SAT, they're never going to have the GPA that they need because

they're not forcing that issue of coming to school. And we're not putting the responsibility on the students and the parents that needs to be there. And I think that's the thing that takes away from the PROMISE . . . from what the PROMISE could achieve. I think there are several things that can be done differently that would help it reach the goal that I think people want it to have . . . the impact that people want it to have. It doesn't seem to me to have the impact that it could have.

ACT Workshop

Elizabeth White, an elective teacher at Logan High School, was pleased when I informed her that students named the ACT Workshop as a program that had been a resource to their college application process. She told me that she felt it had helped many qualify for the PROMISE Scholarship. She explained:

In college they are more conscientious about making the grades just to maintain the scholarship. And now they realize that . . . I don't know if all their parent's do, but I think the kids are beginning to realize the importance of the tests.

Mrs. White also informed me that she teaches the study skills class during the school day as an elective class that Mr. Dyer referenced.

When I asked her to describe the ACT Workshop, Elizabeth White replied that she had been running the program for four years and estimates that several hundred students had taken the workshop over that time period. When I asked her how the program was designed, she referenced the program at George Washington High School that she had been sent to observe by

Mr. Dyer. She explained to me, however, that she was not happy with what had been presented.

This motivated her to design her own program. She explained:

I got angry because we brought a guy in here a few years back to give our kids some test taking tips for ACT. And we did that on Martin Luther King Holiday. And we've had like 55 students come in. And I went to it to because I wanted to see if he had anything to offer that I could help the kids with. And he didn't give them even one tip that would help them. He went through the, eat a good breakfast, get a good night's sleep . . . the same thing that we tell them all the time. And all of those are important, but they already knew those. There was nothing new offered in that. So, so that kind of made me upset because I knew the kids at his school had scored really high and so I knew there had to be more to it than what was going on. So I started buying the prep books myself at the bookstores and going through those and picking out what I thought would work for our kids. And those things have worked. And there some just different little techniques for them to use.

She also cited a specific example to me of a technique her program uses:

On the reading, you had four long passages, 40 questions in 35 minutes and 10 questions for each passage. If you're a fast reader and a fast comprehender, you can get through those 40. You can read it all and answer your questions and that'll work. But not very many kids are at that point. If they answer 30 of those questions, slow down, get 30 right, not make careless mistakes, they raise their score. It just depends on where each kid is with it. Some of them

are very slow readers and so rather than read the whole section, they'll practice reading, like the first two paragraphs, then the first line in each paragraph after that, and maybe then that last paragraph. I give them several options there on that technique where they end up reading about half of the selection and they have an idea of what is going there. Then they can go hunt any more details that they need to find and they'll have an idea of which paragraph that'll be in because they've read the first line. That really works for a lot of kids right there because they can read half the material where they can't read all the material . . . So just, it's a matter of testing smart and what fits that child.

Mrs. White explained that she conducts the Workshop several times a year based on demand. It costs \$25 for students and is waived if a student cannot afford the fee. She emphasized to me that this fee is charged for food during the workshop and to pay a math teacher to come in as a resource. She explained the logistics of the program:

I do this on, on a Saturday, about two weeks before a scheduled test date. And we stay here for about five hours. We either use this classroom or the library if the group's larger. We hit a lot of test taking tips and we hit a lot of time saving tips. If the child's already taken the test once, then they know where they are pretty much. And I encourage them to set their goal...say five points higher for the next one. And a lot of them, the kids who are struggling on PROMISE Scholarship scores, will reach their goal.

When I asked if the program was directly targeted to help students meet the required test scores to qualify for the PROMISE Scholarship, she replied:

That's a lot of it. But I have a lot other kids, you know, who are shooting for, applying for the Yeager's Scholarship or you know, full scholarships . . . kids who've got to get to 30. And I find the same techniques work for either kid. But if the kids going in and their composites are 19, they don't need to go in trying to get a 36 for the PROMISE. They need to go in trying to get a 22 or 23 and all their sub scores. And once they realize that, and how many questions they need to get right to get that score, and they slow down a little bit and become more accurate, they can reach the score. That's a lot of it right there. We've had a lot of kids who use that and it's worked for them. We really hit the main things and work hard for that 4 ½ - 5 hours. And then, I'll tell them what to go home and study, practice these different techniques so that when they go in the test, they have a plan. And we've had a lot of success with this. We've had some really good scores.

She further explained:

We've had quite a few who gotten PROMISE Scholarships because of it. And then depending on what college they're going to, there's a little girl headed out this year to Concord, and she was already in the, high twenties or mid twenties, she needed to get at least high twenties for more money and she was able to do that.

Shelly Jennings was the student Mrs. White was referring to. She and Nathan Potter had both commented to me how the ACT workshop helped them improve their ACT scores to meet each of their individual scoring needs. Shelly explained her perception and experience with the program:

The ACT workshop and SAT workshop. That's a big thing at my school. Elizabeth White, she does the workshops. She does a charge a small fee... \$25, but if you don't have the money you can still take it. It really does help. I really didn't think it would be that helpful. I figured she would go over basic math, stuff like that. The first time I took it I got a 24, and then my English was higher and Math and everything else was kind of in the middle. The second time took it; my English I think was a 33-34, my other ones were in the 20's. But then she went over with us, test strategies, stuff like that. Again, you know my [9th grade] year; I just thought all that stuff was not...I didn't think any of it worked, but she gives a lot of tips. She also has a class, Test Taking Strategies during school that she gives a lot of helpful tips. I took her workshop, after the second time I took it and it's raised all of my scores up, so it wasn't just my English that was high. All my scores were high. I ended up with a 28. I was happy about that.

Nathan also praised the program. He explained to me, "Elizabeth White, she does this workshop for ACT trying to help people improve their scores so they can get more scholarship money. She really wants to see people do good, that's why she does the workshop." When I asked if the program helped him he replied, "Yeah, I took it three times and it's helped me go up around four points." Elizabeth White appeared very proud of the program adding, "I think about the highest in any one area that I've seen kids do, is a nine point increase in one subject area. Which that's awesome."

Mrs. White also explained the Study Skills Class to me she teaches during the school day to Logan High School students as an elective. She said:

I go over the ACT and SAT in that one. It's a one semester class and in the fall we work on the ACT till the October test. Then we just switch gears and work on the SAT for the January test, because different techniques work for that test."

She explained the class sizes are kept small to around 15 students. She added that students had to "work it in their schedule around their own requirements." When asked what resources she used, she replied, "I use this" handing me the registration bulletins for both the ACT and SAT. She added, "I use old SAT tests, or when we're doing ACT, older versions of that. Just whatever test we're on, we use this because it's just the same skill." She commented to me on how many good resources are available on-line with comments such as, "You can go to act.org and do all the practice they want." She also explained the scoring strategy she teaches:

If they want, um, a 19 in the Math, then they just have to get half. And if they want a 20 in the Math for the PROMISE . . . it's get half of them right. So they don't need to go into the test worried about 60 questions if they're not capable of that.

I asked how much she thought student scores were influenced by the level of math courses they had taken. She responded,

It's not so much the higher levels that questions they miss, it's the math they had in the 6th and 7th grade that they've forgotten. We do an hour and half of math at the beginning because math is the lowest area. And they'll go through these, they can all work this one, but, then they struggle right here. Geometry is weak . . . we've found that. So if this question takes them 30 seconds, and they'll be plenty of others like that, they don't want to go spending three and

four minutes here, the questions are worth the same. No penalty for a wrong answer there.

Mrs. White believes that the ACT Workshop would have begun without the PROMISE Scholarship program, but replied, "That really helped, you know, inspire the kids to do it. And parents who are aware of it want them to score high enough for the scholarship." She also credits the program with gradually helping Logan High School's test scores improve. "Since we've started doing this our high school average score is now at state and national average. Because our kids, you know, scores have gone up." Mrs. White also referenced to me that approximately 60% of Logan high school seniors will eventually take either one or both of the college admissions tests.

Teachers

Logan High School teachers were named by all family participants as sources of great influence and resources for students considering college work. During my interviews, the description of one particular teacher by Shelly Jennings caught my attention. This teacher was also referenced to me as "outstanding" by a Logan High School administrator. Opal Richards was an elective teacher at Logan High School and agreed to be interviewed. Shelly described how Mrs. Richards had influenced her during her senior year of high school in such areas as motivation, attendance, and personal responsibility. Shelly explained, "She really wants everyone to go to college. She's really big on that . . . she's great."

Opal Richards expressed to me her frustrations with the PROMISE Scholarship program. When asked I if she thought it was serving its purpose to give more students access to a college education she stated, "Well, I think it would certainly help the higher income children once again, I think that." This was the second time I had heard this comment on who the PROMISE

Scholarship program was serving. School administrator Marilyn Terrell expressed a similar sentiment. When asked why she said "higher income," she explained:

Well, I think you . . . you still have the same group of students receiving the PROMISE Scholarship that always went to college before, and it's from families who have education as a priority and they're usually middle class and higher income. I think it's a wonderful thing, and every family needs help with PROMISE Scholarships . . . I mean everybody can use that. But I'm wondering if we're not missing the boat on a state level, a county level, a school level, and a governmental level to help educate parents about the importance of education. And that's probably why I do what I do is try to reach those kids who probably haven't even thought about going to college . . . that this is available. It's good, but I still think somewhere we're still missing the boat in getting a lot of kids interested and understanding the need for education. I know everyone's . . . the administration and I hit heads all the time on this issue, I think, you know, they say it's the parent's job . . . it's the parent's job. It is our job. It is our job to watch them, to make sure that they get to school and they don't come tardy. I don't care if the parent's are dropping them off and, you say well their parent's are dropping them off, they know they are tardy. I don't care, but set high standards to get those kids to school. So, back to your PROMISE Scholarship, it's wonderful, it sets high goals, but I'm just wondering if we're not missing a sector of our student population that needs to be encouraged. And this is from the state on down.

Mrs. Richards expressed to me that the availability of the scholarship money to increase family accessibility to college was not enough. She felt more emphasis needed to be placed on other aspects of getting students to work harder in school such as attendance. She expressed to me that this could be facilitated by some kind of education program for parents who have no experience with college. When I asked about this she explained:

I think our school does a real good job trying to get information out to parents.

I think they do that. And yes, I don't think we can do everything . . . and yes, some of your parents have a responsibility. But even on a state level, I don't know how they can do more for those parents to encourage them to get the kids to go . . . and more education for them to help their kids. It's just like the No Child Left Behind, it's the one factor that's been left out . . . it's parental education. They have to take part of the responsibility as well you know, we both do. I know that sounds contradictory to what I'm trying to say, but we all have to be in this together. I just think we as schools need a more active role.

Opal suggested a way she believed that Logan High School could take a more active role with educating parents. She passionately explained:

I think that when they bring the kids and the parents in to do their five year plans, that's a golden opportunity. But that is in the eighth grade, and of course, they have to keep coming back to discuss this with the counselor. Counselors are overwhelmed, but I don't know if there could be a special committee that makes a concerted effort and I . . . I don't want to see one more thing put on a teacher, because we are up to here with what we have to do. I don't . . . everyone's

. . . everyone has worked to their limit. So it's going to have to be somebody, either a special committee who says they would like to do this. I don't know if board offices can get involved. I don't know where there can be somebody . . . I don't know through some program . . . I don't know. I don't really know how we could do that. But there's got to be a way. There's has to . . . it has to be able to work.

Opal Richards explained to me what she would like to say to state policy makers and legislators about the PROMISE Scholarship program. She focused on the issues of attendance, more parental involvement, and getting more information to those who need it. She said:

Well, I think first of all, attendance needs to be looked at . . . and tardies to school. We have policies to deal with tardies to class, but not tardies to school. So they can come in at second or third period, miss those classes and they're not really absent. Somehow form a committee, or look into the possibility of more education for parents . . . to help them to make some of the decisions. It also seems to me that I'm hearing . . . and I don't know I haven't done the research, and I don't know for a fact, but what I'm hearing is that every time the school system has a problem the court system is not backing us. I don't know if the legislature can get into the support system to help support us when it comes to absences. The other thing on the semester exams, we use to use semester exams in connection with absences and it worked, and they took that away. All kids need to know how to take a semester exam. They had the option to try to increase a grade and even if they were in school and they didn't have that number of absences, they could go ahead and take the semester exam and

it didn't have to count against them. But they had that possibility of taking the semester exam. It kept kids in school. Because if you said that if you miss more than five days, you have to take a semester exam. These kids were here. They don't want to take that semester exam. So, you know, my big thing has always been absences and being here on time. Somehow that should be added into the PROMISE requirements. I do think that we try to prepare them for the future . . . for responsibility. It is training and it is part of the parent's job . . . it is part of our job as a school entity that gets them ready. We need to have those things in place to get kids ready. It's all just habit. And it's structure, and it's training, and we need the backing to be able to do that. So you know I do . . . once again my whole thing is that I just don't think enough parents are involved. I don't know how to do that. I don't. But we need, somehow to get the information out to there for them to care as much as we do.

Conclusion from My Field Notes

Having concluded my conversations at Logan High School with students, families and staff members, I found myself very reflective of what I had heard and learned over the time I had spent with them. As an educator myself, I was impressed with the resourcefulness and hopefulness that appeared to exist among these members of the Logan High School learning community. It was a hopefulness that seemed to exist while being surrounded by so much despair. I also thought of how my own future may have been very different had my family not made the difficult choice to leave this place we called home for a perception of better educational and economic opportunity. I wondered if I would have gone to college and still been on the verge of completing a dissertation, or would I have slipped into traps like drugs that have long faced

the youth of Logan and had in fact swallowed several of my family members. These random thoughts were spinning wildly through my head when I once again became aware of the mountains that were all around me, surrounding every aspect of Logan as far as I could see. Upon reaching my car after walking through the school parking lot, I noticed a flyer had been placed under one of my windshield wipers. The flier informed me that I could work in the local coal industry making \$17.50 an hour with flexible hours and benefits . . . *and no training was needed.*

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

“Who is there to mourn for Logan? Not one.”

In 1774 Chief John Logan of the Mingo Indian Tribe refused to participate in peace talks with Virginia Governor Dunmore. He instead sent a letter expressing the betrayal he experienced in his relations with white people. The English version of this letter was recorded and published by Thomas Jefferson. Logan expressed that he had always provided food and shelter to any white traveler that came upon his lands, only to be betrayed as one of these groups murdered his entire village and family. Chief Logan expressed his anger and sorrow writing, “Who is there to mourn for Logan? Not one.”

Appalachians share a unique narrative. They have a common ancestry evolved from decades of geographic isolation. This existence created a culture of resourceful, independent people who lived rugged lives often focused on simple survival. This mountain culture is a great source of pride for its people, but also reflects the isolated existence of their communities. It is a culture deeply embedded in its own history and filled with tradition (Keefe, et. al., 1988). When American industrialization asked for its people and land, it was given and taken. Like Chief Logan, these people offered what they had to give, and like Chief Logan they were exploited. And now, who is there to mourn for this place that bears his name? Who is there to mourn for *this* Logan's people? Many have offered help and ideas over the past 40 years, but little has changed. Like Chief Logan, participants in this study also expressed frustration and betrayal. Their concerns were focused on the lack of opportunities in their community and betrayal by those who express negative stereotypes about the place they call home. What hope is there now for this region that suffers the drastic effects of long term poverty resulting from the decline of

an economy based in the extraction of natural resources? What hope is there for better economic opportunity amidst this despair?

This study is a portrayal of five families at one high school in one county of West Virginia making decisions about attending college. Piantanida and Garman (1999) write about “the nature and value of knowledge generated through small, in-depth, context-bound inquires” (p. 131). I present the reader with an understanding of the reality in which the participants live and function. There are different truths based upon perspective, and my own perspective is embedded within my subjectivity. As a native of Logan, West Virginia, I revealed in the introduction and design of this study what I believed *was* my personal lens, and the advantages and challenges associated with this bias. My bias involves subjective things I believe to be true about Appalachian places like Logan, West Virginia, and the lives lived by its people based upon my own experiences as native to this place.

As a result of actually implementing this study, however, I also discovered that I operated from *an additional lens*. I see Logan and its people through the eyes of someone *who left*. Because of this, the reader should understand that my perspective might romanticize this place and its people. I listened to and analyzed their stories using a filter that was somewhat different from their perspectives. I heard the stories of families who were not only native to Logan, but who also lived significant portions of their lives within the community. My conversations were with students who were not given the opportunity to attend schools with more resources. These students have parents who were not presented with *an option to leave* Logan as was my father, or who simply chose *not to leave*. Being native to this place gave me access to information and understandings. I may, however, have a different perspective in my analysis of participating natives' responses because I left.

Conclusions

The West Virginia PROMISE Scholarship was formulated and implemented to help address some of the social and economic needs of West Virginia. It was designed to better educate the West Virginia workforce in order to attract new industry in hopes that it eventually will reinvigorate the state economy. Only in its fifth year, it is difficult to judge the success or failure of the PROMISE Scholarship program; however, we *can* assess how the program is perceived by those using it. What are the perspectives of 12th grade students, their families, and school officials related to affordability and accessibility of the West Virginia PROMISE Scholarship program at Logan Senior High School? To capture the essence of their perceptions, this qualitative study was designed to answer the following set of research questions:

1. What perceptions do students and parents or guardians have about attending college?
2. What factors influence student and parent or guardian decisions about attending college?
3. How has the availability of the PROMISE Scholarship influenced the student and family college decision making process in West Virginia?
4. How has the availability of the PROMISE scholarship influenced other factors such as student effort and achievement, parent or guardian support, and overall school programs?
5. How can the perspectives of students, families, and school officials inform policy maker attempts to increase post-secondary educational access and greater economic opportunity for West Virginia High School graduates with programs such as the PROMISE Scholarship?

These questions are answered based upon the analysis of data gathered from this study. Study conclusions are presented as answers to Research Questions one thru four. Implications of the

study are presented as answers to Research Question Five. Following these conclusions and implications I suggested directions for further research.

Research Question 1: *What perceptions do students and parents or guardians have about attending college?*

The students and parents interviewed for this study believe that, by attending college and graduating with a degree they can have a better economic life. They believe that if they graduate they will get a high paying job. Of those interviewed, very few referenced that someone could graduate from college and acquire a job without a high salary. Participants also believe that going to college makes students better people. This was evident with references to the value of being liberally educated, as well as encouraging self-confidence. I found it interesting that only some of the participants mentioned the specialized preparation one receives as the result of a college degree. The conversation was primarily about making "a lot of money." The career choices of the participating students were predominately in high paying fields such as medicine, law and engineering. Although many times unsure of a career path, they were usually focused on high paying professions.

Student participants believe that college is also about personal freedom and responsibility. Several referenced the new found freedom they expected to have and how they were going to face an environment much different than that of their high school experience. This was also reflected in their concern for what they believed would be harder work than was expected of them in high school. They recognized this would require a higher level of responsibility with the accompanying increased freedom of living away from home and without the structure of a typical high school day. Even the student participant who planned to attend the local community college spoke of this personal responsibility by referencing his need to leave

home to attend classes each day without the structure of high school. The possibility of becoming homesick after moving to college was also a concern for some of the students. This seemed to come from examples they had observed from older friends and family members who unsuccessfully left college and came home to just "hang around Logan."

Several students mentioned that college was about new experiences and meeting new people. This was met with both excitement and angst by the student participants. Social aspects of their perceptions of college were also made obvious with frequent references to partying. The perceptions of how they would face these social challenges within their perceptions of freedom and personal responsibility were very diverse. Some students were confident that they would effectively handle any possible distractions because they had faced them before, or were committed to a more academic experience. Other students were unsure how they would handle this aspect of college life.

Most parents willingly admitted not knowing what to expect when their son or daughter went away from home to college. This is understandable because each had a limited or non-existent notion of any college experience. Although they would reference this lack of understanding, they would also quickly state their perceptions of the social nature of college. Through their accounts was evidence of their own efforts to educate themselves on the college application process. Most expressed negative perceptions of college partying. One parent even specifically referenced the national partying reputation of West Virginia University. Parent participants also referenced anxiousness as they hoped their son or daughter was adequately prepared for what they perceived would be harder academic work. These perceived notions of the social and academic aspects of college even led one parent to decide her son would attend the

local community college where he could live at home and be supervised while he continued to mature.

Research Question 2: *What factors influence student and parent or guardian decisions about attending college?*

Student and parent participants believe that educational opportunity leads to economic opportunity. Graduating from college to acquire a high paying job was the main influence on family decisions to attempt college work. This was not only evident with each student participant, but also with two participating parents who were taking college classes at the local community college. Parent participants often referenced their desire for their son or daughter to be “better” than they themselves were, or for them to have a more lucrative occupation requiring a non-manual skill set. Embedded within this perception of greater economic opportunity was also the notion of economic independence. At least one member from each participating family referenced the goal of “being able to provide for one’s family” as a primary factor to the desire for a college degree.

This desire to be economically independent seemed to come directly from each participating parent’s own personal life experience. All but one of the five participating families expressed their own economic life struggles. These ranged from single mothers who were raising their families with no economic support from divorced spouses, to early marriage and pregnancy, to a work disabling personal injury. In all five families, the participating student referenced the plight and economic struggles of their parents. I believe these struggles facing working class families in places like Logan are especially relevant to the process of getting more West Virginia high school graduates to attempt college work. The stories told by these parents of their efforts to raise their families left a significant impression upon me. They were strongly committed to

helping their son or daughter avoid the challenges they had faced, and a college education was viewed as the answer to these challenges.

In most participating families, this parental influence was a very important aspect of the college decision making process for student participants. An alarming factor emerged in this theme as two of the participating parents wanted their son or daughter to go to college so he or she could “get out of Logan.” Phrases such as “lost all hope,” “nothing here for young people,” and “this is my ticket out of here,” were heard throughout two of the family interviews. These sentiments were based on the perceived lack of opportunities in Logan. This *lack of opportunities* was not only economic, but also social in nature. These parents expressed their perceptions of there being nothing for young people to do in Logan except party. Embedded within this concern was the theme of drug abuse. The perception of a severe illegal drug problem in Logan was expressed by both family and school participants throughout the study, emerging amongst several themes. Because of community conditions like this perceived drug problem, two parent participants wanted to help their children leave Logan permanently. These parents also saw their son or daughter earning a college degree as their own means to leave Logan, and possibly West Virginia, after graduation and acquiring employment.

The decision to attempt college work was also influenced by other factors such as the availability of diverse educational settings and programs. These influences upon the decision to attend college included the availability of academic programs, as well as extracurricular activities such as cheerleading. Logan High School programs such as the Senior Project and ACT workshop also helped influence student college attendance efforts by helping with career exploration and college admission processes. School size was also important as some students and parents chose higher education settings because their enrollment. Several students mentioned

the campus they chose “felt right” or “my friends are going there.” The availability of the local community college was also a factor in each family’s college decision making process. Each family told personal stories of students who became homesick and left college to return to Logan. This notion of getting homesick at college and returning to Logan concerned most participating students and parents. The availability of smaller, nearby educational institutions seemed of increased importance to these families who were concerned about the possibility of student homesickness.

Research Question 3: *How has the availability of the PROMISE Scholarship influenced the student and family college decision making process in West Virginia?*

Students are choosing to attend West Virginia colleges and universities because of the availability of the PROMISE Scholarship. This commitment to West Virginia, however, did not always extend to returning to their community or remaining in the state after graduation. Although many parents would like for their son or daughter to remain close to home after graduation and employment, it was not at the expense of obtaining employment and economic benefits. Other parents expressed the desire to follow their children after college graduation out of their home community, and even the state. Student participants also expressed the emphasis placed upon remaining in West Virginia for college by school officials to take advantage of PROMISE Scholarship benefits.

The participating families in this study indicated that not only did the PROMISE Scholarship program give their son or daughter access to college, but it also gave them access to *choice of where* they could attend college. This choice of *where* was important because it also expanded student program of study options and possible career directions. This access to a variety of institutions enabled participating students to choose the environment that they believed

would best facilitate their academic and social success. As the greatest influence upon the college decision making process, parents were also able to influence or make choices for their sons or daughters. In most cases, this availability of choice helped parents feel comfortable with child's decision of where to attend college and what to study.

Because of the availability of the PROMISE Scholarship, parents and students require more information about the college application process. Participating parents with little or no personal college experience often expressed a lack of understanding of these processes directly and indirectly through their responses. This was especially evident in the financial aspects of college application. Families and parents were often confused when completing forms and meeting requirement deadlines. They spoke of mistakes they had made in the past with older children and told stories about the mistakes of others they had heard. School officials also expressed this greater need to educate parents about the college application process. One school official specifically mentioned the lack of required Internet access facing many families when attempting to complete these processes. Participating parents and students expected the school to help with this information and application process, expressing both praise and frustrations for their school efforts.

Research Question 4: How has the availability of the PROMISE Scholarship influenced other factors such as student effort and achievement, parent or guardian support, and overall school programs?

Students are working harder in high school to earn the PROMISE Scholarship. They are enrolling in more challenging classes to facilitate better college admission test scores. They are taking advantage of programs offered by their high school to improve study and test taking skills. Logan High School's ACT scores have risen to the state and national average with the

implementation of the PROMISE Scholarship program. Parents are seeking more information about concepts such as grade point average and advanced classes. They are expecting school officials to help in this education process and often express frustration when they perceive the school is not meeting their needs. As those most directly referenced by students and parents for their support, teachers were identified as a primary source of this informational and mentoring process.

This has put pressure on schools like Logan High School to develop and offer these types of parental informational programs. Often, however, these parents have limited or no college application experience and do not know *what* information they need. High school officials have to assess and anticipate what these parental informational needs are in an effort to better facilitate the parental education process. Because many parents are reluctant to ask for this help, or are even unwilling to go to school offered programs, Logan High School officials have implemented elements of the PROMISE Scholarship process directly into the curriculum offered during the school day. School officials continue to improve their efforts of reaching these reluctant parents. One school counselor alluded to the increased amount of her time dedicated to the college application process and more specifically, the PROMISE Scholarship application process.

These needed programs and resources are also often developed and implemented with limited funding and resources. Schools are, however, finding creative ways to implement these programs without significant financial resources or burdensome fees upon students and families. Logan High School implemented the ACT workshop based a concept offered at another West Virginia high school. They took the concept and redesigned it for use with their own students based on school and individual student needs. They do charge a fee for student participation, but this fee is waived when students are unable to pay for the workshop. Ensuring the fee does not

hinder student participation has been a commitment by Logan High School administrators. Other school programs are aiding in the college decision making process by helping students explore possible career interests. Exploring these career interests has influenced college choices based on the programs offered at state colleges and universities. The Senior Project program at Logan High School was mentioned by several students as influential in this way. Several parents and high school staff members spoke of the need for goal setting opportunities for students and their parents prior to their senior year of high school.

Findings and Implications

Research Question 5: How can the perspectives of students, families and school officials inform policy maker's attempts to increase post-secondary educational access and greater economic opportunity for West Virginia High School graduates with programs such as the PROMISE Scholarship?

In summary, the following major findings for educational policy makers about the PROMISE Scholarship emerged from data analysis in response to questions one through four. The following findings were in direct to response to the stated goals of the PROMISE Scholarship program.

- Students were working harder in high school to earn the PROMISE Scholarship.
- High school graduates were choosing to remain in West Virginia for post-secondary education to receive PROMISE Scholarship tuition benefits.
- The PROMISE Scholarship was providing West Virginia students with greater access to higher education through increased affordability.

Additional findings from the study that should influence future policy maker attempts emerged indirectly as the result of participant perceptions of college and the PROMISE Scholarship

program. These included topics related to the relationships between education and economic opportunities, communities, parents, information, and schools.

- **Education and Economic Relationship:** Parents wanted lives with more options for their children, and perceived that the educational opportunities resulting in a college degree would provide long-term economic opportunities for those who graduated. They also believed that a college degree would lead to economic independence and personal growth.
- **Community:** Parents wanted their children to live near them after college graduation, but not at the expense of a career that is lucrative and/or personally rewarding. Family and school participants were often concerned with the economic and social conditions they believed existed within their communities. Family participants perceived that the college degree facilitated by PROMISE Scholarship was a way to improve their community or was a way to escape their community.
- **Parental:** Parents with limited or no college experience were often unsure about the concept of going to college and often unable to help their child in the college decisions-making process. Families did, however, believe that short-term goals of attending college included new freedoms, personal responsibility, and encountering new experiences.
- **Informational:** Families often had a lack of understanding of the rationale behind the PROMISE Scholarship program, but perceived the scholarship was financially crucial to student college aspirations. Additionally, family and school participants alike were concerned about the continued funding of the scholarship program.
- **School:** The availability of the PROMISE Scholarship program was not only providing greater access to post-secondary education for high school graduates, but also greater

options for choice of colleges and programs of study. This availability has had impact upon school personnel and the services and programs they provide.

These direct and indirect findings from the implementation of the PROMISE Scholarship program suggest it is having impact upon families and schools in places like Logan, West Virginia. They also provide new information that should have implications upon future state policy making efforts.

Amidst the research-based premises and policy goals, the West Virginia PROMISE Scholarship is about giving hope. It is about giving hope to a state economy and its future workforce. It is about giving hope to places that have been surrounded by decades of despair. I recently heard legendary West Virginia University football star Sam Huff state, "If you don't live in hope, you die in despair." Programs like PROMISE attempt to foster hope amidst the despair experienced by many of those living in Appalachian communities through educational empowerment. But is the PROMISE Scholarship program accomplishing its stated goals? Is it an example of a program that may finally give hope to places that have long been promised so much but realized little?

The perceptions of families and school officials as those most directly involved with the utilization and initial implementation of the scholarship program, help address these questions. These perceptions help us understand the realities in which the PROMISE Scholarship program operates. Policy development should be based on state and national goals within local realities. The findings from these perceptions can be used by educational stakeholders at all levels to help assess and revise the PROMISE Scholarship program, and to facilitate new programs that may better enable PROMISE to accomplish its mission. These programs may be at the state, county,

school district or school level. Regardless of the level of implementation, the perceptions of the families PROMISE is trying to aid should be included at all phases of the policymaking process.

Families are receptive to what the PROMISE Scholarship program is trying to accomplish, in addition to providing financial support for their children, once they learn its rationale. They are concerned about the negative perceptions of their community from both outside and within the state of West Virginia. Many are proud of their community and would like to see their son or daughter have the option to return after college graduation. Others, however, do not want their son or daughter to return because of their own negative perceptions of the lack of opportunities they believe exists. State leaders should be concerned when citizens express such despair in their own community. They must find ways to ensure these PROMISE scholars have access to employment opportunities within the State of West Virginia. Policy makers must also formulate ways to reach those disenchanted with the community in which they have lived and worked most of their lives. If job opportunities do not exist, or citizens are so disillusioned with local and state living conditions, the resources required to continue the PROMISE Scholarship program may not be a good investment for West Virginia tax dollars. For outside perceptions of conditions in West Virginia to change, perceptions within the state must also change.

Parents in places like Logan want opportunities for their children. They want their children to have the knowledge and courage to do what they themselves could not. They do not want their children to face the challenges they faced while growing up, living, and working in their community. They want their children to live in economically viable communities with opportunities to promote a healthy, fulfilling life style. They lend evidence to the notion that economic opportunity does begin with educational opportunity as the PROMISE Scholarship

program suggests. They, however, do not want their children to live in communities with little positive social opportunity and what they perceive to be a serious illegal drug problem. Creating a better educated workforce in West Virginia is only one aspect of revitalizing West Virginia communities and their economies. Leaders and policy makers on the state and local levels must work to address social problems that are perceived to exist within towns like Logan. To revitalize these communities economically, they must be revitalized socially, and sometimes even politically. The results of PROMISE Scholarship efforts will be wasted if the college graduates the program produces take their expertise to other states due to a lack of opportunity in West Virginia.

State leaders and policy makers must also find more comprehensive ways to address the “non-college going culture” alluded to by Logan High School officials as existent within the school and community. These new policy efforts may need to be formulated and implemented *in addition to* the PROMISE Scholarship program. The students in this study may be first-generation college graduates from families who encouraged and supported their efforts to attend and succeed in college. Policy efforts must be formulated to provide new requests for information and resources for this targeted group of the PROMISE Scholarship program. As those most directly responsible for implementing the scholarship program, schools need to be ready for the benefits and challenges associated with increased parental involvement. This is especially important as parents with little or no college experience attempt to more actively participate in their son or daughters educational planning due to the availability of the PROMISE Scholarship program.

This problem should not only be the concern of the local high school or even county school district. It should not be yet another task laid on the shoulders of the school counseling

office. This challenge should also be addressed at the state level because of its complexity. There are other students in West Virginia high schools who may be *capable* of completing college work. As opposed to the students in this study, they may come from families who *have not encouraged* their children to attempt college or do not even know *why* to encourage their son or daughter to attempt college work. How can this group of high school graduates gain access to the PROMISE Scholarship program? If West Virginia communities are to be revitalized, policy efforts should go beyond those who say "Yes, I want to go to college." They must also reach out to those who think, "I never even thought I could go to college; do you think I could?" Educational stakeholders and policy makers must also find ways to reach and inform this segment of the population in places like Logan. State government leaders must also find ways to provide the economic resources needed support these additional policy efforts.

This study would also suggest that information dissemination about the PROMISE Scholarship program is needed beyond the college application process. No parents in this study fully knew student requirements to qualify for the PROMISE Scholarship. Some parents had erroneous information that when corrected led to their frustration. Some praised Logan High School informational efforts, while others did not. I believe one of the more alarming conclusions drawn from the family interview process, involved the lack of knowing the state rationale for the PROMISE Scholarship program by study participants. These individuals were not only parents, but they are also eligible voters. This lack of information about the PROMISE Scholarship program could lead them to vote for candidates or referendums opposed to a program that they themselves actually support.

The success of Logan High School programs such as the ACT Workshop and Senior Project program indicate that schools are formulating and implementing programs to help

students qualify for the PROMISE Scholarship. Successful school efforts such as these should be shared with other learning communities through educational policy initiatives. Data from this study would also suggest that school personnel at all levels are providing support and motivation for students interested in attempting post-secondary work. State staffing requirements should be reviewed in positions such as school counseling. This should involve more than just hiring additional school counselors to assist in completing of student paper work. Data from this study would suggest that long-range educational goal setting and career counseling are also needed.

Because of the short-term concerns students and their families often expressed about beginning college work, educational stakeholders and state policy makers should also examine what is in place to better prepare and support first generation college students to face these perceived concerns. Students expressed perceptions of what they believed would be increased freedom and personal responsibility upon entering college. What is in place on West Virginia college campuses to support these students and help them find success? The PROMISE Scholarship program is not a good investment if students enroll and begin college work only to quickly fail because they are inadequately prepared or become homesick.

The PROMISE Scholarship is giving greater college access to high school graduates by making college more affordable to their families. High school students are working harder in school to earn the scholarship. According to the families in this study, the PROMISE Scholarship program is accomplishing many of its stated goals. Because the program works, West Virginia educational stake holders should want *more* students working harder in state classrooms. The scholarship program needs to give access to *more* high school graduates if local communities like Logan are to be truly revitalized and the “non-college going culture” is to permanently change. The program has now begun to produce more college graduates for the state workforce.

What jobs, however, will be waiting for these college graduates after they receive their diplomas from state colleges and universities? State leaders and policy makers must now face and address this next challenge to reforming the West Virginia economy. The PROMISE Scholarship was only an initial step

Most family participants and Logan High School officials indicated a concern about the stability and continued funding of the PROMISE Scholarship program. If the program is accomplishing its mission and is deemed a good investment for the future of West Virginia's economy and its people, state government leaders may need to consider recommitting themselves to the rationale of the PROMISE Scholarship program. This recommitment may require appropriating *any level* of funding based on program *need*, rather than the current fiscal strategy of making annual program changes to remain within yearly allocated budgets.

Future Research

This study captures the perspectives of five families in Logan, West Virginia. A broader study is needed to discover if the findings presented here represent other West Virginia communities and families. Had I selected student participants from families with greater financial resources or post-secondary educational experience, the study could have yielded different results. From my research, I also believe *the family* is the unit that should be studied in any future efforts rather than students or parents and guardians individually. Research such as this can indicate how the PROMISE Scholarship may need to be adjusted to be more effective for the students and families it is attempting to reach. This should involve a thorough study of *who* is taking advantage of the program or *how many* top high school graduates chose to attend college in West Virginia based upon the availability of the program's tuition benefit. Additional

research may also lead to new policies and programs that could supplement the scholarship program and its mission.

Additional research should also be conducted to examine students and families who are *not* taking advantage of the PROMISE Scholarship program. Logan High School administrator Chuck Dyer spoke of the “non-college going culture” within his school and community. What are the causes and effects of this culture unique to Appalachian settings such as Logan? Educational stakeholders need to know how families of those students *not attempting* post-secondary education, but who might have the potential, perceive college. What are the factors influencing these family decisions? How can policy maker attempts give these families hope? I believe any future research attempts in this area should include a discussion on the possible clash between higher education and culture. It could also include a study of other exile communities and/or marginalized populations such as Native Americans. West Virginia educational stakeholders need to discover what other barriers face state high school graduates and discourage their attempts at post-secondary education. This could lead to new policy maker efforts to formulate and implement programs designed to address barriers to college access in addition to affordability.

Finally, further research efforts should also include other characteristics of education and the economy in West Virginia. For example, what impact does the state's *digital divide* have upon families with limited resources as the use of technology-based college applications continues to increase? Additional research will also be needed as PROMISE Scholars are beginning to graduate and seek employment. As each class graduates, where they move and work would be critical information needed to assess the next steps that are needed to help better educate the state's workforce. This additional information could also be used to take the mission

of the PROMISE Scholarship program, to help revitalize the West Virginia economy, to the next policy making level. This information will also be crucial for educational stakeholders such as legislators, educators, parents, and state citizens in general as important future policy and funding issues will be addressed in Charleston and state voting booths.

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Appendix A

Initial Interview Protocol for Student Participants

1. Why do you want to go college?
2. What do you think about college in general?
3. What colleges have you applied to? Why?
4. What do you know about the PROMISE Scholarship?
5. Why are you attempting to earn a PROMISE Scholarship?
6. Who or what has influenced your decision to attempt college work?
 - a) If a person or persons: How did this person or people influence you?
 - b) If a program: Tell me about this program? How did it help you?
7. What do you want to study in college? Why?
8. Where would you like to work and live after you finish college?
9. What would cause you not to accept the PROMISE Scholarship?
10. What will happen if you do not remain eligible for the PROMISE Scholarship? What will you do?

Appendix B

Initial Interview Protocol for Parent or Guardian Participants

1. How do you feel about your son or daughter trying to go to college?
2. What are your perceptions about college in general?
3. Do you want your son or daughter to go to college? Why?
4. If your son or daughter goes to college, where would you like them to go? Why?
5. What do you know about the PROMISE Scholarship?
6. Why is your son or daughter attempting to earn a PROMISE Scholarship?
7. As your family has gone through the decision-making process to attempt college, what have the influences?
 - a. If a person or persons: How did this person or people influence you?
 - b. If a program: Tell me about this program? How did it help you?
8. What do you want your son or daughter to study in college? Why?
9. Where would you like your son or daughter to work and live after they finish college?
10. What would cause your child not to accept the PROMISE Scholarship?
11. What will happen if your child does not remain eligible for the PROMISE Scholarship?
What will you do?