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How Students From Non-Dominant Cultures Perceive Their Social And Cultural Experiences In Relation To School Success

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HOW STUDENTS FROM NON-DOMINANT CULTURES PERCEIVE THEIR SOCIAL AND CULTURAL EXPERIENCES IN RELATION TO SCHOOL SUCCESS

by

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DISSERTATION

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Approved by:

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Advisor   Date

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Co-Advisor   Date

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DEDICATION

To my son Bobby; A loving son, a child who learned differently and struggled mightily in school—and overcame his obstacles, a cancer survivor—who demonstrated great strength and bravery to live for love, a loyal friend and confidante, and my motivating inspiration every day. Thank you for coming into my life—and staying!

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Lastly, a forever grateful thank you to my family—my husband, my children, my parents—no longer with me, but who believed in me—and my Saints! Thank you for the love!

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

A large majority of the students identified as having a disability, come from low-income families, are recent immigrants to the United states, or do not speak English as their primary language. In 2008, 40% of children ages 0-17 were from low-income, extreme poverty families. Of those children, 11% were white, 35% were black, and 31% were Hispanic (Wallman, 2010). In addition, from the same study by compiled by Wallman, in 2007 8.96% of all children ages 6-21 years were diagnosed with a disability (2010). In relation to these numbers, in 2006/2007 56,614 of the 232,114 students diagnosed with learning disabilities dropped out of high school (2010).

Race, cultural capital, and educational resources are all impacted by socio-economic-status (SES). Students from families with higher SES experienced greater returns in the areas of GPA, math, and reading achievement over students from lower SES families (Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). Some differences in scores could be attributed to family background, but in general the scores were higher for white students from average to above average incomes (Roscigno & Anisworth-Darnell, 1999).

These students' social experiences often do not extend beyond their own neighborhoods or families. Experiences that most mainstream students grow up with as part of their development such as attending local restaurants, movies theaters, shopping malls, or making trips into the nearest big city for other cultural activities such as museums, concerts, plays, or sightseeing are often missing from their life experiences (Maeroff, 1999). In addition, Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell (1999), found that black students are less likely to go on cultural trips, participate in cultural classes outside of school, and have less educational resources in their homes than white students. In addition, when accounting for non-traditional homes such as

single-parent homes and parent-stepparent homes, the number of disadvantages that black students have doubles from that of white students (Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, (1999).

Students from inner city schools are at an even greater disadvantage. Inner city schools have a higher number of single parent families with less educational background—or cultural capital. Inner city schools average 35% of students receiving free lunches. Of the 35%, 69% are non-white (Roscigno, Tomaskovic-Devey, & Crowley, 2006). In rural areas, resources are stretched due to the high numbers of siblings in each family. The average free lunch runs at 27% in rural areas with 17% being students of color. This is compared to an average of 15% free lunches in the suburbs of which 29% are students of color (Roscigno, Tomaskovic-Devey, & Crowley, 2006). Inner city students lack household educational items, cultural capital, and parental involvement in their education. Rural students tend to have more household educational items, but a larger deficit in cultural capital and parental involvement. Also, students from inner cities have a 28% higher likelihood of dropping out of school and rural students an 18 % higher likelihood of dropping out over their suburban counterparts (2006). How parents view school is often how their children will view it. Families' negative and hostile views of school often lead to students dropping out (Khalifa, 2010). These views that children are raised on are included in children's cultural capital. Home environments substantially affect the type of social and cultural capital students bring to school (Khalifa, 2010).

Resource and Network Building Life Experiences

Orange County in California is located adjacent to Lost Angeles County. Orange County is known for its clean beaches, well-to-do housing, clean area, ocean breezes, and culture. Laguna Nigel offers an art festival every year. There are concerts at multiple concert complexes, plays, parks, and a science discovery museum, multiple malls—and most famously—Disneyland

and Knott's Berry Farm. On the surface, Orange County appears to be an affluent, friendly, and economically sound place to live. However, it is also an expensive place to live that is not always kind to recent immigrants or those with a minimal education leading to low paying jobs.

Many students who have recently emigrated from Mexico find they have to live in small apartments in unsafe areas due to gang activities. Arturo is one of these students whose parents came to this country to find a better life where they can work and provide for their children. Arturo lives with his father, mother, uncle, and five siblings in a two bedroom apartment in the city of Orange. His father works night stocking produce in a grocery store. Arturo, who is 16 years of age and attends Orange High School, works as a buser evenings and weekends to help with the bills. Arturo has been identified as having a learning disability. He lives in a metropolis with every advantage this country can offer. Yet, Arturo has never been to a beach—even though there is one less than 15 minutes' drive from where he lives. Arturo has also never been to a movie theater or taken public transportation. Transportation that other teenagers use to get to work, go to the beach, or visit a mall with—Arturo does not have the knowledge to use. Experiences that other students in the area commonly participate in are unknown to Arturo (See Appendix A for more vignettes on students from non-dominant cultures).

Education Building Experiences

Another element that is often missing from their life experiences is pre-school education. When speaking with these children and their parents, they often explain that they could not afford any type of pre-school preparation for their children due to finances; either they could not qualify for any type of Head-Start program, the programs were full with waiting lists, or they were unaware of the programs and how to apply.

In Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell's (1999) study on "Race, Cultural Capital, and Educational resources…," they found that schools are not neutral institutions. The "preferences, attitudes, and behaviors" (p. 159) of the dominant class underscore cultural capital, or societally valued knowledge of cultural cues. This knowledge is more likely to be demonstrated in families of high SES and translates into a greater likelihood of an understanding of the curriculum base schools use. Children from middle and upper classes will have an advantage due to their familiarity, while those not part of that dominant class are less likely to have access to this knowledge, thus—setting the stage for exclusion and academic failure (Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). Household educational resources such as books, pictures, and music, which are valued by the educational system, are necessary for students to have access to and also allow engagement in activities outside the family (1999). Indicators of families' cultural capital include cultural trips to museums outings and cultural classes such as art, music, and dance. Also, having access to household educational resources such as daily newspapers, magazines, dictionaries, computers, calculators and more than fifty books comprise access to capital which translates into increased GPA's and standardized test scores (1999).

Parents with higher levels of social capital and SES select resource rich schools for their children using their knowledge and relationships to access those schools, whereas—children from low SES families end up in resource poor schools due to a lack of knowledge, relationships, or opportunities to attend other schools with greater resources (Parcel, Dufur, & Zito, 2010)

In addition, children of transient migrant populations consistently change schools, as their parents move from place to place dependent on where the work is located. While these parents value education for their students, their need for income is the priority and students suffer academically from the constant moving and upheaval. Students from low-income families who

move schools often experience difficulties building new social relationships versus those from higher income families (Parcel, Dufur, & Zito, 2010). Outside of the financial condition—students who developed school social capital (resources and networks that aid in school success) mediated the negative effects of mobility (2010).

Impact of Experiences on Brain Development

Based on these observations, the question arises, why—if environmental issues are not supposed to be considered when identifying students who have learning disabilities—do so many of these students lack mainstream experiences and cultural knowledge? Can experiences impact the psychological development of students' minds and brains? These questions have prodded further inquiry and reflection leading up to this project. A seminal study by Dante Cicchetti (2002) addresses this issue. In Cicchetti's study, he found that children who were neglected or maltreated developed abnormal neuronal pathways. During the early ages—birth to approximately three years—"the brain builds an overabundance of synapse that is followed by a pruning process that appears to be initiated by competitive interaction between neuronal connections" (2002, p. 1413). Then, based on children's experiences, inactive or unused neuronal connections are eliminated, while the connections that are used the most are maintained. At this point, the experience-dependent formation of synapses occurs—distinctive to children's environments—"each brain is modified in a singular fashion" (p. 1413). Thus, the social experiences that children have impact the development of the brain. This leads to the question, if maltreatment and neglect can cause abnormal neuronal growth in children, can a lack of experiences—a type of social deprivation—cause the same phenomenon? If so, then it is feasible that children's environments could lead to these children being identified with a learning disability. This, then begs the question, what can be done as a society to create a level playing

field for these students that are not part of the dominant culture—due to differing experiences and cultural backgrounds—to be equally successful in school? In order to answer this question, students' voices from non-dominant cultures must be heard. Only then can the bridge between those with access to networks and resources, and those without, be constructed. These networks and resource are the underlying foundation of school success, and those who have been excluded from access to the same—or equitable—networks and resources are without an equitable educational foundation. More on social capital, experiences that build networks and access resources, and its impact on learning and development will be addressed in chapter two.

Statement of the Problem

Many students identified as having learning disabilities come from non-dominant cultures. These students often come from low income families, immigrant families, or families whose ethnicity is different from that of the dominant culture that our current educational system is based on. Dominant, for the purposes of this study, refers to the white middle-class cultural system that defines what is valued, taught, and assessed in the current United States education system. Non-dominant culture is representative of the disenfranchised, low-income, differing cultural values and experiences, and those who are considered other—for the purpose of this study those identified as having disabilities.

These students often lack knowledge of the resources available to students tied into the dominant culture and appear to lack access to the same networks and experiences students from the dominant culture have. This creates an inequitable learning field for students from non-dominant cultures that can lead to high drop-out rates and failure in school. In particular, male students who are African American form a large portion of the population of students experiencing a lack of school success.

Research Questions

Based on previous inquiry and reflection, the questions that will guide the study are as follows:

- Do the socio-cultural experiences of students from non-dominant cultures impact students' success in school?

- Do students from non-dominant cultures have equal access to resources and networks that students from the dominant culture have that can aid in school success?

- Do students from non-dominant cultures have access to the cultural base knowledge, values, and belief systems that underscore the curriculum of our current educational system?

Knowledge of Networks and Resources

Bridging capital has the ability to facilitate access to varying social groups that would allow students to progress further with their goals (Putnam, 2000). Communication among members of the dominant culture form a type of capital that creates power among these participating members, along with trust, and very little oversight (Trainor, 2010). However, for those parents and students who are not part of the dominant culture, there is often exclusion and a sense of disempowerment (Trainor, 2010). Parents not accustomed to the traditional education system may be confused over the concept of individual educational plans for some students and not the rest. Also, the cultural capital necessary to locate, interpret, and digest the informational material on special education services can be confusing to many parents (2010).

Trainor (2010) clarifies this type of situation in her recent study on capital in special education:

> Although parents are expected to participate in special education decision making with school personnel, communication and interaction are not neutral because parties have varying degrees of access to important capital resources. Thus, the potential for parent empowerment may be diminished as a result of complex interactions of race-ethnicity, language, socioeconomic background, and school experience (p. 247).

Parents also need social capital in order to leverage the different forms of capital to create the greatest educational opportunities possible for their children (Trainor, 2010).

Josh is an African American high school senior who lives at home with his single mother and five siblings. Josh has also been identified as having a learning disability (LD) and receives Special Education services. Josh transferred from another school district after his junior year and has found that some of his credits from the previous high school will not transfer, thus he is short some credits and will have to take another semester of school after his senior year before he can graduate. Both of the school districts, the previous and current, are located within the same county. The fact that Josh will not have enough credits to graduate on time—even though he was on track to graduate on time in the previous school district—and the school districts reside in the same county, have created a sense of confusion and distrust among Josh and his mother towards the new school district. Josh has made it clear to his teacher that he does not like school anymore. Due to his low grades he is unable to play sports, and at his old school he played basketball and football. Now, his mother, Arlene, worries that he will get into trouble and feels he is hanging out with others who are not a positive influence on him.

Arlene's son Josh has an IEP, and she has met with the case coordinator for his yearly IEP—and she has also spoken to his counselor about his credits not transferring—yet, actual communication has not taken place. Arlene has asked his case coordinator why he is missing so many credits when he goes to school every day. Arlene is frustrated at the lack of communication and worried about what types of activities are there for Josh if he is not allowed to play sports. Arlene tries to access the system, but feels she lacks the knowledge and is frustrated by her inability to "pinpoint" the problem and get answers to her questions or aid for her child.

In a study by Dornbusch & Glasgow (1996), parents who opposed the expressions and labels used in special education felt their participation in their children's educational process was not valued (much like Arlene's feelings of lacking communication)—nor did it result in beneficial educational opportunities. A cultural history of living in a society whose education system is dominated by one group, which excludes based on class, race, ability, and language, most likely has an impact on their perceptions of how they (the parents) are included in the educational process (Dornbusch & Glasgow, 1996). According to Ravanera & Rajulton (2009), single mothers comprise 20% of the population, are more vulnerable due to their lack of extensive networks, informal or organizational, and reaching out to them can be difficult due to their lack of confidence and trust in institutions.

In addition, this disenfranchised group is less likely to complete school, get jobs that provide for an adequate income to support themselves, and often leads to criminal activity and incarceration, which all create a drain on society's resources as a whole. Knowledge of the experiences of this non-dominant group of students is vital in order to find ways to bridge their

experiences and school, so that they can also successfully navigate the educational system. A major element to bridging these students' experiences is to open access to social capital.

Social Capital

The resources that reside in a social structure generate social capital: Norms, social networks, and the relationships between adults and children that are valuable for children's growth combine to form social capital. Social capital exists within families and within communities in terms of families' abilities to function effectively within communities (Coleman, 1988a; Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002). "School social capital refers to the bonds between parent, children, and schools that support educational attainment and should have implications for social adjustment," (Parcel, Dufur, & Zito, 2010, p. 831) a form of bridging social capital. Bonding relationships are a form of social capital comprised of relationships that are reciprocal in nature and bonded with mutual obligations (Putnam, 2000). These relationships are more intimate than relationships formed through bridging capital (Putnam, 2000).

Mentoring and trust relationships.

Mentoring and trust are important aspects of social capital that can aid students in being successful at school. Carly is a 14 year-old high school student at another local high school in Orange County. For Carly, there is no quiet place to do her homework and no specific time set aside to do it. Carly's mother makes dinner regularly for the family, but they sit in front of the television while eating. Discussion with her mother over the day's events takes place over the phone from the "sober house" where Carly spends most of her time after school. Carly has intimate knowledge of the sober house because she goes there every day after school. She knows all the people there and has formed networks of support through relationships with other adults

in the house. Carly connected to this resource through her parents. After her father went through the "Rock Center," which is a "detox center," he went to live in the sober house. At the time, Carly and her siblings were living with her grandparents in a neighboring state, as her mother had first gone through a detox program: Shortly after her father went through. At one point, both parents were in a detox program and unavailable to care for the children. Her mother was in one sober house and her father in another. The grandparents functioned as an extended family resource in caring for the children. Carly stops at the sober house every day after school to visit, play games, and sometimes eat dinner. The sober house is the only resource that Carly is aware of where she can get mentoring. Carly is unaware of recreation programs in the community and has never been to the public library in her community. Sometimes, all that is necessary for a mentoring relationship with youth is being a sympathetic listener (Phillips, 2009). In Carly's case, she finds those listeners in some of the adults at the sober house. However, while the relationships Carly has developed with some of the adults from the "sober house" constitutes both network and resources for her (mentoring and a safe place to go after school), it is not the equivalent to the types of networks and resources utilized by her dominant culture peers.

Young people identify mentors as being empathetic, willing to keep their confidences, and allowing the youth to feel a sense of control within the relationships. Youth often find these qualities within their peer groups (Phillips, 2009). A young person's ability to effectively utilize their personal capital—such as resilience and independence can be affected by the cultural capital available to them (Phillips, 2009). In Carly's case, she saw her parents overcome their addictions and utilize resources available to them. This enabled Carly to recognize opportunities for support also, even though they were not traditional resources or networks.

The values of collaboration, respect, and the valuing of diversity can build trusting relationships, and engage youth at the cognitive, emotional, and social levels (Kingma, 2002). This allows for the development of social capital which can be fostered in children through participation in community cultural arts programs where they can connect with creative people (Bresler & Latta, 2009). As with the case of Gabriel, feeling valued and trusted aided him in connecting with his teacher which stimulated his desire to be more successful in school.

Access to norms and values of dominant cultures.

According to Maeroff (1998), students who lack a network of support and "the norms and values that underpin it place their education at risk from the day they first walk into classrooms across the United States" (p. 1). Access to the mainstream culture's norms and values, which are encoded in the educational system, and developing knowledge about how to effectively access resources and networks of support systems comprise social capital. This social capital is achieved through networks, built upon common norms and trust, which facilitates coordination and cooperation among its members, allowing them to achieve goals that could not be achieved otherwise (Maeroff, 1998; Noguera, 2003; Schuller, Baron, & Field, 2000). In addition, Coleman (1988b) states that elements provided towards children's education by a strong families can also comprise social capital: These elements are "resources that reside in the social structure itself—the norms, the social networks, [and] the relationships between adults and children that are of value for the children growing up" (p. 12).

Unfortunately, children from low-income families often lack social capital. In a study by the National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], young adults from families within the lowest 20% of income distribution were six times more likely than their peers, from the top 20%

income distribution, to drop out of high school (2001). Greene and Forster, Fellows from the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, have listed the 2003 high school dropout rate for Black students at 51% and 52% for Hispanic students. Also of note, the percentage of Black and Hispanic students who graduate high school at a college readiness level is only 9% for both groups, which is one cause for the under-representation of the populations in college.

In a report by the California Dropout Research Project, Policy Brief 15 (October 2008), one of the underlying causes of the reasons that students drop out was determined to be a lack of social capital, which includes a lack of school readiness, access to preschool and other educational activities, and access to social and financial resources. In addition, these causes were broken down into two group characteristics: individual characteristics and situational characteristics. Under the individual characteristics, it was determined that regular academic grades are more indicative than high stakes testing scores in predicting whether students will dropout or not. In regards to background, as with other research in this area, there is a higher dropout rate among males then females with the highest drop-out rates among blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans.

As regards the situational characteristics reported by the research project, family structure, resources, and practices weighed most heavily. If students live with both parents they tend to have a lower dropout rate versus students with split families or other living arrangements. Also, frequent moving, illness, death, or adults moving in and out of their lives increases dropout rates. Parents who practice behaviors that make use of social capital—such as having high educational goals for children, monitoring children's academic progress, and awareness of children's peer relationships are more likely to have children who complete high school. In addition, there is a high correlation between students who come from families living in affluent

communities and completion of high school. This report demonstrates that dropping out of school is a process that is not based on only what happens at school, but—rather—one that bridges communities, families, and students' academic careers. Social resources, such as supportive or mentoring relationships in families, school, and communities' plays a large part in whether students complete high school or not.

Access to networks and resources

While the main components of social capital deal with networks and resources that can be used to attain goals, it can also include an element of exclusion that can be detrimental to students' successes. According to a recent study by Paris (2008) on multiethnic youth space, students use "oral language to index solidarity within their ethnic groups and to, purposefully and inadvertently, excludes those outside their ethnic group" (p. 110). So, while it is necessary for students to have knowledge of the dominant language an education system is based on, different ethnicities may also use their native languages to exclude others and maintain sub-cultural exclusivity.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the social experiences, both private and public, of students between the ages of 18-23, who are African American and either received, or may have received—special education services, and explore how these experiences impacted their school success. This is only a small representation of students from non-dominant cultures, but this population has been widely recognized as having large numbers of students identified as needing special education services in school—and with not being successful in school (Cataldi, E., Laird, J., & KewalRamani, A, 2007). The study was conducted in qualitative approach with a case

study format. Qualitative research is an inductive method in which generalizations are made about social phenomena that allow for predictions by providing causal explanations based on input from a small population, which is then applied to a larger population. As stated by Glesne (2006), "Qualitative research methods are used to understand some social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved, to contextualize issue in their particular socio-cultural-political milieu, and sometimes to transform or change social conditions."

Giving voice to the experiences of students who have lived the phenomenon is vital to understanding their choices and perspectives. Peter McLaren (1993), a student of Paulo Freire, writes:

> Crucial to the development of contextual, critical knowledge is affirming the experiences of students to the extent that their voices are acknowledged as an important part of the dialogue. …The task of the critical educator is to enable individuals to acquire a language through which to reflect upon and shape their experiences and in certain instances transform such experiences in the interest of social responsibility. (p. 8)

For those in society who care, the only way to truly understand why students from non-dominant cultures struggle to be successful in school is to ask them, observe them, and reflect upon what they have given us in the context they have lived it.

Significance of the Study

Exploration of barriers and supports that contribute to a lack of necessary resources that low-income students need is vital for determining how to create a more equitable educational system. Many low-income students in our educational system receive an unequal education due to unequal access to resources. These resources include knowledge of the mainstream culture reflected in their educational experiences. This knowledge is encoded in the instruction, assessments, and social interactions that comprise their educational experiences. Students lacking this knowledge are more likely to drop out of high school. Students who drop out of high school become disenfranchised from the society in which they live, thus creating undue stresses on an already stressed social structure. The study will explore the experiences of adolescent students from non-dominant cultures identified as needing special education services at some point in their education.

Definition of Terms

The following is a list of terms and their operational definitions for the purpose of this study:

Case Study: A detailed analysis and account of one or more cases in order to explain a phenomenon from participants lived experiences. It is an investigation of a phenomenon within real-life contexts to acquire an in depth understanding through interpretation using multiple sources of information—specifically artifacts, observations, and verbatim. Collective and multiple case studies involve more than one participant and are dependent on what is being explored (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009).

Critical Theory: Research done for the purpose of advocating for special populations which are subjected to the established elite and powerful, in order to bring about change for that populations' benefit—and society as a whole, and to have that subjected populations' voices heard (May, 1980).

Cultural Capital: Value and belief systems that predicate how individuals act in their environments—how they live their lives every day--including what they consider to be important (Williams, 1989).

Constructivism: An interpretive paradigm that is founded upon meaning being created through experiences within our environments and each other. There are multiple realities, seen as wholes, and not individual variables that can be separately analyzed (Glesne, 2006). The only realities are those created by people and are dependent upon observation to for their existence, which precludes discovery of an existing objective reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). There are two differing forms of constructivism: one which is based on developing stages of discovery—founded by Piaget, and the other language based and socially interactive—known as social constructivism—which is based on Vygotsky's work (Vygotsky, 1986; Wadsworth, 2004).

Disenfranchised: Those who do not feel included in their societies' mores, values, and goals (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999).

Dominant Culture: The population which dictates the value system and codification system by which government and education is predicated upon. Specifically, in this country, those with access to power and money to achieve their goals and with knowledge of the mores and value system upon which public education is founded (Bourdieu, 1986; Ecclestone, 2004; deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999).

Empirical Paradigm: A paradigm concerned with the specific parts of a whole that can be defined individually—such as variables that can be manipulated—and which is quantifiable and replicable. Researchers using this paradigm strive to work with what can be measured and is objectifiable (Capra, 1982; Glesne, 2006; Guba, 1982).

Epistemology: How knowledge is generated and justified. It is a way of constructing and understanding knowledge (Glesne, 2006; Guba, 1989).

Exclusion: The act of excluding certain populations from participating with certain groups of people in certain activities or organizations (Bourdieu, 1999; Ecclestone, 2004; Maeroff, 1998).

Interpretive Paradigm: A paradigm concerned more with the sum of the parts—or the whole—and how and why it functions as it does. Qualitative researchers use this paradigm to understand phenomena and how participants perceive their experiences within it (Capra, 1982; Guba, 1989).

Non-Dominant Culture: Those outside the dominant culture who lack access, or knowledge of, the dominant norms which form the basis for their particular government and education system. These populations include recent immigrants, those from low socio-economic status groups, students with disabilities and their families, and any other groups of people without access or knowledge of the dominant populations' mores, value/belief systems, or codified knowledge (Bourdieu, 1999; deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Ecclestone, 2004, Maeroff, 1998).

Paradigm: A framework or belief system that impacts the way knowledge is perceived and research is approached (Glesne, 2006; Guba, 1989).

School Success: The ability to navigate the public education system in order to achieve adequate grades for promotion, graduate high school, form viable networks, and access resources that will

allow individuals to pursue post high school goals which will allow them to live independently (Maeroff, 1998; Ecclestone, 2004).

Social Capital: Social networks, resources (material, financial, and social), and experiences that aid in achieving individuals' goals (Maeroff, 1998).

Limitations

Qualitative research, with a case study format, utilizes a small sample size. For the purposed of the study, the sample size will be located within a limited geographical area. It is an inductive method that assumes the life experiences of these students are representative of many other students.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The current educational system is based on value systems and norms that are referred to as cultural and social capital. They have many other aspects in common also—such as language, behaviors, community involvement, and attitudes toward education. Students dropping out of high school and not completing their education continue to be a problem that creates disenfranchised populations who contribute to a higher crime rate and cause an additional drain on economic resources. Previous research has demonstrated a connection between students who drop out, what forms of cultural capital they have, and the type and amount of social capital they have access to.

Social Capital

The resources that reside in a social structure generate social capital: Norms, social networks, and the relationships between adults and children that are valuable for children's growth combine to form social capital. Social capital exists within families and within communities in terms of families' abilities to function effectively within communities (Coleman, 1988a; Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002).

Features of social organizations that develop social networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit and allow for the ability to use the system to achieve goals is the basic operating definition of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986;Coleman, 1988a; Maeroff, 1998; Putnam, 2000;). Such networks facilitate action that allows families to translate and transmit their individually achieved skills and knowledge to

attain necessary social capital to help them achieve their goals (Brown & Lauder, 2000; Ecclestone, 2004; Maeroff, 1998; Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002).

Social capital exists in relationships between people in which actual and potential resources can be utilized through membership in organizations and networks. Within these organizations and networks are obligations, expectations, information channels, and social norms that exist among its members (Ecclestone, 2004; Kao, 2004). These networks are reciprocal in nature and members work together to achieve mutual goals. The social relationships exhibited in these networks are built on values such as trust, and they interact to support a mutual acknowledgement of others' objectives as valid (Ecclestone, 2004; Kao, 2004; Schuller et al., 2000).

Children are best served when there are shared values of public respect and trust between school personnel and parents. Members of networks and partnerships have some shared values. These shared values are "public" in nature in that they are outside the informal networks and connections of family and friends. Whether or not these values are shared will determine the quality of education for children (MacGillivray & Walker, 2000).

The socio-economic status, race, levels of education, and amount of parent involvement can dictate the response parents will get from school personnel. Bonds that are created through reciprocal relationships in social networks create political influence when money is involved and the people are effectively organized. This combination can produce better service from schools or other public institutions because of the political influence the organized network and money asserts (Noguera, 2003; Putnam, 2000). Schools "reflect and respond to the characteristics—

cultural, demographic, and socioeconomic—of the constituencies they serve" (Noguera, 2003, p. 33).

While social capital is meant to work as an inclusionary process, it can—and has been—used as a determining factor for exclusion. The same "norms, high trust, and dense social networks" that bind communities together can exclude others through sociological boundaries that create separate identities that distinguish between members and non-members (Brown & Lauder, 2000, p. 228). Regardless of the inherent dangers for exclusion, however, access to social capital is needed to provide concrete benefits such as jobs, educational opportunities, social integration, better health, better performing in school, decrease in crime, and higher economic growth (MacGillivray & Walker, 2000; Noguera, 2003).

Social isolation based on race and class barriers impedes the development of social capital. Noguera cites the Oakland, CA school district as an example of isolation. Even though Oakland is across the bay from San Francisco, and surrounded by many economically flourishing cities, most families are completely dependent on the public school system for school services—regardless of the quality of the service. The community is largely comprised of poor, immigrant, and ethnic minority students. Race and class barriers exclude this population from influential social networks, thus creating social isolation. Whereas, working together in pursuit of common community interests would increase social capital, instead—the community is caught up in an increased level of competition over community resources (2003).

The plight of the Oakland population stands in stark contrast to the experiences of more affluent white students who occupy a positional advantage, often becoming part of the "social elite" whose social relationships are embedded in the "institutional structure, patterns, and

processes" of the current educational system(Brown & Lauder, 2000, p. 285). It is the social elite whose social relationships open up opportunities that create choices, whereas those without these social relationships are forced into social isolation based on race and economic status.

Experiences

In addition to networks and resources, social capital includes many other elements that encompass a variety of necessary experiences to attain cognitive and social growth. These types of experiences are important for brain development, as they impact the ability to have flexibility, self-mastery, set individual goals, and develop resiliency (Cicchetti, 2002). Supporting social experiences help prevent isolation and alienation, which many students from non-dominant cultures experience causing a sense of disenfranchisement (Maeroff, 1998). "Social knowledge is essential to gaining access to the mainstream" (1998, p. 10). Students' home lives should be filled with intellectual stimulation in order to instill a motivation in students for school success. Activities that can aid in this stimulation include trips to "museums, concerts, ball games, and other unfamiliar places" (p. 10) that allow for teaching of behaviors that might not otherwise be taught or learned in the home (1998).

<div align="center">

Cultural Capital

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Culture

"Culture is ordinary" (Williams, 1989, p. 4). It is the way people live their lives every day: What they do, what they wear, what they eat, how they worship and celebrate. Culture is a socially constructed common base of knowledge, values, and norms that members assimilate as a natural way of life in order to operate in an acceptable manner within the membership (Ecclestone, 2004; Geertz, 1973). Token days, one day events that are organized and staged to

raise awareness or give students integrated experiences, do not create or define culture. Token days do not change the way things are or how people live their lives (Kozol, 2005). It is important to recognize that culture is comprised of daily behaviors that people learn through interactions in their private lives. Some of these behaviors aid in the development of resiliency and access to social capital, and some of these behaviors hinder development of strengths that can benefit individuals in navigating public social structures.

According to Williams (1989), education is also ordinary. It is through education that the ordinary members of societies have access to common meanings and the accompanying skills that allow members to amend these meanings based on their personal and group experiences. Williams does not believe there is a finite number that have the capability of profiting from higher education or primary education. In fact, he states that he believes these percentages of those that are capable of higher cognitive functioning and academic success to be social constructions by the bureaucracies that control our social and political organizations. Williams states that he cannot accept education as simply training for jobs or for the molding of useful citizens. Rather, "it is a society's confirmation of its common meanings, and of the human skills for their amendment" (1989, p. 14). He asks for a "common education that will give our society its cohesion" (p. 14).

Cultural Capital Defined

Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte (1999) define…., "Cultural capital includes not merely language and social roles, but also the general cultural background, knowledge, and skills passes from one generation to the next" (p. 15). Social Class impacts the exchange rate of cultural capital. The most highly valued cultural capital is characterized by the middle and upper classes.

It deals with what is considered high culture: literature, the arts, communication skills, and cooperative work patterns. Schools base instruction and curriculum on this type of cultural capital. There are codes, both overt and covert, embedded in the educational structure that children from lower SES will most likely have difficulty understanding and accessing. In contrast, students whose cultural capital aligns with school expectations are considered academically superior (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte).

In addition, while Ecclestone (2004) considers both social and cultural capital to be "outcomes and sources of cultural reproduction," she refers to cultural capital as comprising "behaviours, dispositions, knowledge and habits internalized through socialization, accumulated through investment in education or training, and objectified in cultural goods and artifacts" (p. 31). However, the difference between the two resides in the difference between private and public. For example, behaviors among friends and family may, in some contexts, be different from behaviors practiced in public. These behaviors can include personal religious worship practices, language used, and dress. While it might be acceptable to use profanity when conversing with friends, profanity is not acceptable in the work place. Therefore, people's behaviors in private will most certainly have some differences their behaviors in public.

As an example, California is a diverse state with cultural centers of non-dominant populations throughout. Several years ago, Yuba City had the largest concentration of Indians in the United States in one city. These Indian American people dressed differently, had very distinct diets that included foods and spices not common to many from the dominant culture, and they spoke a different primary language. Theirs is a distinctly different culture from the dominant one for the area. However, when they were in the public realm, they abided by the same social rules as others from different cultures. They stood in the same lines to purchase

products, used the same language for conducting transactions, and attended the same public schools. This Indian American population adjusted their cultural capital to be compatible socially when in public, and the networks and resources formed and used in the public arenas—in part— form their social capital.

How can it be known whether or not people's cultural capital is compatible with the dominant culture? Bourdieu developed the concept of habitus to explain the foundational structures that allow for the development of cultural capital. Bennett deMarrais (1999) interprets Bourdieu's habitus to be "a set of ideas about how the world operates, what is to be valued, what one's own place in society is, and which actions are correct or proper" (p. 208). This habitus forms during primary socialization within families and communities of origin. Since this habitus is formed before secondary socialization, I-probably should take out-your beliefs are not part of the lit review believe, the learned behaviors, values, and norms may or may not be conducive to the development of social capital. It is dependent on what the learned norms and values are. It is this difference between primary and secondary socialization that could be viewed as the equivalent of private and public socialization—with the public socialization taking place in the schools and other public arenas.

Bourdieu (1999) wrote that habitus is formed through the application of practical hypothesis which are based on past experiences. The structures formed through this process are the basis of "perception and appreciation of all subsequent experiences" (p. 109). Or, in other words, they become the lens through which we view the world. As Bourdieu states, habitus is a product of our histories. Habitus, then dictates which practices are correct—more so than explicit norms and formal rules. The determination of correctness forms the constraints and limits for individuals' behaviors. This habitus becomes an active presence that is a second nature to people.

In addition, Ecclestone (2004) believes "habitus incorporates multiple, overlapping identities and dispositions which make up a person's life and the effects of different learning experiences as people progress through schooling…"(p. 33). I, interpret this to mean that people's habitus changes through their life experiences. Ecclestone states that people's "interactions reform and revalue" between "field, habitus, and the reproduction of cultural values" dependent on context, thus making the forms of capital fluid (2004, p.33). It takes extensive amounts of time, effort, materials, and psychological resources to develop forms of cultural capital that can be applied in diverse contexts—especially when people's original capital has not originated from the dominant culture, as the necessary resources are not equally distributed (Ecclestone). This creates an inequity in opportunities for developing social and cultural capital, and this inequity exhibits in children's academic achievement.

Aspects of Social Capital

Educational Activities

Children will have a better chance for educational success if parents involve students in educational activities that build social capital in the home. Discussions in the literature stress the importance of early literacy programs and having exposure to reading in the home before attending Kindergarten. Many of these studies focus on children from low-income families. Fish, Jacquet, & Hadassah (2002) studied low-income rural Appalachian children, and it was found that children who attended some preschool, or who had access to reading materials in the home, did better academically once they started Kindergarten than students without preschool and reading materials.

Hockenberger, Goldstein, & Haas (1999) determined that mother's from low-income families who were taught to comment on the literary content in books in a way that allowed their children to relate their own lives to the events and characters from the story, showed an increase in "assertive and responsive utterances during the commenting intervention" and improved emerging literacy skills (p. 1).

Fantuzzo, McWayne, & Perry's studied family involvement and learning competencies for low-income children, and determined home-based activities such as reading to children, providing a place for educational activities, and asking children about school helped them perform better on language and literacy in Kindergarten and first grade (2004). Thus, having access to reading materials in the home and being read to be one aspect of social capital that impacts educational success (Maeroff, 1998).

<div align="center">**Resources**</div>

Cultural Resources

People on the margins of participation within their communities should be encouraged to participate in community building and be given the opportunity to develop skills that would allow them to do so (MacGillivray & Walker, 2000). Trust, norms, obligations, and personal identity come from being part of a cooperating network with shared responsibilities. While cultures vary in belief and value systems, certain values can, and should, be agreed upon: (a) appropriate standards of social behavior, (b) value of education, and (c) benefits of sharing resources (Brown & Lauder, 2000). Determining education as a common value is especially important, as education is the confirmation of its "common meanings and of the human skills for

their amendment" (Williams, 1989, p. 14). However, educators should also recognize diverse cultures require diverse curricula and assessments sensitive to cultural differences.

Positive family attitudes toward education.

Culture and social class play a large part in the acquisition of resources necessary for the development of social capital. School provides opportunities and demands, but the attitudes and effort provided by the social environment of children's homes plays a key role in their ability to learn, according to Coleman (1988a). Children approach tasks at school based on the attitudes brought from home. Coleman (1988a) also determined that variations among family backgrounds make more of a difference in children's academic achievement than the variations among schools. Other researchers agree that children's performances are not only dependent on opportunities, but, also, and on the goals, attitudes, and effort they develop in the application of their skills to these opportunities, which in turn are shaped by their social and family environments (Bankston, 2004; Maeroff, 1998).

Mothers impact the attitudes developed in the home. An intense concern from mothers for their children's school performance, along with a willingness to devote effort and "time to aiding in that performance, shows a high level of social capital in the family" (Coleman, 1988a, p. 5). Some parents' (mothers or fathers) values may support students' education while other parents may have expectations which do not support educational outcomes. An example of this would be parents who are economically successful without having an education and who may have similar expectations for their children (Kao, 2004).

Access to Social Capital

Knowledge of Mainstream Language, Literature, History, and Values

In regards to education, knowledge of how to "play the system," knowledge of the procedures and practices upon which the system is based, is a form of cultural capital that can be used to build social capital—or keep out non-members. This knowledge includes knowing materials, structural conditions, values, and norms that allow for choices and opportunities that lead to educational success—the knowledge of which is unavailable to outsiders (Ecclestone, 2004; Noguera, 2003). Even if parents are well-educated, if they do not have knowledge of the mainstream, or dominant culture—such as language and norms—their children will be at a disadvantage in comparison to well-educated, native-born, white parents' children (Kao, 2004).

Public schools are a social safety net for poor children. Yet, most schools operate based on middle-class norms and the rules of the middle-class (Noguera, 2003; Payne, 2001). People who are not privy to this "coded knowledge" lack useful information necessary for academic success. The value of policy, pedagogy, and assessment practices, along with which type of learners will have access to them are determined by socioeconomic conditions and the dominant culture (Ecclestone, 2004). "Hidden rules are about the salient, unspoken understandings that cue members of the group that this individual does or does not fit" (Payne, 2001, p. 18). Therefore, access to this coded knowledge is only accessible when people have access to the hidden rules that are determined by the dominant culture.

Once knowledge of the hidden rules has been acquired, students may develop the social capital necessary to maneuver the current educational system. Having this knowledge will help children feel a sense of connectedness. Children need to feel connected, have a sense of well-

being, be able to take the initiative academically, and have a sense of knowing to fully gain access to the mainstream and develop social capital. Bridges need to be constructed to connect children both culturally and geographically so that they can "reinvigorate their entire surroundings" (Maeroff, 1998, p. 13).

Another reason that knowledge of the mainstream language, literature, history and values is necessary for educational success in today's climate is due to high-stakes testing. The high-stakes testing on which academic success of children is based often receives criticism for cultural and economical biases. It is the dominant culture, the one that holds political power which determines what is of value, what students should know, how they should know it, and in what language instruction and assessments are given. Any group outside the dominant culture is at a disadvantage. "…Employers, teachers, and examining bodies possess cultural capital in the form of "inside knowledge" that they usually do not share with learners" (Ecclestone, 2004, p. 35). This limits access to resources for students, outside the dominant culture, to develop social capital.

Access and use of community resources.

All children need opportunities to build social capital; however, it is usually children from low-income families, or children who are isolated in rural or segregated urban areas, who most lack the opportunities for enriching activities. Some enriching activities that can build social capital include trips to museums, concerts, ballgames, music lessons, playing in the park with other children, making small purchases in stores, summer enrichment programs, visiting other children's homes, and traveling outside the community to visit unfamiliar places. These activities can be opportunities for learning behaviors and values not previously taught (Maeroff,

1998; Noguera, 2003). The behaviors and values learned during these enriching social activities constitute social knowledge, which "is essential to gaining access to the mainstream. Isolation and poverty operate together to restrict opportunities for" children in need (Maeroff, 1998, p. 10).

The Impact of experience on cognitive skills and academic success.

Maeroff (1998) there are five protective factors that promote cognitive growth:

1) caring relationships, 2) high expectations and clear standards of behavior, 3) high quality activities, 4) opportunities to contribute, and 5) continuity of supports. However, before any of these factors can be addressed, children need to have their physical and emotional needs met: Poverty is an impediment to having these needs met. Children in poverty often lack basic needs such as housing, food, and physical safety. Emotional needs are frequently unmet, as parents are often overwhelmed with trying to secure the next place to sleep or the next meal for their children and are, therefore, unable to contribute to children's emotional needs. Children are held back from forming friends because they are afraid others will find out they are homeless or lacking in some of the basic resources that other children with homes have.

Social experiences that stimulate thinking and require communication and cooperation are necessary for cognitive development. These social experiences are foundational in the interchanging of ideas that are imperative for the development of social knowledge (Wadsworth, 2004). Social experiences exert actions on the brain by feeling back upon it to modify brain structure and function which is dependent upon stimulation from the environment for "meaning making" and active coping (Cicchetti, 2002). Public meaning is socially constructed knowledge achieved through experiences. This knowledge is achieved through social negotiation, mutual

verification, and agreement in judgments. This public knowledge is considered an objective realm and requires trust between individuals and their societies (Prawat, 2000). Through enriching social experiences, children make mental associations with what they learn away from the classroom that form foundational stones of knowledge which they can use to connect to what they learn from the books at school (Maeroff, 1998).

The human thought process is constructive by nature. Weisberg (1993), in his work about creativity, discussed the human process as one that is built on experiences. These experiences form knowledge, referred to as bricks, and all new knowledge is formed by analogical transfer from this previous knowledge as the bricks—loosened from their mortar--are moved around and reformed based on the new information. This analogical thinking is the retrieval of a potential solution based on analogous situations previously experienced. Then attempts are made to carry it out in the imagination. The "memory process works so that knowledge becomes applicable beyond the specific situation in which it was acquired" (Weisberg, 1993, p. 99). The partial overlap between other situations and the problem can stimulate retrieval. Thus, according to Weisberg, human thinking can go beyond past experience by building on the past rather than rejecting it.

Dewey's theory on knowledge supports Weisberg's concept. He stated that "an ideally perfect knowledge would represent such a network of interconnections that any past experience would offer a point of advantage from which to get at the problem presented in a new experience" (1921, p. 396). Thus, it is seen that the "foundation stones" or "bricks" gained from experiences interacting in communities are necessary for students to make connections to what they learn in the classroom.

Mentoring relationships.

Mentoring impacts the acquisition of social capital. "Social capital in the community exists in the interest, and even the intrusiveness, of one adult in the activities of others' children" (Coleman, 1988a, p.5). Interests include enforcement of norms, listening empathetically to problems children do not feel comfortable taking to parents about, volunteering for youth group leadership positions, or participating in other types of youth related activities, such as coaching sports activities, or youth group clubs.

A sense of connectedness to schools and communities is necessary for young people to develop social capital. One of the ways this can occur is through mentoring. These mentors can be significant others from extended families, schools, neighborhoods, or communities (Maeroff, 1998; Payne, 2001; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2003). Wherever mentors can be found, children need access to adults who have socially appropriate behaviors, nurturing adults, and adults who do not engage in self-destructive behaviors (Payne, 2001). Mentoring can also play a positive role in developing resiliency in children: Grandparents, older siblings, and unrelated adults can provide important supports to youth that will enable them to remain resilient when exposed to seriously stressful situations (Hirsch, Mickus, & Boerger, 2002; Sameroff, Peck, & Eccles, 2004).

Resiliency as one aspect of social capital.

Resiliency is the ability to overcome obstacles and hardships. It allows people to remain steady and bounce back regardless of adversity. Trueba defined resiliency as a "person's ability to define their identity in different ways in order to function effectively in different settings and cultural contexts" that enhance their ability to survive and be successful (2002, p.8). Resilient

people rely on strengths that are both internal and environmental (such as community resources and mentors) to overcome their adverse situations (Thomsen, 2002; Trueba, 2002). Ethnic minorities who have emigrated from other countries may have a mastery of different languages, an ability to cross racial and ethnic boundaries, and the necessary ability to endure hardships and overcome obstacles (2002). Many students not of the dominant culture have learned to be successful by adapting multiple personas and learning to "code switch." The cultural norms of the dominant culture are adopted and used in school, but the speech, dress, and larger identity which is personally embraced is expressed outside of school. The ability to "code switch" can be seen as one aspect of resiliency, which is also a form of cultural capital (Noguera, 2003).

The structural organization of the brain is shaped by input from the social environment. Children who play an active role in seeking and receiving experiences will function more resiliently by modifying or protecting brain anatomy through new experiences in areas where they have strengths. Appropriate and positive social experiences can serve as mediators of resilient adaptation (Cicchetti, 2002).

Networks

Socially interacting with others outside of individuals' immediate families allows for the establishment of networks. Parents who know other parents who have knowledge about effective teachers, how to apply to college, and information on financial aid have advantages that can aid their children in maneuvering through the academic system (Kao, 2004).

Crosnoe, Cavanagh, and Elder (2003) identify the concept of "social capital" in regards to viewing the attitudes and behaviors of youth, and how they link to academic functioning. By forming relationships with others, youth gain access to the resources [which include values,

information, and financial capital] from the others in the relationship. The authors argued that by entering into friendships with academically oriented peers, youth gain access to "a new pool of social psychological and instrumental resources" (2003, p. 333). Some of the resources peers might bring to a relationship include: (a) social support and modeling of pro-social behavior, emotional support to combat challenges; (b) friends' knowledge and skills related to schooling, exposure to larger academically oriented social networks; and, (c) other various forms of capital that the peers may have at home (2003). By using social capital as a basis for the conceptualizing of youths' friendships, both selection and socialization can be encompassed. However, it is not just the struggle with grades or test scores for many students, but rather the skills and resources to navigate the educational institutions that may be impeding their academic and social progress.

Students may be afraid to acquire new forms of social capital that require developing new identities and dispositions, but this could be necessary for students to experience educational success. To develop new identities that will allow for access to social capital, students may need to reject peers who do not value school and do the work. Students may also need to concertedly engage in study to acquire habits that will aid in academic success (Ecclestone, 2004).

Friendships exert psychological influence in peer relationships. Adolescents who increasingly associate with peers who exhibit deviant behaviors will, in turn, show an increase in conduct problems themselves. School is another context that impacts adolescent behaviors. Students who exhibit feelings of academic competence, valuing of school, and who attain higher grades are found to have less distress over time. However, school culture and a buying in or a "disenfranchisement" from the school context can make or break a child's education (Sameroff et al., 2004, p. 876). Students need to "feel involved in the educational process and feel that their learning is linked to their effort, as opposed to their traits," this is in contrast to "status-oriented

schools" that create feelings of detachment from the educational process where students feel they are "ascribed characteristics, such as race and gender" (2004, p. 876). Therefore, relationships between schools and students need to remain positive and reciprocal in order to develop networks that are useful to the student and educators.

Impact of Social Capital

Social Capital and Community

Social capital aids both families and schools in the education of children. Social capital can keep children from dropping out of school by creating a connection to the rest of the students' lives. Social capital can help create a sense of community, and connectedness, among families by forming networks among parents so they know each other and their families (Coleman, 1988a; Maeroff, 1998).

Knowledge of material and structural conditions of the educational system is important for parents and other people involved in children's lives. The material conditions refer to financial resources and the structural conditions refer to activities within educational programs. Children are socialized during the school day, and dependent on their families' knowledge of the educational system, certain forms of cultural and social capital are either offered or withheld. In order for all children to receive these forms of capital, understanding of the material and structural conditions of the educational system must be shared through a network that includes teachers, parents, and peers. Resources such as time, effort, materials, and psychological resources are often not equally distributed. People outside the mainstream culture—such as minorities, low-income families, immigrants, and those with disabilities are often kept out of the know (Ecclestone 2004; Kozol, 1991). Those who belong to networks that has access to

resources such as information channels have the ability to maneuver through the academic landscape (Kao, 2004).

Behaviors and Social Capital

Adherence to social norms rewards positive behavior and exacts punishments, or sanctions, for behaviors that are outside the norms. Students without knowledge of these social norms, which shape attitudes and behaviors, are at a disadvantage (Kao, 2004; Schuller et al., 2000). What is of value and what norms should be legitimized as being universal is based on the judgments of the dominant culture (Schuller et al., 2000). Knowledge of social norms is an important part of social capital.

Anyon (2005) argued that economic marginalization creates a constellation of problems ranging from dangerous neighborhoods, inferior housing, and lack of access to essential resources, and social stress—all of which shape children's behavior in a way that can impede their education. When the socio-economic status of families improves, and social and economic stress decreases, there is a demonstrable impact on children's behavior, achievement, and family stability. Programs that address poverty's impacts and focus on social and community supports increase social capital and facilitate educational success for children (2005).

Students need to have their physical needs met in order to learn and develop social capital. Student learning is obstructed when there are too many unmet non-academic needs: A lack of food, housing, or healthcare, can affect students' abilities to learn (Noguera, 2003). Also, social capital will increase if parents can find gainful employment and the family enjoys good health (Maeroff, 1998). The need for having these non-academic needs met before learning can take place is supported by Maslow's (1968) Hierarchy of Needs, which states that people's

physical and emotional needs must be met before they can begin to move up the pyramid to set goals and actualize those goals.

All of these elements act together to create a whole—or a lack of a whole—which impacts students' abilities to function in a school setting. Only those who live the experiences can fully understand the experiences. These students' perceptions, experiences, and insights need to be gained and reflected upon in order to create a better, more equitable learning environment that will promote school success for students from non-dominant cultures.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The resources and networks that are formed through social membership in groups, that are reciprocal in nature, and useful to individuals for navigating socially constructed institutions, are necessary for students—and their families—to navigate the educational system. The goal of this study is to determine what common obstacles, or supports, exist that withhold, or build up, the development of social capital for students from low-income families and non-dominant cultures.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The focus of this dissertation has evolved from observations, social interactions, and experiences of more than sixteen years of working with students who have learning disabilities, are from low-income families, or have recently immigrated to the United States. Educators, administrators, and bureaucrats have spoken for these students and their families as to why they struggle in school and are often unsuccessful in completing their education. However, only the students can give voice to their realities in education. This dissertation is based on an epistemological foundation of constructivism, which is a holistic view of how our interactions with others, and our environment, create meaning and form knowledge.

Vygotsky is the foundational theorist for social constructivism. Vygotsky's social constructivism contrasts to Piaget's developmental constructivism, in that--under social constructivism--reality is created through social interactions and language, while under developmental constructivism—individuals construct meaning through their environment in more egocentric stages. According to Vygotsky (1986), "Thought and speech turn out to be the

key to the nature of human consciousness. …Not only on particular thought but all consciousness is connected with the development of the word" (256).

Paradigm rationale.

. Lincoln and Guba (1985), define paradigm as a set of beliefs and methods for making judgments about what is reality. These beliefs encompass values of importance, legitimacy and reasonableness, and the methods used for research are qualified under the assumptions of these paradigms. The approach to this dissertation is based on Capra's (1982) description of a systems view paradigm, which views all people and their environments as interrelated and interacting with each other to create meaning. This is in keeping with Vygotsky's view that "all consciousness is connected with the development of the word" (1986, p. 256). In addition, Jung (1959) writes of this social interconnectedness with his use of the archetype of the collective unconscious. Jung states that we have a superficial layer of unconsciousness, which rests upon a deeper layer not derived from personal experience or acquisition that is inborn. The deeper layer is called the collective unconscious because it is universal and not individual. Jung (1959) states:

> In contrast to the personal psyche, [the collective unconscious] has contents and modes of behavior that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is…identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us. (p. 287).

This holistic paradigm, as identified by Capra (1982), is dynamic, constructive, and ever-changing based on interactions between people and people with their environments—it opposes the previous positivistic paradigm of fundamental parts that function on their own without need of others and in an isolated context of one repetitive answer. Capra (1982) writes:

The universe is seen as a dynamic web of interrelated events. None of the properties of any part of this web is fundamental; they all follow from the properties of the other parts, and the overall consistency of their interrelations determines the structure of the entire web. (p. 93).

Unfortunately, within the current education system of quantifiable values, many students are excluded from access to community and social resources. This exclusion can be devastating to the fabric of the collective unconscious in ways that may not be recognized for many years to come. In order to draw in the experiences, feelings, and needs of excluded students, one way of approaching research is through naturalistic inquiry, which is part of qualitative research.

Qualitative research.

Naturalistic inquiry is a qualitative approach to research. This type of inquiry, as stated by Lincoln & Guba (1985), is based on five widely accepted principles: (a) "realities are multiple, constructed, and holistic;" (b) "knower and know are interactive, inseparable;" (c) generalizations are bound by time and context; (d) "all entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping;" and (d) "inquiry is value-bound" (p. 37). Within this research model, there are different ways to collect data. A qualitative approach of collective/multiple case studies will be used for this project. The goal is to give voice to what students and their parents have to say about education. What are their concerns? What resources do they rely on to successfully navigate the educational system? What do they see as obstacles in achieving academic success? Only by holding interviews that allow participants to tell their stories can it be determined whether or not students and parents from low-income families and non-dominant cultures experience difficulties in developing social capital, which is necessary for school success.

Qualitative research is an inductive method in which generalizations are made about social phenomena that allow for predictions by providing causal explanations based on input from a small population, which is then applied to a larger population. As stated by Glesne (2006), "Qualitative research methods are used to understand some social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved, to contextualize issues in their particular socio-cultural-political milieu, and sometimes to transform or change social conditions" (p. 4). These interviews will be the first step in changing social conditions that allow for isolation and oppression of downtrodden groups of people. Once the interviews are completed, the transcriptions will be used to identify themes and create narratives that will aide in contextually voicing previously unheard stories that participants share in relation to the development of social capital.

Research Design

This study is based on the qualitative paradigm of naturalistic inquiry, which is a type of constructivist paradigm. The method of data collection used was a multiple case study approach based on life histories of informants about their educational experiences, as given orally. The following chart (Figure 1) compares and contrasts the gathering of data for both a quantitative survey approach and a life history/interview approach taken from P. Thompson's essay on life history methodology (1981) (unless otherwise noted by citation):

Figure 1. Compare/Contrast of Quantitative vs. Qualitative Research

Quantitative Survey/Research	Life History/Oral Interview
Questions are determined by hypothesis at the beginning of inquiry.	Hypothesis if formed after data is gathered and based on informants' life stories.
Fluidity of the hypothesis is "immobilized by any discovery important enough to challenge its own terms" (p.294).	Method is exploration and questioning combined "within a context of a dialogue with the informant" (p.294), which allows the researcher to also learn the unexpected.
Mass survey responses about informants' lives are reduced to "ticking and circling the pre-ordained categories of a printed schedule" (p.	Information is given through a framework determined by the view of informants' lives, not by the researcher's biases or determined

291).	designs.
The researcher's own preconceptions determine the questions used and the development of a hypothesis before gathering data.	Stories/data gathered from informants may show our own preconceptions to be false.
An instrument for measuring features relevant to a research project that tries to give unbiased results of data that are direct reproductions of the reality being studied (Kohli, 1981).	Data is not viewed as features of recalled objects but, rather, a production process that allows for social production of everyday meanings (Kohli, 1981).
"Values context-free laws and generalized explanations" (Riessman, 1993, p. 5) that do not support or trust subjectivity.	The subjectivity of informants and their context create a "rootedness in time, place, and personal experience" (Riessman, 1993, p. 5) that is valued.

An effective way that people can truly understand the needs of students from non-dominant cultures who are struggling in schools is through hearing from them, in their own words, about their educational experiences and history. Thompson (1981) writes:

> The life history method at least make us confront the violence that can be done to other people's consciousness by imposing our own terms on it: and it also allows us a partial solution to this problem, through the juxtaposition of our informants' stories with our own interpretations, so that the evidence can still be read in their way as well as ours, when the work is written up (p. 293).

Much has been written from the perspective of teachers and administrators on why some groups of students are failing and what should be done—along with a mass of data from high stakes tests given during the school year at specific times--but not enough has been done to glean the actual stories from the students who, themselves, struggle in school.

Case study approach.

Case studies allow individuals' stories to be heard from their own perspectives. In the case of students who struggle in school, and who come from non-dominant cultures—too often their social identities and expectations have been conferred upon them by others, such as

teachers, administrators, and those in adjunct education positions that service students. In allowing students to participate in autobiographical constructions of their realities, they can share the aspects of the "past which are relevant to the present situation…in terms of the intentions by which [they] guide [their] present actions" (Kohli, 1981, p. 65). This does not include all past events of participants lives, but—rather—it includes structured self-images that aid individuals in developing notions of identity (Kohli, 1981). Dobert, Habermas, & Nunner-Winkler (1977) define identity as "the symbolic structure that makes it possible, for a personality system, to secure continuity and consistency across the changing biographical states and across the different positions in social space (p.9). It can be ascertained by this quote that each individual has a personal identity and a social identity. Neither identity is static or without growth. New events are not added as they occur. Rather, as individuals interact socially, past events are continuously restructured within a framework of contingencies based on present situations (Fischer, 1978). However, for students from non-dominant cultures, navigating the social spaces of school systems can be exceptionally difficult.

In developing identities, individuals create their own autobiographical themes through internal cognitive processes. When interacting with others socially, other social participants will look for information to "base their expectations of … individual[s'] future actions" (Kohli, 1981, p. 65). The problem remains that the information other social participants glean from individuals' social identities may not be accurate or helpful in understanding the needs of these individuals to aid them in school success. As Kohli (1981) writes, what may have once been valid, may not be what is valid for individuals now.

Collective case studies.

When approaching research in a case study approach, the researcher is interested in understanding how the participants function in the context being studied. This is done by researchers putting aside presumptions and recognizing biases, as to not interfere with the stories being shared by participants (Stake, 1995). In collective case studies, multiple participants—in this study between three to five participants--are interviewed, observed, and participate in constructing realities that bring to light the issues being explored. Issues that present themselves across the case studies that aid in refining generalizations inherent in the inductive method of case studies can be used to develop generalized themes. Once these themes are identified, they may inductively apply to others in similar situations. Based on what is brought to light through participants stories, possible solutions can be developed—or—at the very least—insights and understanding shared.

When working case studies, variables are not identified, nor instruments developed before entering the field. Rather, researchers—who are also interpreters—observe the "working of the cases[s], …records objectively what is happening but simultaneously exams its meaning and redirects observation[s] to refine or substantiate those meanings" (Stake, 1995, p. 9). Progressive focusing allows for modifying research questions as data is gathered from participants. A thorough understanding is the goal when interacting with participants, and if questions formed earlier in the study are not working, due to new issues arising, then new questions must be formed and the focus changed to truly gain that understanding (Stake, 1995).

Participants.

Participants were located through informal resources—other educators who had previously worked with students fitting the criteria and remained in contact. Of the three young men that participated, two were from one particular educator and the other one was referred by a participant. All three participants attended different districts within a large suburban area, and one of the three initially attended school in Texas. Once names were submitted to me, I contacted them to give them an overview of the study and what it would entail for them. I had received a total of seven names. Three of the referrals I was unable to reach, one I spoke with—but he chose not to participant, and the other three chose to participate. Upon the first interview meetings, which were conducted in public places chosen by the participants, the participants were given the forms for participating and took time to read and ask questions before initialing and signing an assent.

All three participants attended high school in a major urban city in Michigan. Caesar, now 22 years of age, transferred from Texas as a 9th grader, due to living situations. He is currently attending a local community college, after failing to successfully transition to the college he was recruited to play sports at directly after high school.

Van is 23 years old, while he attended high school in the area; he has been back and forth between here and Georgia, where he currently has friends and a job. Duane, also 23 years of age, has been recently attending a local community college to develop skills and gain transferable credits, so he can return to a university and continue playing sports. He has family here in Michigan, but his parents recently relocated to Alabama, where he hopes to move also.

Data collection.

An initial interview was conducted, with a shorter follow up interview to ask clarifying questions about what was shared. Interviews were recorded and transcribed using pseudonyms. All documentation with their real names is kept in a locked file cabinet, along with all the transcriptions. Participants were prompted with open ended questions—such as tell me about your favorite class in high school, or in what areas do you feel you struggled the most? Based on the responses, clarifying questions were developed and asked. If it appeared that a participant was uneasy about a line of questioning, a transition was made to a more comfortable topic before continuing.

Interviewing those whose lives are impacted by the phenomena is necessary to gain an understanding of the lived stories participants have to share. Researchers are responsible for helping participants explore their responses to questions that aid in their reflection and reconstructs of experiences within the topic being studied (Seidman, 2006). These life histories can provide new perspectives, evidence, and interpretations "from previously ill-represented standpoints of ordinary men, women and children about what they believe…matter[s] most in their lives" (Thompson, 1981, p. 290). The context of participants' lives gives their experiences meaning, and this is established during the first interview (Seidman, 2006).

As stated by Thompson (1981), questions cannot be precisely formed for case-study/life history interviews. Researchers must be open to developing new questions, allowing for sharpening and shifting of the focus during the inquiry proceedings. This allows for a continued process of testing and reformulation of the hypothesis, with the first findings leading to new

theories and new questions—"reaching eventually toward a sociology which is both theoretically alive and substantially grounded in social reality" (1981, p. 294).

At the end of the interview process, participants were asked to reflect on the meanings of their experiences and to ask any questions they might have or to give any additional input they might want to share.

Interview process.

The interview process is not simply for gathering data but, also, "a process of realities construction to which both parties [researcher and informant] contribute and who are both affected by it" (Woods, 1992, p. 372). It is the responsibility of researchers to actively listen, acknowledge informants' feelings and statements, and reflect on how the interviews have affected the researcher's thoughts and perspectives (Woods, 1992). The interview process was a hermeneutic model of active subjects—both the informant and the researcher—constructing meaning in the production of the record of field work (verbatim and observations) (Atkinson, 1992; Dwyer, 1982). In this type of model, social actors (informants) are allowed to share their stories using their own words (Atkinson, 1992). The verbatim data is transferred into representative language through the use of textual conventions. The translation of informants' narratives is necessary for readability and accessibility for those who will read their stories (1992).

A hermeneutics standpoint accepts and acknowledges the prejudices or prejudgments that people have as conditions of circumstances of time and place (Kimball & Garrison, 1999; Riessman, 1993). The conditioning cannot be eliminated to become truly objective when carrying out qualitative research or simply interacting with others. People's value and belief

systems are necessary for making daily decisions. However, by examining these "historically inherited and unreflectively held prejudices (Kimball & Garrison, 1999, p. 18)," people can free themselves of those prejudices that hinder abilities to understand others (1999). Recognition of differences is vital to achieving new understandings from others whose experiences and perspectives are different than researchers, educators, and those seeking new understandings from individuals outside the dominant cultures. Recognition of these different experiences creates a disequilibration that aids in the recognition of prejudices and their alternatives. It is by bringing these differences to light and openly exploring them that new understanding of selves and others can be made (1999). The meaning that emerges from spoken or written language through a process of social interaction is not fixed, but—rather—fluid and shifting, as consciousness changes the meanings of experiences (Atkinson, 1992; Riessman, 1993). "Meaning is not static, but processual and emergent out of interaction between the speaker and hearer… (Atkinson, 1992, p. 38). This is the hermeneutic approach to the construction of meaning: rather than looking at the differences between people as barriers, this approach views them as bridges.

While the interview process should be dialogic, there can be difficulty avoiding an interrogative, versus conversational collection of data from informants. This is due to the subjectivity necessitated in structuring interview prompts. Dwyer (1982) writes:

The anthropologist singles out "events" and poses questions; the informant answers, embellishes, digresses, evades. The anthropologist, in part for reasons and in a manner reflecting his own society's concerns, is pushed to impose form upon his experience, and his questions provide a skeleton designed to provoke the informant to respond: the

informant's responses add flesh to this frame and dress it, often in unexpected ways (p. xvii).

This state of interrogation can be mediated through the use of more open ended prompts, such as "tell me about…" and "how did that make you feel…," which can then allow researchers to pick up on strands of thoughts brought forth by informants.

Participant protection and confidentiality.

Subjects were informed orally and in writing of the voluntary nature of participation and, also, were assured of anonymity (participants were assigned pseudonyms) and no negative consequences for participating in the study. Students were given an overview of the purpose of the study included in the behavioral consent form and allowed to ask questions about the study and its purpose.

Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. All recordings will be destroyed after they after the final defense and saved on hardcopy with the coded names only. A separate list of names along with the pseudonyms will be kept in a separate place from the recordings until the recordings are destroyed. Only pseudonyms will be used in the study

While there are no direct anticipated benefits for participants in the study, participants were given the opportunity to discuss their experiences and their perspectives of the current educational system. Students will have the opportunity to have their voices heard.

The study may benefit future students and their families by bringing attention to the supports and obstacles that low-income families encounter in school. Educators can work to develop the means to bridge the gap between the resources available to these families and the resources needed by these families. This is the beginning step to advocating for change that will be effective in helping to make education equitable for all children.

Trustworthiness

Approaching this study from a naturalistic perspective, trustworthiness in the study is based on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria appropriate to the naturalistic paradigm. They are as follows: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. Credibility is cognizant of multiple realities that exist among humans based on their mental constructions. There is no one reality to be used as justification when dealing with humans, as there is in the experimental designs of the quantitatively minded. Rather, it is necessary to carry out an inquiry in a manner that will prove credible, so that the participants will approve the findings constructed from their realities. The second aspect is applicability. It allows for the transferability of the findings from a small group of participants, set in a specific time and context, to be inferred to other like groups of people in similar times and contexts. The third aspect is dependability. Recognizing that a naturalistic study of people within their context, constructing their realities, is not without flaws, Lincoln and Guba (1985) write on the topic:

> Humans do become careless; there is 'instrumental decay' such as fatigue; the human mind is tentative and groping and it makes mistakes. But the naturalist is not willing to have charged off to his or her "unreliability" changes that occur because of changes in the entity being studied …or because of changes in the emergent design as insights grow and working hypotheses appear (p. 299).

Therefore, the factors of instability, phenomenal, and induced design changes need to be expected in the study.

Another way to increase validity and aid in dependability is to include three structures in the interviewing process. The first is placing participants' responses in context, which provides for a thick description, including clarifying the history and culture of informants contextually for

the reader (Gee, Michaels, & O'Connor, 1992; Seidman, 2006). The context consists of social situations, place/setting, participants in the setting, and activities taking place. The second interview structure is allowing time between multiple interviews for off days, and to allow participants to reflect internally on the consistency of what is said. In order for participants to thoroughly reflect on their experiences and what they have shared, interviews should be anywhere from three days to one week apart (Seidman, 2006). In addition, connections of participants' experiences can be linked together to check for consistencies--or inconsistencies— remembering that the goal is to view how these participants make meaning of their experiences (2006).

To maintain dependability, corroboration between inquirers and the participants to identify thematic elements from their individual stories will be vital. Member checks are an important way to increase validity of interpretations and thematic elements. All informants were given the opportunity to review their transcripts before publication to check for agreements on verbatim materials, thematic interpretations, and meaning of experiences, which adds to trustworthiness (Gee et.al., 1992; Riessman, 1993). However, there may not always be agreement on interpretations, which makes it vital for researchers to distinguish between their views and the views of their informants, and in the final analysis—researchers take responsibility for the truths of their work (Riessman, 1993). Last, to produce confirmability, all thematic elements used to build a hypothesis were derived from participants' produced data—not inquirers characteristics, views, or biases. The findings developed from the data are based on key themes that resonate across these individuals' lives and geographical areas.

Member checking.

After transcriptions, and re-transcriptions, of the interviews, narrative were formed from the developed themes. In addition to the field notes taken during the interviews, transcriptions were sent out for member checking. There were four contributors to the member checking process. All contributors are in some way involved in education of adolescents. This member checking was used for feedback corroborate areas of accuracy and interpretation. Member checking as a process used throughout case studies allows others in the field of study to make suggestions as to what sources of data may be helpful—in addition to interpretations and critical observations that can aid in maintaining validity (1995). Member checking produced the following input:

Figure 2. Member Checking Table on Sub-Domains

Member	Participant Name	Sub-Domain	Thematic Elements Identified
A	Van	Obstacle	Geometry teacher provided no direct instruction. Was allowed to skip class without notification to parent.
		Support	Had an English teacher who made the effort to make the subject interesting and accommodated struggling students.
	Caesar	Obstacle	Math teacher lectured and did not differentiate instruction. Socializing led to slacking off.
		Support	Athletics provided an incentive to earn good grades. Personal relationships with coaches provided fatherly leadership. Accountability at home for school work.
	Duane	Obstacle	Easy to procrastinate in college—no one to help and no one to be accountable to. No academic help from coaches.

		Support	Participation in sports was an incentive to get good grades. Mandatory tutoring sessions in study groups helped with his Biology class.
B	Van	Obstacle	Pushed through school without understanding the content of failed classes. Lack of communication between math teacher and parent led to truancy.
		Support	Good English teacher who cared whether he failed and tried to make class interesting. Vivian Thomas program sounds good but not sure about the curriculum: mentoring, portfolio, and community service are worthwhile, but how did they get credit for classes they didn't do the work for.
	Caesar	Obstacle	In Texas, advantages given to athletes were not equitable or helpful long term. Absentee parents.
		Support	Sports as an incentive to maintain passing grades. Advantage of tutors. Amazing coach who was his mentor and father figure.
	Duane	Obstacle	He needed more hand on kind of learning to be successful. College Dean and Music Appreciation treated him unfairly by failing him because of one missed test.
		Support	Has both parents at home who were helpful and encouraging.
C	Van	Obstacle	Pushed on through school whether or not he pass the classes. His 9th grade math teacher didn't care whether he showed up to class or not.
		Support	He was an awesome athlete and was known by the older

			team mates gaining a reputation as "the man." Was able to excel in the Vivian Thomas program.
	Caesar	Obstacle	Teachers handed out worksheets and the lecturing made it difficult to understand concepts—particularly in math.
		Support	Being an athlete provided him with tutoring and mentoring by his coaches to maintain passing grades. Chemistry teacher actively demonstrated hands-on learning for students.
	Duane	Obstacle	College Biology teacher did not provide individualized learning.
		Support	Playing sports pushed him to get good grades. High school Biology teacher gave small group and one-on-one instruction.
D	Van	Obstacle	He felt that many of his teachers didn't really teach him, but he was pushed through anyway.
		Support	Ms. H found a way to reach the students. Vivian Thomas program save his life.
	Duane	Obstacle	Felt his teachers didn't want to be there.
		Support	Sports gave him something to look forward to every day.

Instrumentation.

In order to truly gain a socio-cultural understanding of informants' viewpoints, interviewers should "flow with the informant's style of talk and organization of knowledge without imposing preconceived agendas in the interview interaction" (Spindler & Spindler, 1992,

p. 74). This emic knowledge, or native cultural knowledge, is known only to members of cultural groups, and even then—it may only be implicitly, or ambiguously, known to members. The goal is to make this knowledge available to readers, so they man have greater understanding of informants' perspectives (Spindler & Spindler, 1992). Thus, for this study, open-ended questions will be based on broad areas that comprise social capital in addition to their school experiences, such as educational activities outside of school, having a mentor, traveling outside of their community, and making use of various community resources such as the public library and recreation programs. Also, broad, open-ended questions that address academic experiences allowed for participants to express their reasons for struggling in school. Follow up questions were formulated based on responses by participants. Participants' responses were then analyzed and compared to literature on the topic of social capital, its impact on students' education, and teachers/administrators perceptions on why students drop-out and struggle in school to determine common obstacles and what resources they are lacking. The perspectives of these participants give educators a better understanding of why many low-income students from non-dominant cultures have difficulties in school.

Opening prompts.

The following open-ended questions were used to begin participation in the interview process. Semi-structured questions were formulated from the responses of participants and used in a follow-up interview:

Tell me about your high school experience.

Tell me about any struggles you may have had in school?

What do you feel is needed to be successful in completing high school?

What do you think needs to happen for students to stay in school?

Who do you identify with and hang-out with at school?

In what ways do you feel teachers and administrators supported you with your educational needs?

Tell me about an adult in your life that has helped you with school or in social situations?

Tell me about your strengths.

Tell me about your weaknesses.

In addition, questions prompting responses that address social capital building experiences will be addressed: A check list that will be used as a prompt is located in the appendices section, along with a list of both student and parent instrumentation questions to be used as guidelines for interviews. (See appendix C)

Data Analysis

One roll of being a researcher is that of interpreter. Recognizing a problem, studying it out, and connecting it to what is already known aids researchers in recognizing and substantiating new meanings (Stake, 1995). After analyzing the descriptive data and identifying common themes among the case studies, existing theories can be used to structure interpretations—along with exploring alternative means of presenting data—such as narratives, which will draw the readers into the actors' (participants') stories (Glesne, 2006).

During analysis, the sense of exploration and mutual understanding should be preserved (Dwyer, 1982). While there will be some transformation of data into textual formatting, allowing ease of access to informants' stories, meaning and culture derived from data is to be constructed

by readers—not for readers (Atkinson, 1992). As stated by Atkinson (1992), "…Radical questioning of certainty and authority of the scholarly text; a rejection of the search for 'truth' and reason as absolutes; a denial of the intellectual and moral distance between the academic and his or her human subjects…" (p. 38) are what allow for construction of new meanings and the sharing of new perspectives. What is referred to as fragmented (bricolage) text, a more diverse and open representation of data that repudiates closure and certainty as used previously in more formal methods of research, can be formed more readily through a dialogic approach (Atkinson, 1992). Fragmented texts avoid trying to capture cultures through the perspective of a single point of view. Atkinson refers to fragmented text formed by informants' stories as "bricolage" or the fragments of crafted data (1992, p. 41). The literary text becomes an assembled collage. Any interpretative comments within the text should be viewed as another textual fragment dropped in—just one more piece of the collage (1992).

The hermeneutic process of using fragments of data from informants' stories to create new meaning is seen in Dwyer's (1982) dialogic work in Morocco. The Self (researcher) confronts the Other (informant) in trying to discover an idealized conjuncture of two different worlds and their perspectives: this consists of dialogues between researchers and informants. Following this method, researchers insist on giving voice to participants/informants—refusing a product based on one dominant voice (Dwyer, 1982). There can be no illusion of an objective self. Participation between researchers and informants inevitably locate "the self culturally as the 'outsider' intruding on the other's terrain, and historically as a representative of a society that has a prior history of intrusion" (1982, p. 274). When trying to make sense of experiences, people's values and viewpoints, contextualized by the distribution of power in social groups, create a lens through which meaning is created (Gee et al., 1992) Thus, it becomes expedient for researchers

to recognize the prejudices and preconditioning inherent in a hegemonic society in order to examine their own positions based on new information provided by their informants (1982).

In regards to hegemony for the purposes of this project, a hegemonic state exists when "the worldview of the dominant state maintains control through the socializing activity of institutions (De Marrais & Le Compte, 1999, p. 29). Those with power control the value and belief systems that education is based on. As stated by Bruner (1996), "Institutions impose their "will" through coercion…" (p. 29). These institutions specify the roles people play and the respect and status that each is accorded based on culture (Bruner, 1996). These inclusive and exclusive apparatus include precedents and ways of thinking and talking (1996). Schools are set up to demonstrate knowledge in certain ways to create distinction among individuals that allow for privileges. However, those without access to these precedents and ways of thinking and talking and performing—such as on high stakes testing—are then excluded from these privileges (1996). These value and belief systems dictated by bureaucratic society members are embedded within the schools' curriculum and act as an exclusionary device against those of non-dominant cultures (Gee et al., 1992). Therefore, it is necessary for researchers and informant to "transcend their differences" (Dwyer, 1982, p. 276), while becoming transparent to each other (Dwyer, 1982). When analyzing data from interviews, prejudices, prior conditioning, and the dominant culture values and belief systems were compared to the data produced by informants from non-dominant cultures in order to more clearly construct meaning relevant to those who are under-represented in society and the educational system.

For this study, collected data such as interviews, observation/field notes, memos, artifacts, notes from relevant literature, and other documents were divided and placed together in like piles. These piles were then coded based on the type of data and descriptive material they

represent (Glesne, 2006). The codes (thematic relationship) are flexible, as with the arrangement of the piles, to allow for fluidity and input of new themes and information. Each major code identifies a central idea or concept, with the coding scheme maintained in a personal code book (2006).

Narratives

Story telling in the form of narratives is how humans create order from events, actions, and crisis. It defines who people are and why they act in certain ways. These stories can form narratives that have points that aid in understanding of human actions in certain situations, add new information that constructs new knowledge, and can possibly be generalized to others' lives. When researchers explore phenomena through creating discourse with others, more thorough understandings of *why* can be achieved. However, for researchers who are conducting interviews and discoursing with informants, it is vital to know that interpreting narrative text must not efface narrators' words or meanings (Riessman, 1993). Narratives are interpretive frameworks created to further unpack discourse, not to detract from the intent of the speakers (1993).

Narratives should represent narrators' "quality of mind…[which] is the soul of narrative" (Scholes & Kellogg, 1966, p. 239). Quality of mind is "transmitted through the language of characterization, motivation, description and commentary" (1966, p. 239). Quality of mind is achieved by maintaining the integrity of informants' words and the point they are trying to achieve, or what they want readers to take away from the text. Narratives have story components: a) an abstract, b) the orientation or setting, c) the complicated action, which is also known as the catalyst, crisis, or problem informants are speaking about, d) a non-narrative evaluation, which is the point of why the story is being told, e) a resolution, and f) the coda or

end (Gee et al., 1992; Labov, 1972). The narrative clauses which constitute the text comprise the complicating action—problem or crisis—which is the narrative (Misher, 1986).

Elements of narratives.

The abstract of narratives usually consists of one or two clauses that summarize the whole of stories and encapsulates their point for being told (Labov, 1972). The setting of stories orients readers to the place, time, person, and situations or activities being addressed in the text (1972). Once the interviews are held, and transcriptions completed, narratives require a systematic reduction of data to a core narrative, which allows for comparisons with other narratives and with what is currently know about the subject from relevant literature (Riessman, 1993). To achieve cored narratives, utterances are parsed into numbered clauses based on the identification of where in the narrative thy fit in order to function most effectively (1993). Functions include orienting readers, carrying actions, or resolving actions. Parts that detract from the core narrative are deleted, which may include asides between speakers, listeners, or elaborated non-essential descriptions. Other speech features that can aid in meaning are represented by commas for pauses and numbers for seconds in parenthesis for long pauses (1993).

Once data are reduced to core narrative material, clauses are formed and numbered. There are four types of clauses: a) narrative clauses that form the core of narratives, b) free clauses that can be moved anywhere in the text without changing the core meaning or point of the narrative, c) coordinating clauses, and d) restricted clauses (Mishler, 1986). When writing narratives, researchers must determine the types of clauses within transcribed data. Narrative clauses are the meat of the narrative and fixed in their positions. They cannot be moved without causing changes in semantics. A free clause can be relocated throughout the narrative sequence

without changing any semantics. Coordinating clauses serving the same functions can be moved around without impacting the temporal aspect of narratives. Last, restricted clauses can be displaced in either the earlier part of narratives or the latter—but not both—as they have a restricted range regarding the maintenance of temporal (time) meaning (1986). By identifying and knowing the use of each types of clause, narrators can analyze the data without effacing the meaning of speakers' words.

Stanzas are created from the clauses that have been identified and deemed necessary for core narratives. Stanzas are "the building blocks of the narrative, groups of lines said together about a single topic, a vignette, in the form of a stanza" (Riessman, 1993, p. 51). Stanzas are developed based on a particular perspective, event, claim, action, or the changing of functional information (Gee et al., 1992). The basic element in constructing narratives from data is the use of thematic organization (1992). This identification of ideas, concepts, words and similar events, which are of high interest, or viewed representations by narrators, form thematic concepts on which stanzas are created (1992).

The plot of narratives is the "skeleton which, fleshed out with character and incident, provides necessary clay into which life may be breathed (Scholes & Kellogg, 1960, p. 239). Plot is a sequencing of events in informants' lives (Riessman, 1993). However, when attention is drawn to the differences from the mainstream, or conventional, catalysts may be identified, allowing for causal narratives to form (1993). Causal sequences can be identified as turning points, for this study, as effects students' lives—determining success or failure in school.

The evaluation of discourse is what makes the story tellable and can be based on narrators' reflections or asides—whether implicitly or explicitly stated (Gee et al., 1992; Labov, 1972; Riessman, 1993). Evaluation is the reason for telling a story or the point narrators are

trying to get across. The resolution, much the same as literature—unfolds how the problem is resolved. Due to the nature of some ongoing problems, narratives will not always contain resolutions. However, narratives will always have a coda or end. Codas signify the end of speakers' turns to talk or that thoughts have been completed (Labov, 1976). Codas mark the end of sequences of long series of sentences (1976). Codas should leave readers feeling satisfied and complete that "matters have been rounded off and accounted for" (1976, p. 366). Codas also represent the literary devise that returns the social actors, and readers, back to the present situation (Mishler, 1986).

Interpretation of narratives.

Language is fluid, and interpretation is dependent on how it is used and in what ways. Observing speakers helps reduce the ambiguity of language. Also, collaboration between speakers and listeners creates the best opportunities for real meaning to be constructed. When analyzing and interpreting informants' data, researchers control the selection of discourse to be featured in the narrative (Riessman, 1993). Analysis needs to maintain the integrity of the intent behind informants' words and leave interpretations open for readers (1993). In the analyzing process, narratives "talk is 'cleaned up' of disfluencies to render it easily readable" (1993, p. 31). Narrative is used to unpack the underlying content and construct new meaning; thus, interpreting narratives (1993).

Interpretation of informants' data is not arbitrary, but—rather—it is based on humans' need for sense-making of contrasting themes in their lives, that are symbolized concretely within narratives, which humans seek resolution for (Gee et al., 1992). Gee et al. writes, "The meaning of a text flows from a combination of the words and structural organization of the text together with the inferences hearers draw based on their knowledge of the speaker and the context (1992,

p. 248). Researchers are responsible to make sure that the integrity of the speakers words remain intact and that speakers are represented in a trustworthy manner.

One way of insuring this during the interpretive process is through the structural aspects of speakers' languages. The conjunctions, ellipses, and repeated words and phrases can aid in the cohesion of text for readers. These devices form threads linking the text together. Speakers use contextual cues to signal readers how speakers want to be viewed and how they view themselves and their world (1992). The rhythmical organization of the text is based on the rise and fall of speaker's pitches, whether they speed up or slow down, and the places where there are pauses and hesitations (Gee et al., 1992; Riessman, 1993). These linguistic devices signal expressions of speakers' viewpoints, attitudes, and a deeper sense of meaning they want to convey (1992; 1993). Researchers use these signals to aid in the construction and interpretation of narratives; thus, maintaining trustworthiness, coherency, and accurate evaluation allowing informants to share their stories. structural aspects of informants' "sentence grammar are used in text building and textual sensemaking" (Gee et al., 1992, p. 251) when analyzing discourses. The lines and stanzas of narratives are linked through cohesion (1992). Linguistic devices such as

CHAPTER 4

Participants' Experiences and Perceptions of School Success

Thematic Elements

Within the domain of school success, and the subdomains of obstacles and supports, 5 shared common themes emerged from all three participants regarding school success: sports, reputation, instruction, transitioning, and mentoring. Of the five thematic elements, three consisted of elements that acted as both obstacles and supports—sports, reputation, and instruction, while the lack of transitioning skills acted as an obstacle and mentoring remained a supportive element. The overriding theme that links all five elements is sports. Participants demonstrated a relationship between their ability to play sports and the other four themes (see Figure 3).

Figure 3.

In this chapter, participants' experiences and perceptions on how these elements impacted their education will be shared; first, with an introduction to the thematic element and its impact—obstacle or support—followed by a narrative based on Bell/Labov's style of narrative reporting. Next, a poetic narrative will end each thematic section based on a combination of all three participants input; and last, there will be a culminating poetic narrative based on the Gee/Riessman narrative style. The formatted narratives allow for participants' stories to be told in their own words.

Caesar.

Caesar is a young man, 22 years of age, who moved to Michigan to live with his aunts the summer before his sophomore year in high school. He had previously lived with another aunt in Texas, as he "never like been with his parents" and he doesn't know his father. Caesar stated that he was "one of the top athletes every year…[playing] football, basketball and" running track. He feels that is his life, and was his life, when he was in high school and then in college. However, he feels that being an athlete is more valued in Texas than in Michigan, and while he still got a great deal of attention as an athlete in Michigan, it was not as much as when he was in Texas. Caesar shared that he received "a lot of special attention" as an athlete—regarding his instruction: his coach interceded on his behalf to get additional services such as tutoring and one-on-one instruction when his grades began to drop. Caesar related his school success to his motivation to play sports, and when he was ineligible to play, he lost the motivation to continue his education.

Caesar stated that he was a "little guy" playing with the "big guys." He felt popular with the other students, girls included, and let himself get distracted by many of those people—letting

himself get "big-headed." Upon self-reflection, he stated that if he could do it all over, he would have "did it different."

Caesar had difficulty transitioning from Texas, where he was already a top athlete and "when your athletes [in Texas] the arm is extended out way more than just being a normal student." He had high grades in Texas, but they had not prepared him for the more independent academic programs here in Michigan. However, after receiving recognition as a top athlete in Michigan, he began to get the academic support he needed to keep his grades high enough to continue to play. Yet, when he left high school, after being recruited by a local college to play sports, he was unable to maintain an independent level of academic study; thus causing him not to make a successful transition.

The instructional pieces for all three participants, as with Caesar, include observations on both supportive instruction and instruction that resulted in obstacles to their education. For Caesar, math was the biggest struggle for him. Due to his struggles with math, that was the subject he failed. Duane considered that "some people have that block" and can be a "genius at one subject, but the next subject struggle at." Teachers that expected him to learn by listening to lectures and leaving him to complete the work added to his academic frustration, while those who found more diverse ways of teaching aided in his school success.

The mentoring for all participants proved to be a support for them with school. Caesar, having never lived with his parents, lives with an aunt who is a teacher. In fact, two of his aunts are teachers, which he credits with giving him educational support. However, he also believes that his high school coach played the greatest role of mentor in his life—supplying him with equipment and accessories to play sports and coming to his aid when he was in trouble.

Duane.

Duane is a 23 year old who believed that "sports always play a good part in [his] education." Duane explains that he "did sports his whole life." His coach in Michigan also coached his brothers before him, so Duane knew the coach. He originally had difficulty his freshman year with the JV basketball coach, as he states that the JV coach was actually their janitor. Duane felt that particular coach did not "see talent like [him]," so the varsity coach interceded on his behalf to get him back on the team. After the first year, he was moved to varsity, but in football, he started on the varsity team as a freshman. In high school, Duane related that all of his coaches were involved with his academics and interceded to get him the special services needed to pass and remain on the team. However, when he transferred to a college after high school, where he had a sports scholarship, the coaches did not have the same concerns—nor did they aid him in his academics. Duane came from a two parent family with older brothers and sisters. While he stated it was hard to balance sports with education, he felt "you really hatta balance between the two."

As with Caesar, Duane was also recruited to play sports after high school; this time at a private university in Texas. However, the pace of learning was much faster, with an emphasis on students working and learning independently, and the coaches were not involved with students' academics, as they were in high school. The college coaches were involved in the sports side of students' lives, but not the academic, so when the coaches found out that Duane had become ineligible—"everybody is like…shocked." Duane felt like he "never had nobody helping me." In addition, due to the amount of instructional support received in high school, in contrast to what he received in college, he believed that what he did in the classroom would be enough to get him by, and he thought it was "easy, so [he] didn't make it his top concern." Thus,

he was shocked when, "at the end of the day, when finals…final grade came out…[he] had an 'F'." Duane also believed that his coaches should have interceded with the Dean to overturn his grade—much like high school—but that did not happen.

Duane also struggled in math the most. When the math teacher would go over it in class, he could follow with a study guide, but—by the time he got home and tried to do his homework—he could not distinguish between the types of problems; …"looking at it in a book, or in a test…it just looks the same." In addition to math, when transitioning to college, Biology also became an issue for his school success—and for the same reasons. When the teacher would go over the material in class, he could follow, but Duane could not retain the information in order to do the homework outside of class. It was not until he had a Biology teacher that made students go to mandatory study groups outside of class that he could successfully retain the information. Duane felt too many teachers took the attitude of "I want to try and tell you this way…it was one way or the highway…, [and] if you don't get it, there's nothin' I can do."

Duane credited both his parents with being his mentors. His father finished both high school and a college degree. His mother finished high school, married his father, and stayed home to raise the family.

Van.

Van is a 23 year old who was also successful playing sports in high school. He "was the only freshman playing with some of the varsity guys." After reflecting on his attitude as an athlete in high school, in comparison to his attitude now, he believes that high school athletes, as a whole, "don't understand that bein' an athlete is a privilege." Like Caesar, Van did not know

his father, and lived in a single parent household with his mother, who he stated was very involved in his education.

Van relayed that he felt his issue with struggling in school came from "the balance of being the popular and still…succeeding in athletics." Reflecting back on his high school career as an athlete, he stated that he realizes that you "don't always have to be the guy that fit in." Not realizing that he would come to high school with a reputation in tow, he stated that the reputation went to his head because he did not understand at the time that "you had to be the man and you had to be a student also…to be able to play sports."

Van also had transition issues—finding the work and expectations much easier in middle school than high school. When he began failing his classes in high school, they continued to pass him through, even though he did not understand the material. He only needed an average GPA, but the classes that he was failing added up by his senior year, and at that point he was not going to graduate without some type of intervention.

As with the other two participants, Van struggled the most with math. He feels confident counting money and managing his day to day finances but has difficulty with higher level math concepts. He feels many teachers do not care about the students they teach, citing that after he quit going to Geometry, the teacher "didn't care. He never made a call home." Van equates a Special Education remediation class entitled "Vivian Thomas" with his completing high school. In this program he spent four hours a day—one of which was an elective and the other three in the same class, working with the same teacher—doing work to gain the necessary credits to graduate. Van states that he received 8 grades for four hours of work, compared to the 6-7 grades for a full day of work on a "normal kids report card." The classes he needed were represented on

his report card, but the work students did in class was the same—not necessarily the curriculum that he was receiving a grade for. Van did feel that this program "saved my life really," and that what they learned in that program—continues to aid him in his adult life to this day.

In regards to mentoring, Van credited his uncle, who lived with him and his mother for a time, as his "father figure" and mentor. He reflects that his uncle is the one who taught him to play sports, but also stayed on him when his grades were slipping.

Sports.

"Like sports, that's my life, that was my life. ...I kinda lost focus, after I lost sports—basically."

Caesar's sports narrative.

Abstract

21   Like sports,

21   that's my life,

21   that was my life.

22   I went to college to play football…sports are my life,

23   and I knew I could never slip because I didn't wanta….

Orientation

26   they were looking at me in 7th and 8th grade. Yeah….[1] and as soon as I moved there,

27   I was on varsity—as a freshman—so I was with the big guys—as a little guy.

Complicating action

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[1] More than 3 ellipses represents a pause

18   you have to keep your grade point average up….

18   keep your grade point average at a certain gpa…you couldn't have an F either—no F's.

19   You couldn't play on the team with a F. So, that was part of it

26   I moved here and ..…I mean .….it dropped [GPA]….I mean..…it, it--it dropped.

27   It was like when I was there, I was an athlete--and we big on sports down south.

27   Whatever they can do to get that player, they're gonna do it.

28   .….A lot of tutoring, a lot of special attention…….I got like

29   Teachers stayed sometimes when I could like…whatever really that I needed..…

30   my coaches would make sure that I had it. So that I could play….

30   make sure my grades never dropped…never really dropped.

39   it's a big transition, like when you gettin' like….from nearly pampered, you know….

40   and then, now you're here, and it's like, you know, they're not as big on sports in MI.

41   Sports isn't life up here for school, like it's, they're about the school, like--

42   especially in the suburban area—the schooling area I went to.

43   They were strict about grades, like they were really not so….”oh, oh, it's an athlete!”

44   This is not what they do here. I mean, you get some—you know they like,

44   “oh yeah, he sweet”…but it's not the same when it comes to the learnin'.

45   They treat you as you're the same as everybody else. You gonna….

46   like you work hard on the field, you gonna work hard in ….like, you know….

47   It was like being pampered to now I'm really out here on my own.

Evaluation

55   My coach……he actually talked to my math teacher, to let me start getting the extra

56   tutoring and ….the tutors…that's how I got through.

48   I got some tutors and stuff when I needed it cause I had an awesome coach—

49   so I got some of that but…..not as much attention as you, as I was getting' [in Texas]

32   … a lot of individual tutoring, but we did a lot of team tutoring too.

57   I….it was a schedule like for tests, there was a schedule for homework,

57   I met with somebody after school to get all my practice, warm-ups,

58   he tutored me one-on-one.

59   By my senior year there…it helped me all the way into my senior year…

32   For some of them, it was just going over their head, but for me,

33   I was actually understanding with the one-on-one and the small group. So….

34   for some, it may have benefited for some, for some it may have not.

35   For me it did.

Resolution/Coda

60   It helped me the one-on-one.

56   …the tutors…

56   that's how I got through.

21   It helped me because I love sports.

Duane's sports narrative.

Abstract

64   I did sports my whole life.

83   Sports always play a good part in my education.

Orientation

65   I actually…[laughs nervously] I actually got kicked off the team—like during tryouts

66   three times…

Complicating action

84   I always wanted to play sports so bad, like….

85   I knew I had to get the grades to continue to play. So, that pushed me…

86   on the side of me just learning in class like—I gotta—If I don't get a 2.5 or better

87   —I'm just gonna be in class not doing nothing—no activities after school.

87   And, I wasn't like that type of kid.

88   Like I always wanted to be involved in sports—and things after school,

88   which your grades have to be at a certain level to participate…..so….that was my push.

66   …..our coach…he wasn't really like a basketball coach. He was our janitor,

67   and they gave him the job as our basketball coach…..so….

68   I took it so he really didn't see talent like that, so…uhhh….he was a JV head coach,

68   and our varsity head coach—he knew me from middle school,

69   and he knew how I played and everything….

69   so he convinced him [JV coach] to let me back on the team

70   and it was history from there.

73   I became the team captain after that. As well as with another individual, like,

74   we actually went to the same middle school together.

74   We already had that type of a relationship. To…know who we played,

75   and like—team work basically.

76   Like our whole season, it was basically us bein' our coaches tryin' to win.

77   ….because of what we knew about each other already.

77   … in football, I had an excellent coach. He actually coached my brothers

78   so he saw me grow up from young to a young adult basically.

79   I played varsity football in 9th grade.

80   I didn't like playing JV at all. I played JV one year of basketball…[but for football]

81   cause they said I was too good to just waste my time on JV….

81   I could be on varsity playing.

82   Usually, a 9th grader will be on JV for the whole 2 years he supposed to play—

83   unless they lose a varsity player and have to play a JV player up—to the varsity level.

Evaluation

90   The reason why I left there [Texas], [laughs—in a disgusted manner]..it was sports.

91   I had a music appreciation class?..... made me ineligible in sports.

92   And after that, it kinda took a downfall cause it wasn't sports and education anymore…

93   it was just education.

98   That was always like hand to hand…always been hand-in-hand with my education.

93   So, my focus was just like shifted,

94   and then that next semester when it was just all school, I didn't pass anything.

96   I basically was….going to class sometimes, and I guess—doing all the wrong things.

97   I'd rather go out instead of be in class the next mornin'.

98   If I didn't have sports with my education, I probably would have been…

99   I probably would have struggled more in school—

100   basically—because sports gave me something to look forward to after my education.

Resolution/Coda

94   And…I came back to MI and I went to a community college.

97   I kinda lost focus, after I lost sports—basically.

        Relationships with coaches.

Abstract

103   So…as far as my life and school?

102   As far as the two differences…

113   [In high school] we had more of a relationships. [but in college]…It's like,

114   you do whatch you gotta do, and …..it's like…

114   you do whatch you gotta do on your own—basically.

Orientation

104   Then when I went to college, it was like…they acted [strong emphasis on the word

104   'acted'] concerned…but they wasn't really like…getting' progress reports—none of that.

105   They were just hopin' you passed, and…..not like "how was school?" like.

Complicating action

106   We used to get those type of questions [in high school]

107   —concerns while I was in high school.

107   As far as college, their was involved about basketball, my coaches,

108   and so…like when I end up failing that one class, it was just…like…

109   everybody is like…shocked, or what not? Again, I have to…

109   they found out I failed the class, they really never really tried to me anywhere to help me.

110   I told ya I wanted to go talk to the dean myself, get everything squared away by myself,

111   but I never had nobody helping me….

132   Yeah. They [college coaches] were upset [with a laugh] [about becoming ineligible].

133   That's what kinda puzzled me at the end of the day, like…..you see…

134   and like I told you I showed all the information……all of my information I had

134   for my grades to get changed were sufficient, so…them knowin' that, they shoulda had,

135   I shoulda had more support.

136   It's just me doing everything by myself.

Evaluation

111   … I never had nobody helping me,

112   so I feel like that woulda helped to—getting' back on my feet in college.

136   so….I guess like……since I was just in there as a student, by myself, talkin' to the Dean,

137   gettin' everything squared away—instead of my coaches and everybody behind me….

138   like…you see…this is not right, this is—but—

138   everybody just left it alone.

Resolution/Coda

92   And after that, it kinda took a downfall cause it wasn't sports and education anymore…

93   it was just education.

139   The details you know.

Sports combined poetic narrative.

Sports—Identity and Value
Like sports, that's my life.
I did sports my whole life—sports are my life,
I went to college to play football
Sports always play a good part in my education.

I played varsity football in 9th grade.
They said I was too good to just waste my time on JV.
I was on varsity—as a freshman—so I was with the big guys—as a little guy.
I was the only freshman playing with some of the varsity guys, so
I was a kid goin' into high school as a freshman, and I was an athlete that played varsity football.

I was an athlete…and I knew I could never slip.
You couldn't play on the team with a F.
I was an athlete…
I knew I had to get the grades to continue to play. So, that pushed me…

Whatever they can do to get that player, they're gonna do it--
A lot of tutoring, a lot of special attention…
We did a lot of team tutoring too.
I got some tutors and stuff when I needed it cause
 I had an awesome coach!

My coaches would…make sure my grades never dropped,
never really dropped.
My coach…he made me feel wanted.
My coach……he actually talked to my math teacher,
to let me start getting the extra tutoring and ….
the tutors…that's how I got through.

I probably would have struggled more in school…
because sports gave me something to look forward to.
I don't feel that they were distracting….
I think more than anything,
it was the fact that I played sports,
and that I was an athlete.

The balance of being the popular…
the popular guy…and still succeeding in athletics.
 I didn't expect to be recognized, or known,
by other students…that upper classmen
 who had already been there…
people seeing that they knew who I was already.

In my junior year, I was ineligible.
A lot of them don't understand that bein' an athlete is a privilege.
I kinda lost focus, after I lost sports.
I always wanted to play sports so bad, like…
that was my life.

Reputation.

"And it was times when all I could think about was bein' 'the man'."

Van's reputation narrative.

Abstract

147   Uhhh, I was kinda fudging and being a student athlete and being a popular guy at school.

148   And, uhhh, which cost me to struggle because I did not know how to handle everything.

Orientation

152   I think in my early years, I just had a lot of trouble with the understanding…

153   that you don't always have to be the guy that fit in. You know..ta, ta, ta…

153   and also be the smart guy at the same time. If you know what I mean?

169   I wasn't doin' well in school at the time, and all …..and it was times

169   when all I could think about

170   was bein' "the man"….

Complicating Action

175   I was a smart kid. I was a smart kid who just didn't apply myself

176   in the way I knew I should have, or that I was capable of.

161   I was the only freshman playing with some of the varsity guys.

161   So, when I came there in 9th grade,

162   I didn't expect to be recognized, or known, by other students…that upper classmen

162   who had already been there…..I didn't expect to be recognized by and I was.

163   I didn't know that I was gonna find that recognition,

164   so that kinda got to my head a little bit…

165   and uhhh, not understandin' that you had to be the man

165   and you had to be a student also…to be able to play sports.

183   And everybody knew who you was…uhhhhh, you know,

183   all the females knew who you was…. All the guys knew who you was…..

184   you was just one of the popular kids in the school.

177   It wasn't a reputation I knew about. The only thing I know I was knew about was

178   I was a kid goin' into high school as a freshman,

178   and I was an athlete that played varsity football, and I practiced with varsity all summer.

179   And…once I got to school in the fall, uhhhh, it wasn't a bad reputation that I had,

180   it just…..people seeing that they knew who I was already. …..

Evaluation

155   I think it was more…so uhhh…..the being the popular guy….I think that was my issue.

157   I think towards the end of my high school years, I started to look at that more, and maybe

158   I created that image, and maybe I need to change it.

158   And I started to do that toward the end of my years….

167   … bein' socially acceptable to everybody else doesn't make a difference—

168   if you can't control your own actions and you can't do right by your parents,

168   and have great grades.

170   and by the end of the day, bein' "the man" without the grades,

171   they get me nothin' but nothin' but ineligible.

Resolution/Coda

149   Uhmmm, now I'm at the point where, I managed to get it together my senior year

150   and graduate on time. Now, I'm 22 years of age, uhmmm, I'm a very smart individual.

151   I'm more in the mind-set of a self-made business man—that wants to get a degree,

151   and then believes school is for him.

152   I think in my early years,…

163   I didn't expect to be recognized… and I was.

164   so that kinda got to my head a little bit, and me bein' the man…

171   that tended to change for me.

172   And, and I started to focus more on getting my books right.

172   Instead of worrin' about bein' the man….and…to be honest…after a while,

173   I honestly didn't care to be the man or not.

174   I just wanted to graduate.

Caesar's Reputation Narrative.

Abstract

187   Like, when you're athletes, the arm is extended out way

187   more than just being a normal student.

Orientation

185   They're were looking at me in 7th and 8th grade. Yeah….and as soon as I moved there,

186   I was on varsity—as a freshman—so I was with the big guys—as a little guy.

Complicating Action

193   Well, it's all about the type of person you are. What you let affect…

193   what you let take a toll on you. What's important…what you let…I mean….

194   I really….my personal life, I never really let it…I tried not to let it….I…

195   I…let it intervene a couple of times, you know where I didn't…

196   my head wasn't on straight… Girls…and then me coming here [to Michigan]

199   …and just feeling like "the man"…I just thought I was so popular and people liked me,

200   and I was just a people person and I liked interacting with people.

200   I was distracted by a lot of people too—distractions was the number 1—in class,

201   me in the class, I'm a top athlete, I gotta clown around—this and that.

202   I thought I could slack off a lot…you know…

Evaluation

202   like.…I just…big headed.

189   It was so much easier here—like sports, the competition,…it like,

188   ….”oh, oh, it's an athlete!” "oh yeah, he sweet…

189   I like really didn't even need to try out…

190   I just met with the coach. He kinda knew who I was

191   they kinda informed him I was coming to MI anyway…

191   .he kinda knew where I was gonna be…

192   so he kinda knew already….but….

Resolution/Coda

198   I fell down in school.

199   … and just feeling like the man

202   I thought I could slack off a lot…you know…

202   If I could do it over….

203   I'd a did it different. Yeah…..Yeah…..Yeah….

Reputation combined poetic narrative.

Reputation--"Bein' the Man."
I was kinda fudging and being a student athlete
and being a popular guy at school, which cost me to struggle
because I did not know how to handle everything.
It's all about the type of person you are. What you let affect…
what you let take a toll on you. What's important…

 I just had a lot of trouble with the understanding…
that you don't always have to be the guy that fit in.
I wasn't doin' well in school at the time, and all ….
and it was times when all I could think about
was bein' "the man."

I was a smart kid who just didn't apply myself
 in the way I knew I should have,
or that I was capable of.
I was the only freshman playing with some of the varsity guys.
I didn't expect to be recognized, or known, by other students,
all the females knew who you was….
all the guys knew who you was…..
you was just one of the popular kids in the school.

So that kinda got to my head a little bit,
and me bein' the man….and uhhh,
not understandin' that you had to be the man
and you had to be a student also…to be able to play sports.

My head wasn't on straight…
I was distracted by a lot of people too—distractions was the number one.
I fell down in school.
Girls…and then me coming here
and just feeling like the man…
I just…big headed.

I just thought I was so popular and people liked me.
you got emotions you're dealing with on the court, on the field,
 plus—you gotta give people attention outside of it.
You really hatta balance between the two.
Me in the class, I'm a top athlete,
I gotta clown around—this and that.
I thought I could slack off a lot…you know.

Maybe I created that image, and maybe I need to change it.
Bein' socially acceptable to everybody else doesn't make a difference,

if you can't control your own actions,
and you can't do right by your parents,
and have great grades.
By the end of the day, bein' "the man" without the grades,
they get me nothin'-- but nothin' but ineligible.

If I could do it over….I'd a did it different…
Instead of worrin' about bein' the man….and…to be honest,
after a while, I honestly didn't care to be the man or not.
I just wanted to graduate.

Transitioning.

"That was really my first time bein' on my own…anything I had to do was basically on me. …I

never had that responsibility to myself."

> *Caesar's Transition narrative.*

Abstract

265   …they're not as big on sports in MI.

266   Sports isn't life up here for school, like it's, they're about the school,

267   like--especially in the suburban area—the schooling area I went to.

Orientation

265   They don't do a lot of the scoutin' from middle school to high school.

268   They were strict about grades, like they were really not so…."oh, oh, it's an athlete!"

269   This is not what they do here.

Complicating Action

270   …it's not the same when it comes to the learnin'.

270   They treat you as you're the same as everybody else [in MI].

271   You gonna….like you work hard on the field, you gonna work hard in ….like, you know,

272   so…I don't know. It was like being pampered to now I'm really out here on my own.

253   I moved here and ……I mean….it dropped….I mean…..it, it,…it dropped [GPA].

254   It was like when I was there [middle school in TX], I was an athlete….

254   and we big on sports down south.

254   Whatever they can do to get that player, they're gonna do it.

255   …..A lot of tutoring, a lot of special attention…….I got like,

255   I was able to go and take my tests with tutors. Like….I was able to do a lot.

256   Like, when you're athletes, the arm is extended out way more

257   than just being a normal student. Going there it's like straight A's; we passing you

258   and you just keep working now and you keep doing this, and…

259   we gonna get you all the way to where you need to be…

259   just we gonna help you out…..just do what we need you to do right now….

Evaluation

273   I got some tutors and stuff when I needed it cause I had an awesome coach—[in MI]

274   —so I got some of that but…..not as much attention as you,

275   as I was getting' when I was here [Texas].

Resolution/Coda

265   …they're not as big on sports in MI.

270   They treat you as you're the same as everybody else.

271   You gonna….like you work hard on the field, you gonna work hard in

272   ….like, you know….

Duane's Transition narrative.

Abstract

280   It wasn't really that hard to transition from middle-school to high school.

278   like my middle school is probably move of an advanced school,

279   so I was already prepared for like those first days….

281   When I went to college….it was a whole different….yeah….

283   It was a private school in… Texas.

282   It was a sports scholarship. To play basketball.

Orientation

283   I went to school, after I left school in MI, right after high school, I went to Texas.

284   …. and like that class, when I took it there, it was basically,

285   he moved at his pace—not the students pace.

291   And, at the end of the day, when finals…final grade came out…I had an 'F.'

Complicating action

287   I had a music appreciation class?

288   Like, it was easy, so I really didn't, like, make it a top concern.

292   I had an 'F,' but…it….like my paperwork and everything—it didn't say I had an F.

293   It said I still had like a B—a B or a C—is average—so, what I did—

293   I got all the paperwork from that class that teacher…..took it to the Dean to look at it.

294   I'm like, "I shouldn't have failed this class." And, when I took it to the Dean…

295   this is the crazy part about it….I took it to the Dean. He saw everything,

296   but—it was a test I missed, and…in that class….and he told me it was

297   "an insufficient amount of paper work or proof." I'm like…you just missing a test.

298   Everything else"…it was almost a B basically,

298   so he told me that if he was to change my grade, these are his exact words,

299   "If he was to change my grade, he has to change everybody else grade."

300   And, I didn't like see where he got that perception from. So, I'm like—

300   "I'm the only person here in your room right now concerned about his grade,

301   trying to see what's goin' on. Nobody else is here and I never seen anybody

302   goin' in n out your room about this grade or this test….so….

303   that not like you changin' everybody else grade" and he told me he can't do it,

304   so….that basically made me ineligible in sports.

317   He just saw what he wanted to see……for me to have all the proof,

317   and me give it to you, and you still turn me down—it was just….

318   I guess, it was his ego basically—about the whole situation.

328   I had one counselor, like, he was my ….he was my counselor, he was my….advisor.

329   He could only do so much as far as helpin' me because,

330   I guess that wasn't his position…I guess…you know… to be involved in that situation

331   back then. …He like puts his word in, like…" He's a great student.

331   He does a lot of work. He tries"….but he did his part,

332   but there was only so much he could do.

333   That's the only person that really helped me.

343   I just felt like I was in a predicament I can't get myself out of.

343   Like, I already paid for it, I don't wanna drop out the class and not, at least,

344   attempt to get credit or get what I'm paying for…so…it was like,

345   I basically in jail in my own classroom. But like,

346   I ain't got no choice but to try my best to get outta this class the best way I can.

378   As far as high school, I never visited campuses…like….I was always like busy

378   with sports and what not, or school work. So, when it was time to like….you know,

379   they have college events and stuff like that, they gonna prepare you for college…,

380   As far as high school, I never got the chance, like it wasn't preparatory college.

381   Like, the stuff they was doing, I basically knew it already. So, when I got to college,

382   and they were teaching college material, like—it was all new to me.

383   And, so it was up to me to learn everything by myself, and then—as far as I told you,

384   some teachers had their plan, and they teach—like—it wasn't workin' for me.

385   And then, as far as the tuition there, like…our tuition was almost twenty grand!

386   It was a private school….like, you all, like..that ain't regular tuition—

387   like a university or 4 year college. That was way high!

388   Most expensive school I ever heard of!

340   They have a tutoring center. Sometimes…like, they have certain hours, and I work—

341   on the side—o' goin' to school, so sometimes the hours that the tutoring…

341   they don't match up--so…I really don't have the time like that.

356   that semester, when I fail everything, it really took a toll on me,

357   as far as being away from everyone.

357   It was like my first true position of being by myself away from family.

359   I kinda got homesick after a while, after all that was going on…

349   like communication…when you in high school, you can talk all the time…

349   see your girlfriend all the time, but when you away at school—you can't talk as much.

350   Then, I have practice, I had work I had to do, so…our communication

351   was probably at an all-time low. And, that attention caused problems with me and her.

353   and then I lost family members and stuff while I was at college.

359   I wasn't fully there in class all the time…I wasn't interested in it.

360   While I was in there [my classes], while everybody else is doing work,

360   my mind was somewhere else.

Evaluation

363   As far as high school and university, the big difference was to me….was …

364   that was really my first time bein' on my own and away from my family and what

364   ….anything I had to do was basically on me.

365   And like, class-wise, transition to the college, I never had that responsibility to myself.

366   If you wanna put it like that. …Like, I always had like, if I came home

367   and I ain't doing nothin', or somebody axes me…what you gonna do today,

367   or—you don't have nothing to do today…well, when I went to college, it was all on me.

371   so—when you get to college, if I had to tell somebody anything else,

372   I'd tell them like…..Do your school work first, and ….it's okay to party,

373   but make sure everything you have to do—as far as the classroom—is done.

373   That's what I wasn't prepared for. I still was goin' out…and "Oh, I'll do that later."

374   Procrastinatin'. Like you can procrastinate in high school—

375   you got time to get back on your feet, but—far as college—

376   it's like—you gotta be on your feet.

Resolution/Coda

308   I just got back focus—four years later—I'm 23—that happened when I was like 19.

347   ….in high school… It was really like everything…everything was okay.

348   as far as when I left for school…

376   You gotta a million problems about everything.

377   …I took care….

337   Basically, I had to find my way….

Transition combined poetic narrative.

Transitions—Change and Responsibility
Sports isn't life up here for school, like it's,
they're about the school.
They were strict about grades, like they were really not so….
"oh, oh, it's an athlete!"

We big on sports down south.
Going there it's like straight A's—
"we passing you and you just keep working now and you keep doing this,
and…we gonna get you all the way to where you need to be…
just we gonna help you out…..just do what we need you to do right now."

It wasn't really that hard to transition from middle-school to high school.
When I went to college….it was…different.
So, when I got to college,
and they were teaching college material,
 like—it was all new to me. And,
so it was up to me to learn everything by myself.

I had an 'F,' but…it….like my paperwork and everything—
it didn't say I had an F.
I got all the paperwork from that class,
…..took it to the Dean to look at it.
. I'm like, "I shouldn't have failed this class."
….and he told me it was "an insufficient amount of paper work or proof."
I'm like…"you just missing a test. Everything else"…

I had one counselor, like, he was my …
.he was my counselor, he was my….advisor.
He could only do so much as far as helpin' me.
He like puts his word in, like…
" He's a great student. He does a lot of work. He tries"….
but there was only so much he could do.
That's the only person that really helped me.

I just felt like I was in a predicament I can't get myself out of.
I basically in jail in my own classroom.
But like, I ain't got no choice but to try my best
to get outta this class the best way I can.
That semester, when I fail everything,
 it really took a toll on me.

When I went to college, it was all on me.
It was like my first true position of being by myself away from family.
I wasn't fully there in class all the time…I wasn't interested in it.
While I was in there, while everybody else is doing work,
my mind was somewhere else.

That's what I wasn't prepared for.
I still was goin' out…and "Oh, I'll do that later."
Procrastinatin'. Like you can procrastinate in high school—
you got time to get back on your feet, but—
far as college—it's like—you gotta be on your feet.
You gotta a million problems about everything.
They treat you as you're the same as everybody else.
It was like being pampered to now—
I'm really out here on my own.

Instruction.

"…It's me, and I haven't learned anything. I'm just sittin' there stuck."

Caesar's Instruction narrative.

Abstract

578   You have to take all the same classes as everybody else. Uhmm hum, hum……

537   Math—it always—it stung me every time.

564   …it's me, and I haven't learned anything. I'm just sittin' there stuck.

Orientation

577 Oh yeah….I took many a tests…I'ma….taken many a tests to see how I do in math. ….

533 Yeah. I'm more of a hands-on—all the way. I mean like….most athletes are.

534 They're just hands on…..they like…this is what they do…

534 they learn with their body…they express with their body…

535 you do everything with your body.

Complicating action

536 Math. Math. Any other subject, I had it. I could find the means to just tackle it…

537 just to get it out the way….

549 ….it's just that I couldn't get it.

553 [talking like he's the teacher] "Okay class. Do the warm-up on the board."

554 Alright, we come in and do the warm up. "Alright, open your books,

554 we gonna go over this for the chapter." So, we'll go over the chapter in about 25-30 min.,

555 we do our highlighting and stuff—go over the chapter. She'll pass us out a practice sheet,

556 and the end—we'll leave and grab the homework out the door, so….

557 You know, we sit there, …you really don't get it, you can go with someone

558 and partner up and they can show you how to do it…like…you know…

558 like in the classroom…like, but when you really not paying attention, like….

559 we really just sit there like talk—we kids—we not gonna really like…..and we just,

561 and she just sittin' up there on the computer and stuff, and I'm like…..

561 like you wanna ask her for help of anything, and the whole class starts to talkin'.

562   The bell just rings, and then everbody just gets up and just grabs the paper and left.

563   And then it's another day in the class, new chapter and it's me,

564   and I haven't learned anything. I'm just sittin' there stuck. … like…okay…

565   grab the worksheet. I'm just grabbing all the worksheets,

565   so I have all the worksheets and stuff—not complete, but I have 'em. [nervous laugh].

550   My coach……he actually talked to my math teacher,

551   to let me start getting the extra tutoring and ….the tutors…that's how I got through.

567   I….it was a schedule like for tests, there was a schedule for homework,

568   I met with somebody after school to get all my practice, warm-ups,

569   he tutored me one-on-one.

571   We got a schedule on…at the end of the week, I knew I could take my quiz,

572   go down there with my tutor that I had over there…helped me out,

573   so I could understand it—it's the one on one attention—like with somebody there.

537   Even like, we use a lot of math in Chemistry too, so…but I was kinda good…

538   I understood. I had a good Chemistry teacher. Isa just average…

539   he's a really good Chemistry teacher, so—he made it easy for me, …

540   that's why I kinda understood like the Chemistry—as far as the formulas and everything.

541   We…okay….we, he showed us a lot. That's what he did. I mean like—

541   with the chemicals, and like, it was more, it's always like a…

542   and we always experimenting, and a lot of hands on stuff, so I was so into it.

543   You could not be into the stuff. He bring liquid nitrogen, and freeze things,

544   and how we boiled, and all…..you can't not be into that you know…

545   you can't just not learn anything from watching the stuff that goes on,

545   and doing the things and stuff. You cannot, not learn. So…

547   We did have quizzes at the end of the week, but we labs nearly every other day,

547   so…but we had quizzes, vocabulary and stuff—I mean that's normal…..

548   we did a lot of hands on.

600   I'ma people person.

592   My strengths were….well, I talk, …..with hands on….I was good in groups—

593   groups working—coming together as a team and figuring things out.

593   Figuring out the problem and stuff…I was just….I don't know….I just….

595   I be better by myself, but if I do—if you put me in an environment where I do have to

595   work with a group….I'm easy to work with—easy to get along with.

596   But, I don't try to…I don't step on nobody's feet….I don't wanna…it's hard …

597   but I try not to step on people's feet and try to explore everybody's ideas.

598   You know people see it from different points. So, you take it all in…you know….

587   Yeah! It's like…your stronger at some stuff than like other stuff.

587   Like I wasn't…I don't know….I just….some people have that block, you know.

588   Sometimes, that's just how it is. They can be genius at one, uhhh, subject,

589   but the next subject struggle at. I mean—everybody's gonna have a weakness….

590   no one's gonna be just perfect…every one's gonna have that weakness. Yeah….

Evaluation

601   It should be like…It shouldn't be to where everybody set up the same,

602   to have the same goal, to have the same….because—it's like—it's not the same.

602   You know…people are not the same. People are gonna struggle,

603   but like—no matter how much—some people maybe—even if you get them a tutor—

604   you know—even—some people still won't understand it. Like, they can't understand it,

605   they just…it's just a block they have that they can't understand it.

606   They can be strong in other stuff.

607   Why not try something different, in a different area…why not see how the level,

608   the amount of people that succeed of an idea? ….I mean,

608   it's just like whoever came up with the idea of the kids going to high school

609   and it all being straight on there…everybody learning the same thing.

610   Like…whoever came up with that? Why not see, why not try something else

611   to see if it can work—you know? See if you can get better results—you know?

Resolution/Coda

585   Math was the only one…I failed….

571   …It helped me the one-on-one.

569   By my senior year there….I was…it helped me all the way into my senior year…

589   everybody's gonna have a weakness….

590   no one's gonna be just perfect…

Duane's Instruction narrative.

Abstract

612   As far as classes, like—I was always good at, English, Science, some science—

613   cause once it goes to Biology and everything—it gets hard...like I

614   never had a teacher that made it interesting….

Orientation

618   …like the teachers I had, I ain't gonna say everyone, but the teachers I had was like—

619   you should know it from a master's standpoint….

620   …it was always hard—Biology, and like, Math.

Complicating action

614   Like, it was always like, I [teachers] don't want to be here,

615   so I'm going to teach it like I don't wanna be here. Like…you guys questions…

616   and they really like…they didn't like—explain it from a stand point of like a student

616   that don't really know, and you got a master's and like degree,

617   so you should really be able to break it down to like a younger level…

618   like when you first learnt it type level.

622   Math wasn't hard, it was like, when we goin' through the, like the study guide,

623   it's easy for me, like, in class, like afterwards, like, when I have to study it on my own,

624   and….put it into perspective, like…looking at it in a book, or in a test….

625   it just looks the same. Everything looks the same. It don't look different to me.

627   Actually, in high school, I passed it…like…cause it was more of a help…like…

628   it wasn't like….like…the study guide was basically did in class,

629   and like whatever you needed help on, they actually helped you with it.

630   Like, during that class session,…it was certain tables that he [math teacher] went to,

631   and whatever questions we had, he would break it down for that table

631   and go to the next table and do the same thing. ….

701   One of my favorite classes was math, he was more of….young minded.

702   He understood students at age point, like, here you all—16…18…

702   I know ya'll don't wanna be in here bored like….he actually made the class fun.

703   He'd joke around with us. Like, we actually was happy to go to his class.

704   Like, he was one of the homeboys, but at a certain point, he knew like, and we knew like,

705   he still our teacher—we still have to respect him. So, everybody knew that,

706   so—we would joke around, but when it was time to learn—take care of business—

706   we was on the same page.

707   He didn't teach us like…I'm gonna get money because you're a student type…

708   some teachers be like…you here…you can't do nothing about it…..I'm just teachin'.

710   But, he was one of them teachers—"I had teachers like ya'll had, so I understand like—

711   you need more attention, you might need more help, so I'm here for ya'll."

712   So, he was more like a father away from home.

715   Like, that was the most understandin' class I ever had.

716   He related it to everything you probably can go through in that day or…growing up—

717   basically. It wasn't always numbers and letters with him. So, it was more than that.

Transition to college instruction

690   Alright, I'm gonna tell you the difference. Alright….uhhhh, math in high school,

691   as far as tests, and why I was successful in takin' those tests, they were specific.

691   It would tell you what you have to do and what type of problem it is,

692   but …in my college classes—it'd just be factor these,

693   but it's different steps and different problems—and that 1-15 you have to do.

694   Like, they [college teachers] don't break it into groups—like what type of problem it is.

695   The steps and everything….just give me problems and I'll figure everything else out

695   by myself. Instead of like, give me the problems, tell me what type of problems they is,

696   basically, then do them by myself. So, if you see, trinomials, monomials,

697   or something like that—factor those—and bein' specific—basically—

698   it'd be way better than what I did. So….cause…testes right now in college that I take,

699   I'm getting' half points because I'm thinkin' this problem is that problem.

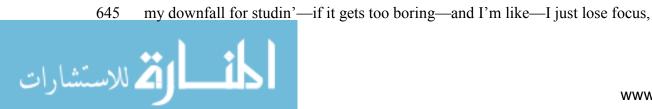700   So, I did it right—it's just the wrong steps to that problem. So…..

663 I did the homework. As far as the homework, from when we did the testes, I say—

664 probably like the homework might have been easier than the tests?...

664 Because it will probably be one variable—or a couple numbers—or something like that.

665 Then when the tests come, probably 3 different numbers, 2--3 different variables—like—

666 and then everything gets confusing after a while.

682 ….some of the stuff I'm strugglin' on in class--…trinomials…that right there….

683 like…some of the problems, probably have 3 different steps to it.

684   Like the first one, and sometimes the second one…like I can get that, like, easy,

685 but when it comes to like breaking it down, or factoring it,

686   that's where I have my problems at, sooooo…

633 [a typical lesson in bio his first college year] Uh….It was basically like, alright…

634   … "Today, we're going through chap. 1 through 3 or 4."

634 It was basically a bunch of chapters at one time—each class or like each test basically.

635 So, we'ud go through the first chapter…like--lecture wouldn't necessarily be in the book.

636 He'd already have it wrote out, basically, we had to find it in the book.

637 That's how he taught his class like…it taught, what he took outa the book,

638 like the details, or what he was talkin' about—we had to find them in the book.

639 He stood up and taught [like a lecture]…it was just all…and the chalkboard—no—

640 like the marker eraser board? [He wrote] phrases and like, try to write pictures of it.

650   After I failed it the first time, I actually, the second semester, they gave it to me again,

651   and…like…I had a different teacher, and that teacher was like more hands-on

652   …..and then, like, as far as our study, in class—you were lectured the same way

653   as the teacher before—but afterwards—he assigned groups like—campus—like,

653   you had to be with that group to learn it. …study groups….yeah…that helped.

654   Afterwards too….but like it was mandatory….that was like part of the class.

655   It wasn't on the syllabus, but he told us in class—write your name down—

656   like we basically had to sign a paper when we showed up. To the study group—

657   so you know—someone can't forge your signature—

658   it wasn't like a printed signature…you had to….cursive write it…so…..

659   Uhhhh…..we went over every chapter, that he basically, that he talked about in class.

660   …with other people talking about it…. Cause everybody had different stand points

661   at that time we got together, like….one person was good at this,

661   next person was good at this, and, like, we all put it together.

662   And it helped everybody…with that. Yeah.

Evaluation

688   Math is just like Biology—like, after a while, if it ain't excitin' to me,

689   it don't keep my interest like that.

645   I mean…..I got to interested in it to keep my attention. That's what I feel…

645   my downfall for studin'—if it gets too boring—and I'm like—I just lose focus,

646   and I try to find something excitin' about it, …so when I gotta to take it home by myself,

647   I tr'it for like a good 30 minutes—I'd learned a little bit out of it, then I'd be like,

648   I'll just wait for class to start again

649   and then look and listen to what he talk about in the lecture.

676   When it was like, subtract this variable from that variable,

677   and that's your answer at the end…when it's quick with math, I'm great at it,

677   but when you got—find this first, then find this, then it's your answer at the end….

678   it's crazy!

670   It's just like, seein' that whole problem, I basically say, it sometime intimidate me

671   or somethin' like that—when you see a math problem that's real long…

672   with a whole bunch of numbers and letters—it gets intimidating sometimes. And then,

672   afterwords, I be like, I'm doing all this in math, and they making it this hard for me!

673   And after this class, I might not ever see this math in my life ever again! [laughs]

674   So….it's like, like, a crazy feelin' to me. To have to struggle through all this,

675   to not ever see it again—basically.

719   I'd a took the biology class, like, 3 times.

719   Those first two teachers was like almost on the same level.

720   They taught as if they were teaching degrees and master students already.

721   They didn't take it as we just come in. Some of the stuff we learned in high school,

721   you know, everything you're not gonna remember all the way through everything.

722   They all took it as, "If you don't know it now, you ain't ever gonna get it"

723   Type of teacher, that made class like—boring, and they made….

724   I just felt like I was in a predicament I can't get myself out of.

724   Like, I already paid for it, I don't wanna drop out the class and not, at least,

725   attempt to get credit or get what I'm paying for…so…it was like,

726   I basically in jail in my own classroom. But like,

726   I ain't got no choice but to try my best to get outta this class the best way I can.

728   I mean…to a certain extent. Like, you had some classmates that might axe a question,

729   and hea'll try and explain it, but if you don't get it—that's all he gonna give you like—

729   "if you don't get it, there's nothin' I can do—I tried…and you still don't get it."

730   It ain't like he tried to find ways around it…like maybe get it this way,

731   I want to try and tell you this way…it was one way or the highway, basically.

Resolution/Coda

679   I tried the tutoring for math…like…I told you….Like—some points—I get it!

680   And then after that session is over, then when I go home, and try to do it myself

680   ….like….it goes back blank like.

671   …it gets intimidating sometimes.

674   So….it's like, like, a crazy feelin' to me.

Van's Instruction narrative 1.

Abstract

389   Throughout my high school career, I struggled the first 3 years to be honest.

Orientation

391   I started 9th grade and I did fail some of my classes, and they proceeded to move me on—

392   without…uhmmm…. without understanding.

396   I kinda think it hindered me.

Complicating action

391   …they proceeded to move me on

392   Okay…..maybe he's failed these classes,

393   and maybe we need to make him retake these classes, and just moved me on

394   to tenth grade and takin' on the 10th grade schedule and then failin' there,

394   and then movin' me on to 11th grade schedule and then…

398   I believe science was my easiest subject. …I never really had too much of a problem

399   with science…or social studies.

400   Math is my least favorite subject….I can do the work,

400   it's my least favorite subject though. …Yeah, I just think that,

401   as far as counting my own money…….I can count my own money, and I'm good.

404   I, just felt like math was a lot of work, a lot of number correction,

405   and I know I didn't see myself bein' a numbers correction type of person—

405   for the rest of my life….so….

406   English….uhhh, on the high school level, when I got to high school,

407   it did become a little bit harder…Uhhhh, I think it was because of the work load,

408   That's why it was a little more harder to me.

408   I can truly say that English and math were my least favorite subjects. …

410   My first year [in high school] I did not fail it [English].

410   I had a teacher, Miss H*, she uhhhh, really took a liking to me,

411   so she made sure that, you know, I'd be at the work—no matter—whether

412   she had to force me to do the work, or I just came in

412   and finally had the attitude to do it on my own.

413   But, she made sure that I was not going to fail her course.

415   I think she knew that her class had a reputation …we were freshman coming in and,

416   you know, we didn't, we hadn't adjusted to the high school life, yet

417   …so we, you know, wildin' out really…, and I think she started to notice that,

419   and she started to make a valid effort to make our class a little bit more interesting.

419   So, not only could we learn, but, also, she was findin' a way to teach us.

420   She was findin' another way to teach us, and instead of bein' a boring teacher—

421   put this on the board and "do this."

424   I can't count on how many hands, how many deadlines she probably extended for us…

425   to get work in….and depending on our interpretation and understanding of….that..

426   whichever it may have been, she did change her options up a little bit to accommodate us.

427   More than most teachers did.

[Contrasting Instruction]

428   I had a teacher in tenth grade by the name of Mr. C*. He was our Geometry teacher.

429   This is my first year of taking Geometry in high school,

429   and he was not a good teacher at all. Every student, I believe, in our school hated him.

430   And, ...I think the only kids that past his class were the kids who took a likin' to math.

432   …he couldn't explain Geometry to us….he come into the classroom at 10:00 am

432   in the mornin', and he will have….the first day, I remember the first day I walked in,

433   he had work on the board, and he was like, "do this."

434   And we were lookin' like, "we don't know how to do the work."

435   I didn't understand how to do his work because I was never taught it by him.

436   So, in turn, I just kinda ended up, after so long—I just ended up stop goin' to his class.

437   He didn't care.

437   He never made a call home, he never, never called my mom,

438   and I had a mom who was in my life, and she really, was up in my head about school.

439   So, he never called, he never sent home a letter, never was a suspension,

440   never was a disciplinary meetin', never was any of that.

440   My mom didn't even know I had stopped goin' to his class—

441   until parent/teacher conference—till the end of the year.

442   Then, she found out that I had so many absences in his class,

442   that she knew I wasn't going then…

444   Besides that, he never made an effort to let her know anything.

Evaluation

457   Mr. C* was my geometry teacher. He was the one who didn't teach anything,

458   after so long, I just….skipped his class.

446   I probably made it up [Geom] in summer school, the summer after my 11th grade year.

396   I kinda think it hindered me a little bit because I knew I was capable of doing the work.

397   ….But, I didn't do the work 2 years prior….so…I think……….

450   I don't think I was missing resources. I think I just didn't utilize my resources—

451   how other people did. We had a…we had a library at our high school, you know,

451   we had a computers that were able to be used. I just don't think I utilized it to the …

452   to my full capabilities that I could have.

464   I know it's sad to say, but I think everything, at that time, depends on how I'm doin'.

465   I think some days, where I knew I had homework where I just didn't do it,

465   and there were some days where I did do it. It wasn't that I didn't care,

466   it was just that…..I honestly can't even remember what my mindset was.

467   There was just….one of those things, where if I felt like it I did it,

468   and if I didn't—I didn't.

Resolution/Coda

395   They just continue to push me through.

389   I finished high school.

Instruction narrative 2—supportive instruction.

Abstract

473   Vivian Thomas. …it was originally designed for special needs students…

476   Then regular ed kids started to get in there when they were failing….

Orientation

478   I'm lucky for them to take me and work with me last school year of high school,

478   to be able to graduate on time.

Complicating action

480   It definitely helped me out a lot. Just..just…saved my life..really…

481   I wouldn't have done with high school if it wasn't for them.

482   The way that was is it was a 1 through 4 schedule, every day you had a 1-4 schedule.

482   Now whether you had the 1-4 in the afternoon or in the evening…

483   if you had the 1-4 in the morning—you would come to school from 8 to 12:20.

484   By 12:20, you're done with school for the rest of the day.

485   But, within that 4 hours, you spent 3 hours in their classroom,

485   and then you had an elective.

486   but ….during the time you spent in that classroom,

487   …the schedule was made for classes that you needed.

488   So, for instance, the classes that I failed my first two years….

488   Once I got in 11th grade, the classes that I failed were the classes that I needed…

489   not classes that I was supposed to be takin' as a junior. If you know what I mean?

491   So they were classes that I needed, but it was…..it was more…on my report card…

492   towards the normal kids report card…they would have 6 or 7 classes—I had 8 on mine.

492   So, I needed 4 hours of school every day, for 8 grades.

494   It could be a kid in there that was a senior, and I was a junior,

495   and I could be in there takin' a freshman math class or….and he could be a senior,

496   and he could be takin' a…a…sophomore Geometry class

497   —but we all did the same work.

500   we learned how to work—Microsoft word, Microsoft PowerPoint,

501   we learned how to work everything from…hyperlinks to uh….we did it all.

501   We did more work in that program, than regular ed students did

502   in their day to day classes.

503   We had a website… And we started to use Blackboard in that program.

504   And, when we would have to read something here…and maybe this day

505   you got out a the book all work and you take this all work home and do it outta the book,

506   or maybe today you gotta go on Blackboard—

507   and you gotta do your homework on Blackboard.

507   We had…we did community service projects…..uhmmm…

518   It made me feel great. Community service was just a something I always looked to do.

519   I'm always lookin' for the next big thing to do to give back to my community,

520   so….it was a great thing for me to do.

508   …we did uhhh..social studies work out the book, we did math work out the book,

508   we did math work off the computer….[laughs]…

509   we uhh….you know….we created a portfolio.

Evaluation

487   …the schedule was made for classes that you needed.

496   …we all did the same work…we all followed the teacher's curriculum.

521   I was in a position where…uhh…I was behind in credits, and…uhh…

522   what this program was supposed to originally be, it was supposed to originally be for IEP

522   Special Ed students…they were supposed to particularly…it was…

523   the program was supposed to be just for them.

524   But, they ended up startin' it to be something different….

Resolution/Coda

509   we created a portfolio.

510   My portfolio that I created in that program still helps me to this day,

510   when I need something for something that I workin' on current.

481   I wouldn't have done with high school if it wasn't for them.

480   just…saved my life..really…like….this program saved my life.

Instruction combined poetic narrative.

Instruction—Obstacles and Supports
Throughout my high school career, I struggled…
You have to take all the same classes as everybody else.
I did fail some of my classes,
and they proceeded to move me on—without…
without understanding.
I kinda think it hindered me.

<u>Learning Obstacles</u>
Math is my least favorite subject.
Math—it always—it stung me every time.
Math. Math. Any other subject, I had it.
I could find the means to just tackle it….just to get it out the way.
Math… like, when I have to study it on my own, and….put it into perspective,
like…looking at it in a book, or in a test….
it just looks the same. Everything looks the same.
It don't look different to me.

It's just that I couldn't get it.
as far as counting my own money…
I can count my own money, and I'm good.
I just felt like math was a lot of work--a lot of number correction,
 and I know I didn't see myself bein' a numbers correction type of person—
for the rest of my life….so….
when it's quick with math, I'm great at it,
but when you got—find this first, then find this,
 then it's your answer at the end….it's crazy!

<u>Instruction Obstacles</u>
I had a teacher in tenth grade by the name of Mr. C*.
 He was our Geometry teacher…
and he was not a good teacher at all.
 Every student, I believe, in our school hated him.
He couldn't explain Geometry to us.
I remember the first day I walked in,
 he had work on the board, and he was like, "do this."
And we were lookin' like, "we don't know how to do the work."
I didn't understand how to do his work because I was never taught it by him.
So, in turn, I just kinda ended up, after so long—
I just ended up stop goin' to his class.
He didn't care.

You know, we sit there, …you really don't get it,
you can go with someone and partner up

and they can show you how to do it… like in the classroom…,
but when you really not paying attention,
like….we really just sit there like talk—we kids.

She just sittin' up there on the computer and stuff,
and I'm like…..like you wanna ask her for help of anything,
and the whole class starts to talkin'.
The bell just rings, and then everbody just gets up
and just grabs the paper and left.
And then it's another day in the class, new chapter and
It's me, and I haven't learned anything.
I'm just sittin' there stuck.

And then, afterwords, I be like,
I'm doing all this in math,
and they making it this hard for me!
And after this class,
I might not ever see this math in my life ever again!
So….it's like, like, a crazy feelin' to me.
To have to struggle through all this, to not ever see it again…,
You should really be able to break it down to like a younger level.

Instruction Supports
My first year I had a teacher, Miss H*,
she uhhhh, really took a liking to me.
She made sure that, you know, I'd be at the work—no matter,
she made sure that I was not going to fail her course.
I think she knew that her class had a reputation…
And, I think that once she got up in there,
we were freshman coming in and, you know,
we hadn't adjusted to the high school life, yet…
so we, you know, wildin' out really…,
and she started to make a valid effort to make our class
a little bit more interesting.
So, not only could we learn, but, also,
she was findin' a way to teach us.
She was findin' another way to teach us…
instead of bein' a boring teacher.

One of my favorite classes was math,
he was more of….young minded.
He understood students at age point, like, here you all—16…18…
I know ya'll don't wanna be in here bored like….
he actually made the class fun.
Like, he was one of the homeboys,
but at a certain point, he knew like, and we knew like,

he still our teacher—we still have to respect him.
He didn't teach us like…I'm gonna get money because you're a student type…
some teachers be like…you here…you can't do nothing about it…
I'm just teachin'…like I had teachers like that—
you don't get it that's your problem.
I'm still gonna get paid at the end of the day type of teacher.
 But, he was one of them teachers—
"I had teachers like ya'll had, so I understand like—
you need more attention,
you might need more help,
 so I'm here for ya'll."
Like, that was the most understandin' class I ever had.

I had a good Chemistry teacher, so—he made it easy for me.
He showed us a lot. That's what he did.
We always experimenting,
 and a lot of hands on stuff, so I was so into it.
You could not be into the stuff.
 He bring liquid nitrogen, and freeze things,
 and how we boiled, and all…..
you can't not be into that you know…
you can't just not learn.

I was in a position where I was behind in credits.
Vivian Thomas…it was originally designed for special needs students.
The schedule was made for classes that you needed.
So, for instance, the classes that I failed my first two years…..
once I got in 11th grade, the classes that I failed were the classes that I needed…
not classes that I was supposed to be takin' as a junior.
So they were classes that I needed…
the normal kids report card…they would have 6 or 7 classes—
I had 8 on mine.
So, I needed 4 hours of school every day, for 8 grades.
It could be a kid in there that was a senior, and I was a junior,
and I could be in there takin' a freshman math class or….
and he could be a senior, and he could be takin' a sophomore Geometry class—
but we all did the same work.
She never differentiated…we all did the same work…
we all followed the teacher's curriculum.

I'm lucky for them to take me
and work with me last school year of high school,
 to be able to graduate on time.
Yeah. It definitely helped me out a lot.
 Just..just…saved my life..really…like….
this program saved my life.

I wouldn't have done with high school if it wasn't for them.

Impressions and Conclusions
I got to interested in it to keep my attention.
That's what I feel….my downfall for studin'—
if it gets too boring—and I'm like—I just lose focus,
 and I try to find something excitin' about it…

It shouldn't be like…. It shouldn't be to where
everybody set up the same, to have the same goal,
to have the same….because—it's like—it's not the same.
You know…people are not the same.
People are gonna struggle.

You know people see it from different points.
Your stronger at some stuff than like other stuff.
Some people have that block, you know.
Sometimes, that's just how it is.
They can be genius at one, uhhh, subject,
but the next subject struggle at. I mean—
everybody's gonna have a weakness…..
no one's gonna be just perfect…
every one's gonna have that weakness.

Mentoring.

"My father walked out right before I started high school."

Caesar's Mentoring narrative.

Abstract

760   My coach. He was just always there.

762   He's met my family…like…..ummm…he would be the person.

Orientation

768   …He was just kinda like that father for you…you know. Like, I didn't have a father.

769   He made me feel wanted. And wherever I feel wanted is where I stay.

Complicating action

751   When I moved here, my sophomore year, …Uhhhh, actually,

752   I moved because like family problems and stuff.

753   ….I've never like been with my parents, so…Well, my mom is,

754   you know she has problems, she's not in such good health

755   and I don't know my dad,….

760   My coach. … He's bought me new shoes every year—for the sport—new gear

766   and whatever like—all the little stuff and accessories that I want.

760   He was just always there. Well, I called him one night.

761   I needed gas money…whatever…I was stuck. He lives kinda far out.

762   He got right up. It was about 12 something at night and we had school the next day.

764   Probably, I was doing something I had no business doing.

765   I can't really tell you exactly what it was, but I remember….

Evaluation

769   I thought about transferring schools…once you feel wanted,

770   and this person did this and this for you…it's like, I can't leave.

771   Even at scrimmages, coaches that have offered me to come to their schools,

772   like—right in front of my coach…..you can't…it's just the loyalty.

Resolution/Coda

775   I live with a teacher, so I know……like the problems.

774   I mean they have to go home to their own kids and their own problems.

776   Just like my coach…it never mattered….whatever.

772   …it's just the loyalty.

Mentoring combined poetic narrative.

Mentoring—Feeling Valued
<u>Van</u>
As far as a mentor….I think my uncle was my biggest.
My father walked out right before I started high school.
Bein' that I didn't had that growin' up,
My uncle is more like a father figure to me.
My uncle was the first taught me how to play football,
and he was the one who stayed on me when my grades were slippin'
or when I needed to step up,
or when I needed discipline.
It was my uncle.
<u>Caesar</u>
I moved because like family problems and stuff.
I didn't have a father.
My mom is, you know she has problems.
I've never like been with my parents, so…
My coach--he was just always there.
He was just kinda like that father for you…you know.
He made me feel wanted—
and wherever I feel wanted is where I stay.
I thought about transferring schools…
once you feel wanted,
and this person did this and this for you…
it's like, I can't leave,
…it's just the loyalty.
<u>Duane</u>
Both my parents.
My strength and toughness lies with me father—
and love and like "you can do it don't worry about it"
was always my mother's side.
 Like, she'll give me like, the mind state….
.and my father's like—"man up and do whatcha gotta do"
and my moms like "you gonna have that type of problem,
people gonna do this,"

so both of them played like a major part.

Concluding Poetic Narrative on Obstacles and Supports of School Success

Culminating Poetic Narrative—All Voices (Based on Gee/Riessman Format).

Frame

198   I fell down in school.

199   …and just feeling like "the man,"

202   I thought I could slack off a lot…you know…

391   and I did fail some of my classes

Affect and conflict

Stanza 1

187   Like, when your athletes, the arm is extended out

187   way more than just being a normal student.

147   I was kinda fudging and being a student athlete and being a popular guy at school.

148   And, uhhh, which cost me to struggle because I did not know how to handle everything.

Stanza 2

64   I did sports my whole life.

83   Sports always play a good part in my education.

98   If I didn't have sports with my education, I probably would have been…

99   I probably would have struggled more in school.

Stanza 3-5 (Sports)

21   Like sports, that's my life, that was my life.

83   I always wanted to play sports so bad, like….

18   you have to keep your grade point average up….

84   I knew I had to get the grades to continue to play.

79   I played varsity football in 9th grade…

81   cause they said I was too good to just waste my time on JV.

29   whatever really that I needed…..my coaches would make sure that I had it.

30   So that I could play….

91   I had a…class, made me ineligible in sports.

92   And after that, it kinda took a downfall cause it wasn't sports and education anymore…

93   it was just education. So, my focus was just like shifted,

94   and then that next semester when it was just all school, I didn't pass anything.

Stanza 6-8 (Reputation)

169   I wasn't doin' well in school at the time, and all …..

170   and it was times when all I could think about was bein' "the man"

152   I just had a lot of trouble with the understanding…

153   that you don't always have to be the guy that fit in.

161   I was the only freshman playing with some of the varsity guys.

163   I didn't know that I was gonna find that recognition,

164   so that kinda got to my head a little bit,

165   not understandin' that you had to be the man and you had to be a student also.

199   I just thought I was so popular and people liked me,

198   and just feeling like the man…,

170   and by the end of the day, bein' "the man" without the grades,

171   they get me nothin' but nothin' but ineligible.

Stanza 9-13 (Transitioning)

104   Then when I went to college, it was like…

104   they acted concerned…but they wasn't really…

105   not like "how was school?" like.

106   We used to get those type of questions …while I was in high school.

266   Sports isn't life up here for school.

271   They treat you as you're the same as everybody else.

268   They were strict about grades, like they were really not so…."oh, oh, it's an athlete!"

272   It was like being pampered to now I'm really out here on my own.

254   We big on sports down South.

256   Like, when you're athletes, the arm is extended out way more.

257   Going there it's like straight A's; we passing you…

258   we gonna get you all the way to where you need to be.

281   When I went to college….it was a whole different….yeah….

291   And, at the end of the day, when finals…final grade came out…I had an 'F,'

343   Like, I already paid for it, I don't wanna drop out the class…

346   I ain't got no choice but to try my best to get outta this class the best way I can.

343   I just felt like I was in a predicament I can't get myself out of…

345   I basically in jail in my own classroom.

113   It's like, you do whach you gotta do, and …..it's like….

114   you do whach you gotta do on your own.

Stanza 14-21 (Instruction)

406   When I got to high school, it did become a little bit harder.

391   I did fail some of my classes, and they proceeded to move me on—

392   without…uhmmm… without understanding.

395   They just continue to push me through.

428   our Geometry teacher… was not a good teacher at all.

430   I think the only kids that past his class were the kids who took a likin' to math.

432   He couldn't explain Geometry to us.

435   I didn't understand how to do his work because I was never taught it by him.

436   I just ended up stop goin' to his class.

437   He never made a call home, he never, never called my mom….

440   My mom didn't even know I had stopped goin' to his class—

441   until parent/teacher conference—till the end of the year.

557   You know, we sit there, …you really don't get it,

559   we really just sit there like talk—we kids…

562   The bell just rings, and then everbody just gets up and just grabs the paper and left.

564   I'm just grabbing all the worksheets, so I have all the worksheets and stuff…

563   And then it's another day in the class, new chapter,

564   and it's me, and I haven't learned anything. I'm just sittin' there stuck. …

601   It shouldn't be to where everybody set up the same,

602   You know…people are not the same.

410   I had a teacher, she made sure that I was not going to fail her course.

417   We hadn't adjusted to the high school life, yet…so we, you know, wildin' out really.

419   She started to make a valid effort to make our class a little bit more interesting.

420   She was findin' another way to teach us, and instead of bein' a boring teacher.

521   I was in a position where…uhh…I was behind in credits…

473   Vivian Thomas…it was originally designed for special needs students,

487   the schedule was made for classes that you needed…,

497   but we all did the same work.

588   Some people have that block, you know.

587   It's like…your stronger at some stuff than like other stuff.

588   They can be genius at one, uhhh, subject, but the next subject struggle at.

610   Why not see, why not try something else to see if it can work—you know?

Stanza 22-23 (Mentoring)

768   Like, I didn't have a father.

755   I don't know my dad.

740   My father…walked out right before I started high school.

753   I've never like been with my parents.

739   My uncle is more like a father figure to me,

740   and my uncle was the first taught me how to play football.

760   My coach. He was just always there.

769   He made me feel wanted. And wherever I feel wanted is where I stay.

Frame

135   I shoulda had more support,

111   but I never had nobody helping me.

136   It's just me doing everything by myself.

202   If I could do it over….

203   I'd a did it different. Yeah….

CHAPTER 5

Discussion of Findings

Reflections on Interviews

I was excited to meet with my participants and hear their stories on school experiences. However, not all the young men whose names were given to me by referral from educators were interested in sharing their stories. Three of those referrals wanted to share their stories. Yet, there were some topics that participants seemed hesitant to share. When I was recruiting for the study, one of the people I spoke to for possible referrals was an older male of African American heritage in an administrative position at a local university. He mentioned to me that some males fitting the criteria for the study may feel "insulted" just by approaching them based on the criteria of coming from low-income families, struggling in school, and possibly having a disability. On three other occasions, three other people who are African American people I knew in one capacity or another, also seemed uncomfortable with the criteria I was using. At the time, I was not sure how this would bode for me, since I am middle-aged, female, and white. Fortunately, I found three participants willing to share. Figure 4 summarizes how the five thematic elements acted as obstacles, supports, or both for the participants in anticipation of the discussion to follow.

Figure 4. Thematic Analysis Chart

THEMATIC ELEMENTS	OBSTACLES/SUPPORTS	SHARED NARRATIVE
SPORTS	O: When not eligible for sports, participants lost motivation to be successful in school.	"So, my focus was just like shifted, and then that next semester when it was just all school, I didn't pass anything. …I

		kinda lost focus, after I lost sports"
	S: Participants wanted to maintain passing grades, so they could play sports.	"I always wanted to play sports so bad, like…I knew I had to get the grades to continue to play…." "It helped me because I love sports…you can't play on the team with an 'F'."
REPUTATION	O: Focus on "tryin' to be 'the man'."	"I didn't know that I was gonna find that recognition, so that kinda got to my head a little bit, and me bein' the man…not understandin' that you had to be the man and you had to be a student also."
	S: Due to participants' reputations as "top athletes," they were given additional tutoring and one-on-one instruction—along with special accommodations to pass classes.	"Like, when you're athletes, the arm is extended out way more than just being a normal student."
CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION	O: Participants were pushed through to the next grade's courses without an understanding of the curriculum. In addition, some teachers failed to make a valid effort to make classes interesting for students to learn.	"I did fail some of my classes, and they proceeded to move me on—without …understanding." "…She just sittin'up there on the computer and stuff, and I'm like…it's me, and I haven't learned anything. I'm just sittin'there stuck." "…It was like, I basically in jail in my own classroom."
	S: Some teachers did make an effort to form relationships with students and make learning interesting, so they could learn the curriculum.	"She was findin' another way to teach us, and instead of bein' a boring teachers—put this on the board and 'do this'." "He bring liquid nitrogen, and freeze things, and how we boiled, and all….you can't not be into that you know….you can't just not learn anything from watching the stuff that goes on and doing the things and stuff."

TRANSITIONING	O: Participants were not prepared to independently work on their own at the level of instruction needed after transitioning from high school. Also, with their high schools coaches advocating for all their needs in high school, so they could play sports, these students lacked the necessary skills to effectively advocate for themselves. In addition, participants lacked time management and prioritizing skills.	"And like, class-wise, transition to the college, I never had that responsibility to myself. …It was all on me." "The teachers I had was like—you should know it from a master's standpoint before you learn it." "I tried the tutoring for math…like—some points—I get it! And then after that session is over, …and try to do it myself…it goes back blank like." "I got all the paperwork from that class…took it to the Dean to look at it. …, and he told me it was 'an insufficient amount of …proof'. I'm like…you just missing a test. …That basically mad me ineligible in sports." "Procrastinatin'. Like you can procrastinate in high school—you got time to get back on your feet, but—far as college…you gotta be on your feet."
	S: The only supportive transitioning advantage came from the portfolio and computer skills developed from the Vivian Thomas program that Van attended.	"My portfolio that I created in that program still helps me to this day…."
MENTORING	O: None that could be defined.	
	S: Whether coaches, teachers, uncles, or parents, the participants related positive attributes to being mentored and mentoring.	"He was just kinda like that father for you… Like, I didn't have a father. He made me feel wanted. And, wherever I feel wanted is where I stay."

Free sharing.

Having spent most of my life living and teaching in California, I was hoping to relay a sense of comfortableness with my participants. All three of my participants were all congenial, easy to speak with, and had very poignant stories to share. Each participant had specific issues that they felt were the main causes for having struggled in school, and they also had experiences they felt supported them during difficult times in school.

It did not surprise me that these young men had, and still continued to in some cases, participate in sports. For many young men and women, sports can be a motivating force to attend school and get passing grades. I was surprised, however, at the overall pervasive extent that sports encompassed their lives—weaving through all aspects of their lives—including their reputations, classroom instruction, mentoring relationships, and transitioning skills and experiences. These young men based their value in society and school culture on their abilities to play sports well—to be a top athlete. The problem becomes—what happens when they become ineligible to play sports? Add to that a reputation of "bein' the man" because of being a top athlete—if having that reputation gives them value, in their perspective—how does that loss due to ineligibility impact them? Considering the minute number of high school and college athletes that make it in professional sports—enough to earn a living—should we, as educators and a society—continue to place such emphasis on student athletes to the point of neglecting content curriculum and transitioning skills?

I was impressed, however, by the lack of complaints over money or not having resources. There was no whining from any of the participants about their difficulties with grades—only disappointment at not being prepared to handle it on their own. These young men were self-reflecting, looking back on their what they perceived to be their mistakes and how they could

have handled it better. Their attitudes were forward looking, and they were not willing to give up. They chose to share their stories in the hope of helping others who might be in similar circumstances they faced in school.

Hitting a brick wall.

In contrast to the open share, still, there were some topics where I felt I had hit a brick wall. During the interviews, all three participants wanted to make clear that they were smart, fully capable, and successful in many areas—in spite of, what they struggled with in school. These indications of their abilities were not in response to any prompt by me and mostly took place in the beginning of the first interview before visibly relaxing in my company. Although, during the telling of an obstacle, there were some interjections given—seemingly—as a reminder to their aptitude.

In addition, there were three other areas that the participants did not want to discuss in general. These were receiving special education services, coming from low-income families, and their home lives. Although, Duane did elaborate on his family life to some extent, and it is notable that he comes from an intact two parent home. While it appears likely that these students had disabilities in the area of math—and possibly reading and written expression for Van—I was unable to get them to discuss receiving special education services. The most I could get was involvement in a special education program from Van and being pulled for testing from Caesar. Van did mention qualifying for free lunches throughout school. When I broached these subjects with the participants and found that they began to shut off from me, somewhat, I had to change to a new topic and spend some time getting them comfortable talking to me again before moving on to experiences they wanted to share.

Narratives and Literature

   Cultural capital—values and beliefs.

As written in chapter two, cultural capital is based on values and beliefs that people practice on a daily basis. For these participants, value was determined by their ability to excel in sports. Duane's older brothers all played sports at his high school, previous to him attending, so he stated that his varsity coach already knew who is was and aided him in moving onto the varsity team when he was only a freshman. In addition, Caesar states that sports is his life. Also, for Van, being a student athlete was equated with "being a popular guy at school."

Included with these values and beliefs embedded within cultural capital are social roles. These social roles may be the outcome of cultural reproduction, which can include "knowledge and habits internalized through socialization, accumulated through investment in education or training, and objectified in cultural goods and artifacts" (Ecclestone, 2004, 31). All people want to feel a sense of belonging and an increase in self-esteem. Historically, African American males have been represented in basketball, football, track, and baseball, with basketball being labeled as a Black sport by both European and African Americans (Harrison, 1999). The sport of basketball has an 80% African American population of professional ball players (Harrison, Jr. 2001). These are all sports which do not require expensive coaching or facilities (Kozol, 1991).

Theses socio-cultural norms, whether forced, or self-selected, "play an important role in the dominance exhibited by Black athletes in [especially] basketball" (Hodge et al., 2008, p. 937). Black athletes "aspire to professional careers in basketball, boxing, and football as a means to economic and social mobility" (2008, p. 937). These young athletes may often self-stereotype when characteristics of "hoop dreams" [being able to make money playing sports—including the fame and all that goes with it] are viewed as acceptable by athletes' social groups, thus

solidifying stereotypes of the Black athlete. When this happens, athletes experience ups and downs of self-esteem and motivation—all dependent on their identity and value as an athlete (Hodge et al., 2008; Miller, 1998; Biernat, Vescio, and Green, 1996). This trend of Black students playing these low investment sports has continued since the 1950's (Hodge et al., 2008; Kozol, 1998; Burden, J. et al, 2004; Coakly, 2004; Wiggins, 1989).

All three of my participants played football and basketball, while a third also did track. This over-representation comes from two areas: 1) the stereotype that the physical attributes of Black athletes make these sports more suitable—versus sports that require intellectual prowess (Hodge et al., 2008), and 2) the fact that football, track, basketball, and baseball require less funding and coaching, and are therefore easier to maintain for schools in low-income areas (Kozal, 1998; Hodge et al., 2008). Those student athletes from low income families hone their skills at free, public outdoor facilities that commonly have basketball hoops, baseball and football fields, and tracks—which can be accessed at local schools. This is in contrast to the country clubs for members only that those with money have access to (Burden et al., 2004). It is not that these students were born with exceptional athletic ability, but, rather, when they feel competent in their athletic abilities, they will spend the time necessary to develop superior skills in aspiring to become professional athletes (Hodge, et al., 2008; Harrison, et al., 2004; Ogden & Hilt, 2003). Hodges et al. argues that the message to young Black males should be on of balance—that "sports careers must not come at the exclusion of more potentially attainable educational and professional goals" (2008, p. 941). There is less than 1% chance that these athletes will pay sports professionally (Hodge et al., 2008)

Many schools are now schools of choice. Meaning, parents can send their children to any school with room, if they have transportation. With many schools being funded by the numbers

of students attending, successful sports programs bring prestige to schools and thereby attract new students. Still, at what cost, and what message are we sending to students when we fill their days with practice and games, all the while neglecting instruction and life skills to aid in transitioning? Is being an athlete what these students really want, or do they see it as a way to fit in—to have value in their school culture and eventually greater society?

Sports.

While all three participants stated that they felt they were motivated to get passing grades in school to play sports, and—therefore—being an athlete was a support, there are relative statements to support their involvement in sports as an obstacle to school success also.

Support.

Participants stated that all they ever wanted to do was play sports. Caesar stated that he was a top athlete every year at his school. He was a little guy playing with the big guys since he first started at the high school. His team member and he received extra tutoring in small groups and one-on-one to maintain the grades to play sports. He received a "lot of special attention," and when things got hard for him in math—his coach spoke to his math teacher on his behalf for extra accommodations. Duane shares that "when your athletes, the arm is extended out way more than just being a normal student."

Duane stated that "he was too good to just waste …time on JV." His older brothers' reputations aided him with the varsity coach in moving up from JV. Duane "always wanted to play sports so bad, …[he] knew he had to get the grades to continue to play."

Van, on self-reflection, admitted that he was "kinda fudging" with his school work, as his focus was on being a "student athlete and being a popular guy at school." He admits that he didn't know how to balance "bein' the man" and being a student at the same time. He shared that

when in classes, "I'm a top athlete, I gotta clown around….I thought I could slack off a lot…I just…big headed." He recognized that if he could do it over, he would do it differently.

So, as a support, being a "top athlete" did motivate them to get passing grades, but were they passing because they were earning the grades? Were they assimilating the content? Van stated that even though he failed some classes the first two years of high school, they continued to push him through. He felt this hindered him because he was capable of doing the work but "they proceeded to move me on…without understanding." All three students also had high school coaches that advocated for them—regarding their grades—getting them additional tutoring, extra time, and other accommodations. Caesar's coach even bought him all the necessities and accessories to play sports. While the advocating by their coaches enabled them to continue playing sports in high school, the question arises, might it have helped them more to learn to advocate for their own needs?

Obstacle.

The desires of the coaches and the students did help them get through high school, but at what cost? The most difficult transition for all three participants came when transitioning from the high school environment to the college environment. All three participants stated that they felt unprepared for college—especially in the curriculum. They were not getting the small group tutoring or the one-on-one help that they got in high school. For Duane, when he experienced a failing class the first year of college, he expected that his coaches would intercede for him with the dean to get his grade overturned. He stated that when his coaches at college found out he failed a class, they were shocked, but "they really, never really tried to help me." When he became ineligible to play sports, he lost his focus and came back home to attend a community

college. He shares that sports "was always like hand to hand…with my education…because sports gave me something to look forward to."

In addition, all three participants' days were filled with sports after school and throughout the summer. Van stated that he would go to school, go to practice, go home—sometimes do his homework if he was in the mood, and just hang out until bedtime. Duane felt that if he had been involved in some of the transition activities that other students' normally did—such as visiting colleges and preparing more academically, he might have adjusted more easily into his adult years. However, with his sports obligations, he was unable to attend those events and activities—due to his practice and game schedule. So, in reality, these sports families create isolation as networks are held to teammates and coaches—identity and value dependent on belonging to or being ineligible to play-with the loss of identity and value leading to exclusion and isolation. As previously mentioned in chapter two, students may fear developing new identities and dispositions that would increase school success, allow them to reject hanging out with others who do not value school, and aid them in engaging in study habits that allow for school success (Ecclestone, 2004). While these new identities would allow for an increase in social capital, it would be a step out of their comfort zone of what they believe is expected of them, and, in turn, they may believe that their value—based on a perceived social role in their school culture— would be at risk.

Maeroff addressed the impact of experience on cognitive skills and academic success with five protective factors, as mentioned in chapter two. When related to the themes that evolved from the participants' interviews, they would address the following: 1) caring relationships—Duane and Caesar both expressed positive relationships of caring from their high school coaches, but failed to find the same relationships in college when they became ineligible;

2) high expectations and clear standards of behavior—as long as the three of them played high school sports, their coaches and teachers made sure they had the grades to continue being eligible; 3) high quality activities—the only activities the participants were able to do were their sports, which consumed their time; 4) opportunities to contribute—once Van realized that he had to attend to his classes to graduate, and create a balance between sports and getting good grades—he was able to do community service through the Vivian Thomas program; and 5) continuity of supports—there lack of transition skills and supports crippled their ability for a smooth transition. The only continuity of support were their coaches, but the college coaches did not have the level of concern or advocacy the participants had come to expect from their coaches.

Classroom instruction.

Participants experienced a variety of instructional experiences in the classrooms they attended. The most supportive instruction experiences were connections made through relationships. Rita Pierson, a professional educator since 1972, recently stated in a presentation that for significant learning to occur, there must be significant relationships. In response to another teacher who stated, "They don't pay me to like the kids. They pay me to teach a lesson. The kids should learn it. I should teach it. They should learn it. Case closed." Rita replied, "You know, kids don't learn from people they don't like" (https://www.ted.com/talks/rita_pierson_every_kid_needs_a_champion). This epitomizes the feelings of the participants. The classes they did well in, they felt the teachers genuinely cared for them, and those they failed—they felt the teachers were just there to earn money, with no concern over whether they understood the curriculum or not.

Support.

English became much harder for Van once he reached high school. As incoming freshman, Van felt he had some adjustment issues to high school life. What he liked about his English teacher that year was her willingness to "make our class a little bit more interesting." He felt "she was findin' another way to teach…instead of bein' a boring teacher." He also felt that she "really took a liking to me, so she made sure that…I'd be at the work—no matter--…she made sure that I was not going to fail her course." The fact that Van felt she liked him became a support to his school success, as the relationship motivated him to learn.

Once Van was admitted into the Vivian Thomas program, he was able to catch up on his credits to graduate. He equates being in the program to having "saved my life." During this time, he was able to make up the work for the classes he had previously failed in less time than if he re-took the class. While he made it clear that it was a program developed for students with special needs, he also stated that "regular ed kids started to get in there when they were failing, and dependent on the teachers, who they wanted to take." The teachers had the option of choosing who they wanted to work with in the program. Van states that he created a portfolio that "still helps me to this day, when I need something for something that I workin' on current." He also related that they used Blackboard, other computer software, and participated in community service with the elderly, which made him feel great. Van stated that "community service was just a something I always looked to do…for the next big thing to do to give back to my community." Van believed this program to be a support for school success.

Caesar was also able to develop relationships with some of his teachers that supported his school instruction. While he had difficulties with math, he did well with his high school Chemistry teacher. Caesar stated, "Isa just average….he's a really good Chemistry teacher, so—

he made it easy for me, so that's why I kinda understood like the Chemistry—as far as the formulas and everything." He relayed that his teacher was always giving them experiments to do—with a lot of hands-on "stuff." They boiled and froze and did labs nearly every other day.

Obstacle.

When Van stated failing some of his classes, they proceeded to move him on "without understanding." He felt this hindered him and he believes he was capable of doing the work, but "they just continue to push me through." With the work getting more difficult, after moving into the upper grades, he did not do well with teachers who were "boring" and would "put this on the board and 'do this'." He felt his high school Geometry teacher Mr. C was not effective. When he walked into the classroom, work was posted on the board, and "he was like, 'do this,' and we were lookin' like, 'we don't know how to do the work.'" Van stated that he "didn't understand how to do his work because I was never taught by him," and then he "just ended up stop goin' to his class." His mother, who was involved in his education, never found out until parent—teacher conferences—at the end of the school year. Other than that, Van claims that "he never made an effort to let her know anything." This lack of concern over Van not attending class made him feel without value as a student to this teacher.

While Van relayed his belief that the Vivian Thomas program was a support for his school success, I believe that there were some issues, which later created obstacles for him. This program had students from all high school grades 9-12th. Van attended four hours a day, and one of those hours he went to an elective. For the three hours he was in the classroom, he was with students from all different grade levels, working towards credit from any classes they had previously failed. However, while one person might have been doing Geometry, another Biology, another history, and—yet another working on English—all the students were taught the

same curriculum by the same teacher at the same time. Van stated, "…but we all did the same work. She never differentiated…we all followed the teacher's curriculum." Yet, what showed on their report cards, were credits given for whatever courses they had previously failed. So, while it is great that they "learned how to work—Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint," and they created portfolios, when they transitioned to college—they were unprepared for the course work required. They lacked the basic curricular framework needed to build on at the higher levels of community college or a university.

Caesar also had teachers whose instruction, he believes, created obstacles for his school success. In a satirical vignette, Caesars mimics his math teacher, "okay class. Do the warm-up on the board. Alright, open you books, we gonna go over this for the chapter." At which point the students are directed to highlight parts of the chapter. Next, a practice sheet is passed out, and at the end—students are to "grab the homework out the door." They are allowed to partner up and work together, but when, as kids, you partner with a friend—and they don't understand it either, nothing gets done. Then, Caesar shares, 'it's me, and I haven't learned anything. I'm just sittin' there stuck."

Transition needs.

All three participants lacked the necessary curricular foundation and academic skills needed to successfully transition to a college environment. Caesar related he received "a lot of tutoring, a lot of special attention…whatever I really needed…. My coaches would make sure that I had it, so that I could play." The additional supports that Caesar received aided him in maintaining his grades, but did not teach him how to study on his own or how to utilize resources independently.

Van was able to participate in the Vivian Thomas program at his school to catch up on credits for classes that he failed. While Van felt that this program saved his life, he failed to actually learn the content for the subjects that he was receiving credit for. He shared, regardless of the grade level students were in, or the subjects they were getting credit for, "we all did the same work. She never differentiated." While this may have given him the credits to graduate high school, it did not prepare him to build on that content knowledge at a higher level.

Duane, too, received special instructional accommodations. Duane struggled significantly in math, particularly with problems requiring multiple steps. He stated that when he was in the classroom, he could follow along, but then when he went home and tried to do the work on his own, the problems blended into one type, and he was unable how to differentiate the process for completing the work. However, when he was failing, his coach spoke with his math teacher and set up accommodations that included one-on-one instruction, after school tutoring, a special schedule for taking quizzes and tests, and a homework schedule—all to be done after team practice for whatever sport he was playing at the time. All Duane, Van, and Caesar had to do was show up to where they were told, when they were told, and instruction—with accommodations— would be supplied to maintain eligibility to play sports.

With their coaches and teachers managing their schedules, these students only had to show up to their allotted places at the allotted times. However, when they left high school and went to college, they did not have the same relationships with their coaches and teachers. With no one to plan their time for them, and with the increased difficulty of college curriculum, they were left to their own means of organizing and managing their time. As Duane mentions, when he went to college, it was all on him. He states, "That's what I wasn't prepared for. I was still goin' out…and 'I'll do that later'. Procrastinatin." But, he continues, while students might get

away with that in high school, you cannot get behind in college. "You gotta be on your feet. You gotta million problems about everything," he shared. That was his first time being away on his own, and he stated, "That semester, when I fail everything, it really took a toll on me."

Duane was, also, not prepared to advocate for his own needs without support. When he failed the music appreciation class he felt was a blow-off at the time, he found himself alone going to the Dean to get his grade overturned. He had support from coaches in high school getting his grades fixed, so he expected the same from his college coaches. Still, there are many "top athletes" available to play, and his coaches expected him to handle his own academic issues if he wanted to continue playing at the college level. Duane blames his inability to get this grade changed due to the lack of involvement by his college coaches. He shared, "Since I was just there as a student, by myself, talkin' to the Dean, getting' everything squared away—instead of my coaches and everybody behind me…like…you see…this is not right, …everybody just left it alone."

In addition to time management and academic knowledge, and because of the amount of time spent on the ball field, participants lacked experiences with transition activities that other students participated in. Duane shares, "As far as high school, I never visited campuses…like….I was always like busy with sports and what not. …You know, they have college events and stuff like that, they gonna prepare you for college. …I never got the chance." This poses the question, if these students had spent more time learning how to learn, manage their time, visit campuses, and participate in additional transitioning activities—such as adult living skills—would they have been more successful transitioning into their adult lives?

Bein' the man.

One of the surprising, and interesting, observations I made is the maturity level of the participants involved. I believe the age, and experiences to date since graduating high school, allowed for a comparison of the cultural and social attitudes they had then, to what their current understandings and values are now. Time has passed, and these young men have reflected—in an impressive way—on their values and beliefs and how they have changed. Each participant recognized how they would have done it differently. Yet, none of them are bitter or resentful—simply moving forward and working harder to claim new lives for themselves and leave the old ones behind.

Of the values being left behind that most impacted their success is reputation—or, as they put it—"being the man." Van defines "bein' the man" as "you was just the popular kid, and everybody knew who you was. …all the females knew who you was…all the guys knew who you was." Reputation acted as both a support for these participants and an obstacle. It acted as a support because of the doors it opened for them; they received additional tutoring, one-on-one instruction, extended time to turn work in, athletic apparel, shoes, and accessories, and a place in the social structure of school that gave them a sense of belonging. In reverse, however, it became an obstacle because the participants felt they had to live up to a cultural standard set by their peers, which took their time and energy, and became distracting.

In regards to supports, all three participants received "a lot of tutoring, a lot of special attention," as an athlete. Their reputations as athletes preceded them as they moved from middle school to high school. When Duane's JV basketball coach kicked him off the team because of attitude, the varsity coach who knew Duane and his older brothers had him reinstated—and later moved to varsity. Duane shared, "they said I was too good to just waste my time on JV." Van

had spent his summer playing with the varsity team before he went to the 9th grade. And, while Caesar went through some culture shock moving to Michigan from Texas, once his reputation was spread—he too joined the varsity teams.

In contrast, having the reputation of "bein' the man" created obstacles for their school success also. As Van stated, "I was kinda fudging being a student athlete and being a popular guy at school…,which cost me to struggle because I did not know how to handle everything.…I just had a lot of trouble with understanding …that you don't always have to be the guy that fit in." Van attributed many of his struggles with trying to maintain the reputation of "being the popular guy" with balancing that of succeeding in athletics. He did not necessarily believe having that reputation to be a bad thing, and it was one he was not aware of at first, yet trying to maintain that reputation was a stimulus for failing classes in school. Van stated, "it was times when all I could think about was bein' 'the man' and by the end of the day, bein' 'the man' without the grades—they get me nothin' …but ineligible.   After a while, I honestly didn't care to be 'the man'…I just wanted to graduate." Van, now 22 years of age, recently moved. He states, "I'm a very smart individual. I'm more in the mind-set of a self-made business man that wants to get a degree, and then believes school is for him."

Caesar and Duane had similar experiences with their reputations. Caesar related that he tried not to let his personal life, and reputation, interfere with school, but there were times when it did—resulting with his remark, "I fell down in school." The causes of which were "girls…and then me coming here to Michigan and just feeling like 'the man'. I just thought I was so popular and people liked me, …I was distracted by a lot of people too—distractions was the number 1." He continued to share that his reputation of being a top athlete carried with it the expectations of his peers to be the center of attention. Caesar states, "I'm a top athlete, I gogta clown around—

this and that. I thought I could slack off a lot…you know…like…I just…big headed. If I could do it over….I'd a did it different." Caesar is now taking classes at a community college and hopes to transfer them back to the college he originally attended after high school—and maybe play sports again.

Duane's reputation created a strain on his emotions and impacted his ability to complete all the requirements being an athlete, student, boyfriend, and family member required. He shared, "you got emotions you're dealing with on the court, on the field, plus—you gotta give people attention outside of it. …So, it could be hard sometime." Trying to balance all of his obligations, while living up to his reputation, came to a head when he became ineligible to play sports at college. Sports and education always went hand-in-hand for Duane. After becoming ineligible, he "kinda lost focus." He quit going to class and struggled with finding a new identity—or re-visioning his old one. During the interview, Duane stated, "I just got back focus—four years later—I'm 23—that happened when I was like 19." Since then, Duane has returned to Michigan and begun taking classes at a local community college. After working hard on his academics, he has recently been accepted to a university in Alabama, where his family has recently moved, and where he will—again—take up sports, but with a different perspective.

Mentoring relationships.

Mentoring, as previously mentioned in chapter two, helps build a sense of connectedness with their school communities. Caesar's coach's willingness to come and get him in the late night hours, even when there was school the next day, made him feel wanted. When Caesar needed athletic gear, his coach got him what he needed, so that he would feel less than other students who had their financial needs met at home.

Van's uncle was his main mentor. His uncle taught him how to play sports—again a cultural value—and in some cases a necessity. But, more than that, his uncle "was the one who stayed on me when my grades were slippin' or when I need to step up, or when I needed discipline." In addition, Van also felt a connection with his English teacher who made an effort to understand his adjustment to high school life and tried to make class "a little bit more interesting."

Duane, of the three participants, came from a two parent household. He credited his parents with being his mentors. He felt he received messages of "strength and toughness" from his father and one of "love and like 'you can do it don't worry about it' from his mother. In addition, like Caesar, Duane also credits his coaches and some of his high school teachers as being "more like father figures" and "being concerned about everything goin' on" in his personal life at school. This was something he felt he lacked when at college.

Revisioning What We Value

When we socially interact with others outside of our immediate families, we can establish new networks that can aid us in achieving our shared goals. This can, however, also have a limiting element if our social networks are member exclusive—such as with sports and these participants. They were so focused on being the "top athlete" that their time was consumed with sports, to the disadvantage of educational instruction and transition activities.

After completing my interviews, I found a great deal of literature on the culture of sports and students of African American descent. The belief that sports is a way for these young men to attend college and play sports has become embedded in the values system of, especially, the middle to lower socio-economic classes. Have we as educators and a society perpetuated this value system? Garland (2004) wrote that college is out of reach for Black males unless they can

show talent as an athlete, or they can qualify based on low-income financial need. However, with the increased admission standards based on high-stakes testing, universities eliminate possible opening for Black males who do poorly on standardized tests (Atwell, 2004). In addition, programs that by-pass curriculum to gain students credits to graduate create extremes obstacles because they lack the prior knowledge base to build on at the higher levels. Such as when Van earned his credits through the Vivian Thomas program. While he gained many good life skills to build learning on, the credit he received was for a curriculum he did not study. Thus, when he was moved into college classes, based on the belief that he had background knowledge in those areas because of the credits on his transcripts, he was not able manage the learning of the college material.

Black student athletes will sometimes be admitted to a university without academic credentials that are up to par with other students, but—once there, they "endure rigorous physical training" (Hodge et al., 2008, p. 936), which they are prepared for and academic classes, which they are not prepared for (Bilberry, 2000; Edwards, 1984). In the academic setting, these athletes will have to compete against other students who are academically prepared for the rigor of the courses, which will—in turn—continue to feed the stereotypes of Black students being athletically superior—but academically inferior (Hodge et al., 2008; Edwards, 1984; Harrison, 2001). It is not, however, that these athletes are less intelligent, rather—they are less prepared, having been valued in secondary school for their athletic abilities (Hodge et al., 2008). As previously discussed in chapter two, these ascribed racial and gender attributes are usually seen in status-oriented schools, which incubate feelings of detachment and disenfranchisement from the educational process (Sameroff et al., 2004).

All three participants stated that they were not prepared for the pace, expectations, or level of curriculum in college. This is supported by Hodge et al. (2008), who wrote that 40% of high school graduates surveyed related their feelings of not being prepared for college expectations. This same report asserts that Black males were also not prepared for entry level jobs either (2008). This makes sense, as the participants all related that sports were their lives and all they did was go to school, practice, and play their games. With all of their reputations, popularity, and identities based on their athleticism, there was no reason for them to believe they needed to do anything else or prepare in any other way. So, what do we as a society really value?

Implications of the Study.

Based on the lived stories of the participants, it appears that we, as a society and educators as a whole, value our reputation more than we value teaching students how to learn and success as adults. In Michigan, where the money follows the students, winning sports teams draw in promising students athletes with the reputation of having a winning school. In addition, with the quantitative accountability of passing all students, along with the threat of punitive intrusions by the state if we do not gain and maintain a passing grade, students are passed through without understanding and given credit for courses not completed.

Multiple times throughout the interviews, the participants reiterated without prompt that they were smart. Not all students learn the same way. Students with learning disabilities have average intelligences and simply learn differently. What does that say about us, as educators, if we just push students through because we believe they cannot learn—instead of changing things up so they can learn? Van state that even though he had failed some classes that he should have re-taken, "they just continue to push me through." Van stated, "I was a smart kid …who just didn't apply myself in the way I knew I should have, or that I was capable of." Van felt pushing

him through hindered him because he knew he was capable of doing the work, he simply needed someone to show him how to apply himself. At a certain point, in order to continue to play sports, Van was admitted into the Vivian Thomas program and given credit for completing whatever the teacher's curriculum was at the time—but for the courses he had failed. Thus, another student was added to the list of completing the graduation requirements.

Another interesting aspect gleaned from the interviews is the disconnect between students and some teachers. Included in the descriptions are the teachers that sit behind their computers while the students do the assignment that has been put on the board, the teachers that are glad when the students who need help quit coming to class, and the teachers who are more concerned with compliance then learning. These teachers are still out there, and their students are still struggling to learn without being taught. Connections and relationships need to be made between teachers and students. Students who feel connected and wanted will make an effort to learn.

In addition to the disconnect students feel with some teachers, is the lack of transition activities that our student athletes lack due to the amount of time and energy spent on the field honing their athletic skills. Both Duane and Caesar stated they had never been informed of, or participated in, any transition activity—such as visiting college campuses. Instead of working their schedules around others and those types of activities, everything evolved around them as athletes—whether it was tutoring, one-on-one instruction, or making up course work.

In addition, learning difficulties were not addressed with these students. Math concepts become more advanced and abstract in high level math courses. All three participants exhibited difficulties with the higher level math. Van shared that math was his least favorite subject, but that "as far as counting my own money…I can count my own money, and I'm good. …I didn't see myself bein' a numbers correction type of person—for the rest of my life." He failed

Geometry because the class is more than counting money, and he did not believe his teacher taught him. Van stated, "I think the only kids that past his class were the kids who took a likin' to math."

Caesar, too, had learning difficulties in math that were never addressed in secondary school. He stated, "Math. Any other subject, I had it. …Math—it always—it stung me every time." Only when he began receiving special tutoring, one-on-one instruction, and accommodated testing times and locations, was he able to pass math. However, without addressing his learning difficulties with the subject as a whole, he was unable to successfully complete any math courses in college when he transitioned. To this day, Caesar continues to struggle with math concepts, but he is getting tutoring help at the local community college to address this issue now. Why neither Caesar or Van were given specialized services I do not know. This was a touchy area for them to discuss. My impressions were that to admit to learning difficulties equates to not being intelligent and would be an affront to their reputation as a top athlete and African American male.

The impressions I received from Duane were the same. Duane was able to pin-point the exact issue he had with math, which many of our students with learning disabilities also struggle with. Duane's issue with math exhibited with the more complex problems associated with higher level math requiring multiple steps to solve problems. When working in the class, one type of problem at a time, Duane felt he could follow along. However, when he took home the assignments, he could not distinguish between the types of problems when they appeared on the same page. This was the same issue for tests. When multiple type problems appeared on the same page, he could not differentiate to apply the process for solving each type of problem. Duane states, "When you see a math problem that's real long…with a whole bunch of numbers

and letters—it gets intimidating sometimes. …I be like, I'm doing all this in math, and they making it this hard for me! And after this class, I might not ever see this math in my life ever again!" And, he is right. Dependent on what Duane chooses to do as a career, will he need those higher level math skills? Is what we require for students' high school diplomas what is best for them?

Limitations of the Study.

Are there limitations to this study, as with any qualitative study that uses narrative from a small population sample? It is really how you perceive it. Yes, this study is limited to the lived stories of three participants. Yet, this is just the beginning—the foundational step is moving forward to exploring how pervasive these implications are in the rest of the population of male students from African American cultures. As educators, and a society, we spend a great deal of time asking why certain phenomena happen, but—unless we are asking those who are experiencing these phenomena—we are speculating and gathering numbers based on assumptions.

In order to get a full grasp of the implications of the study, a mixed method study would need to be completed. Questions can be formulated from the developed themes and issues shared by participants, which can be distributed en masse to larger numbers of students. This can be done both at the high school levels, community college levels, and freshman university levels. In order not to single out students during the process, a marking area for ethnicity can be used and later sorted out. Three to four response questions can be placed in the survey to allow for subjective responses—including a contact email, should they wish to contribute more narrative on an individual basis.

For an even more thorough study, interviews with parents or guardians and past or present teachers could add depth to the issues shared by participants. I believe that all non-dominant cultures significantly represented in our educational system should also be presented with the opportunities to share their lived stories, so that we—as educators—can continue to improve our educational system for students to have more school success.

Where We Go From Here.

Two of the major implications derived from this study are a disconnect in instruction and curriculum, and its impact on their transitioning abilities; thus, we need to reflect on what we teach, how we teach, and how to assess students, so we can prepare them for a life of learning and transitions. It is obvious that granting students credits for content they have not learned will only give the schools a reprieve, as far as numbers for accountability, and—in reverse—not aid students in their future endeavors at all. I propose a re-visioning of planned curriculum for high school students. Much like an Individualized Educational Plan, students should have a choice over the curriculum they take in high school. Based on their future goals, students can design their own high school choices from a buffet of choices—much like picking an entrée, a side dish, a beverage, and a desert in a buffet line at a cafeteria or restaurant. If students' focus is on language arts, history, or performing arts, why do they need to have advanced science and math classes? The same can be said in reverse. Does a student planning a degree in Chemical Engineering really need to understand the subtleties of identity in Shakespeare's *King Lear*? For a student who wants to be a nurse, they will need some math and science, but do they really need Physics? Why not offer a more hands-on type of math course that will cover the type of math needed in the medical profession?

Next, and this one will certainly be off-putting to some, but why must students admittance into a public university be dependent on high-stakes testing such as ACT or SAT tests. We know that universities look at students' high school careers among other quantitative data. Why not implement Senior Projects—a culmination of students' mastery in the areas of choice which they will pursue after high school. While it will be more time consuming and demanding, it will also entail a better mastery of what students have learned. It allows them to demonstrate what they excel in, versus being forced to regurgitate memorized information or perform in a manner that is unnatural for their intelligences. At the end of each year, seniors can present their projects to a committee that will approve or deny their advancement. This project, along with oral and written responses to college application questions based on the major students are applying for can be used to determine acceptance to public universities.

With the advancements in technology, it would be a small matter to format software to record responses from applicants to be sent in files to a committee. There can also be the written essay requirement, as students need to be able to compose language, but the oral aspect would allow the student to elaborate more on their thoughts.

As for transitioning skills, the one class that I believe all students could benefit from is an independent living skills class. All three participants had difficulty adapting to their lives when having to advocate and manage their own needs. A class where time management, money, advocacy, and study skills are taught could be an advantage for all students. These ideas would take restructuring to implement and a change in value systems. Instead of focusing on what we, as educators and political bureaucracies want, we would need to focus on what students want and need.

The Power of a Single Voice

While this study contains narrative of only three participants, each voice is powerful in what they share—especially because of the time they have had to reflect on their experiences. This is especially evident in Caesar's summary of his feelings on the education system:

It shouldn't be to where everybody set up the same, to have the same goal, to have the same….because—it's like—it's not the same. You know…people are not the same. People are gonna struggle, but like—no matter how much—some people maybe—even if you get them a tutor—you know—even—some people still won't understand it. [sounding relaxed and confident at this point]. Like, they can't understand it, they just…it's just a block they have that they can't understand it. They can be strong in other stuff.

Why not try something different, in a different area…why not see how the level, the amount of people that succeed of an idea?….I mean, it's just like whoever came up with the idea of the kids going to high school and it all being straight on there…everybody learning the same thing. Like…whoever came up with that? Why not see, why not try something else to see if it can work—you know? See if you can get better results—you know? (lines 601-611).

An individual can be powerful. I was touched by the resiliency demonstrated by my participants, their desires to share their stories with no other reward but that of hoping to help other students that come after them. Their statements will stay with me and echo in my mind, whether it be Duane's statement of "I basically in jail in my own classroom," or Van's realization that "by the end of the day, bein' 'the man' without the grades, they get me nothin' …but ineligible," I will be a better person and educator for having heard their stories.

APPENDIX A: STUDENT VIGNETTES

Margarita

Margarita is a 14 year-old student whose family has recently come to this country. Margarita's parents are hoping that she will have the opportunity for an education that will give her more opportunities than her parents had. However, Margarita lacks access to the same experiences that her peers have access to. Margarita is a 9th grade student at Orange High School in the City of Orange. She is quiet, reserved, and unwilling to interact with most of her peers. There are only two other students in her Special Education classroom that she will personably talk with. When she talks with them, she will only speak in Spanish. Margarita limits her English spoken language with the teacher to simple sentences or one word answers. Today, however, Margarita is excited! Her teacher is taking her and her class on a field trip to Knott's Berry Farm with the money the class earned from fund raising events. Margarita has never been to Knott's Berry Farm—even though it is only 10 minutes from her home. Her parents struggle to pay for their small apartment. In addition to making the trip to the amusement part that most students her age in that area make on a yearly basis, Margarita's teacher is taking her on the public transit bus to get there. Margarita is nervous and snaps at the teacher when asked basic questions during the ride there. Once there, she becomes stomach sick and anxious. What should have been an exciting new experience for Margarita was a trying one, as she had little experience outside the home and school setting.

Susan

Susan lives in a middle-class suburb of Detroit, Michigan. Susan is the parent of two young children, one is preschool age and the other is a first grader. Her oldest child has Hyperactivity Disorder and requires medication. However, even though her husband only nets

$600 every two weeks, she does not qualify for Medicare or any other medical or dental insurance for her family because the government does not take into account income that is paid to child support. Susan's husband was married before and has three children from a previous marriage. Her husband's paychecks are attached. Unable to support a family of four on $1200 a month, she is unable to pay for the prescription that her daughter needs to be successful in school. In addition, Susan is unable to afford to send her young son to preschool. Susan's husband makes too much money to qualify for Head Start but not enough to pay for the much needed education that most students have when they begin public school. Susan is at a loss where to find the resources to meet her children's educational needs.

Celenia

Celenia is a beautiful, young, 15 year-old student at Orange High School whose mother—a single parent—recently emigrated from Mexico. Celenia is popular with the boys and a little on the naïve side when it comes to boy's advances and how to respond to them. Her mother worries over her and wants Celenia to have a good education, so she will not have to struggle like her mother. Celenia's mother comes to her first IEP for Celenia. An interpreter is present who works in the office and helps interpret for parents when an interpreter is needed. The special education teacher reviews the parents'/children's rights with Celenia's mom. The right to a free and appropriate education is discussed, along with the right to have Celenia's needs met with accommodations and modifications if needs be. After reviewing the parents'/children's rights, Celenia's mother wants to know how she can get this education for her daughter and how much it will cost. Her mother is unaware of exactly what her rights are and what to do if she feels her daughter's needs are not being met.

Cynthia

Marysville, California is located 45 minutes north of Sacramento and holds a diverse population. It is also known for its large number of low-income families, high number of paroles, and large number of meth labs. Cynthia attends the local high school and has been identified as having a mild cognitive impairment. She attends a special day class for her academics that is composed mostly of students with learning disabilities. Cynthia's great grandparents settled in the area during the great depression after leaving Oklahoma, along with many other settlers from that area. Cynthia comes from a low-income family whose father is currently out of work. Her family lives in a tent in the yard of some friends. The family friends allow Cynthia and her family to use the bathroom to shower daily, but she often comes to school unkempt and in clothes that have not been recently laundered. Cynthia wants to get good grades in school, but it is hard for her to concentrate when she has not slept well and is hungry. Cynthia's parents lack the networks and resources to aid them in finding shelter and food—the basic needs of all humans. Without these basic needs, it is difficult for Cynthia to be successful in school.

Gabriel

Trust is crucial for children to gain social capital. Gabriel is an 8th grader at Ball Jr. High School in Anaheim, California. He attends most of his school day in a special day class where his academic needs can be met and mainstreams for electives, recess, and lunch. He comes from a low-income, non-dominant culture family. He is a quiet boy that tries his best in class but always seems to expect to be criticized by his teachers and peers. The special day class he is enrolled in is planning a holiday boutique—along with other classes of students with special needs—to raise money for charity. Many decorations and crafts are made by students and the

anticipation builds for the big day. Students who have turned in their permission slips to go will travel on a school bus, set up displays, and sell the merchandise to the community. Out of the three teachers at this school, only one teacher will attend along with two aides, and the other two teachers will remain behind for students who do not attend. Each teacher not attending must designate someone to be responsible for that classroom's money box—someone to make change and collect money. The teacher calls Gabriel to her desk and asks him if he would be willing to be responsible for the money box for their classroom. A look of surprise and shock cross Gabriel's face. Gabriel—stunned—asks, "Me? You're gonna trust me to do the money?" The teacher replies, "Yes. Can you do it?" Gabriel gets a big smile on his face. He listens intently as the teacher gives directions on what to do. When he arrives back from the boutique, the attending teachers gives an excellent report about Gabriel's responsible behavior regarding the money. From that point on, Gabriel worked studiously in the classroom, always seemed happy to be there, and demonstrated a positive rapport with the teacher and his peers.

APPENDIX B: INSTRUMENTATION CHECKLIST—SOCIAL CAPITAL

Access to networks and resources:

_____Mentoring relationships

_____Support networks

_____Access and use of community services, resources, activities

Social relationships within and outside of school:

_____Opportunities for outside social interaction

_____Resiliency

_____Play groups, playgrounds, and peers

Activities that stimulate social and cognitive growth:

_____Early educational activities

_____Reading materials

_____Traveling

_____Family activities

Values and belief systems"

_____Attitudes toward education

_____Language

_____Mainstream literature, history, and values

Obstacles and barriers encountered:

APPENDIX C: STUDENT INSTRUMENTATION

Student Instrumentation

1. Access to networks and resources

Mentoring relationships

Can you tell me about someone who you've spent time with that has helped you want to get good grades/marks in school?

Access and use of community services such as literacy programs, community recreation programs, museums, theaters, etc….

Tell me about some of the places you go in town. What are some of your favorite movies and where did you see them?

Knowledge of how to access community and government resources

How do you check out books from the library? How do you purchase items from the store? (Can you describe the process/steps/order of how you do it?) You have an interest in _____, how would you go about finding out if there was a class offered in the community? What steps would you take to sign up for it? If there is an emergency and no adult around to help you, what would you do?

2. Social relationships within and outside of school

Opportunities for social interaction outside of the family

Who are some of the people you "hang out" with outside of the family? What are some of the reasons for spending time with them? Can you tell me about your most enjoyable time with one or more of those people? Can you tell me about your least enjoyable time?

Resiliency

What do you do when something doesn't go the way you want it to? What do you do when you have a conflict with someone? How do you get help when you need it? How do you get some of the things you want? What do you think is the best way to make friends? Tell me about some of you friends?

Access to play groups, playgrounds, and peers who get good grades

(the three P's)

Tell me about your friends. How are they doing in school? In the past, have you ever spent time hanging out with friends at each other's houses or playgrounds? How often?

3. Activities that stimulate social and cognitive growth

Access to reading materials in the home

Tell me about some of the stories you've read at home. How many times in a week do you think you sit down and read a book?

Traveling

Tell me about some of the places you've gone outside of town. Who did you go with and how did you get there?

4. Values and belief systems

Positive Family attitudes toward education

Why do you think you need to go to school? What are some of the things you learn in school that you think you'll use and remember? What are some of the things you learn in school that you think is a waste of time? What are the most important things about school—to you?

12. Knowledge of mainstream language, literature, history, and values

What other languages do—or have you spoken in your lifetime? How does this benefit you?

What literature/stories do you think should be studied in school?

What are some of your favorite stories you have read in school? What are some of your favorite stories you've never read in school and what were they about?

What events in history do you think should be studied in school?

What is the best thing about getting an education?

In what ways do you think learning best takes place?

Tell me three things that you think are the most important things to remember about life and why.

5. Obstacles and barriers encountered

What do you think makes schools difficult for you?

What do you think needs to happen for you to be more successful in school?

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ABSTRACT

HOW STUDENTS FROM NON-DOMINANT CULTURES PERCEIVE THEIR SOCIAL AND CULTURAL EXPERIENCES IN RELATION TO SCHOOL SUCCESS

by

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This study explores the shared narratives of males who are African American, come from low-income families, struggled with school success, and may have been identified as needing specialized instructional services or having learning disabilities. This study includes three participants' narratives on the obstacles and supports they faced during their high school years and when transitioning beyond. It identifies shared themes of sports, reputation, and instruction, transitioning, and mentoring — including the relationship between each and how it impacted their school success.

The development of these thematic elements are related to developing networks and resources related to culture values, identities, and access to social capital. Participants ranged from 22-23 years of age, all having officially graduated from high school, transitioned to college to play sports, but failed to meet the academic requirements necessary to maintain eligibility.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

I owe a great deal to the example my parents set for me, as to who I am and what I do. Both of my parents were teachers, originally farmers. The both had Master's Degrees, my mother in Education and my father in Physics and math. It was not their intelligence that set them apart, but the compassion that they approached their students with. They were both assets to humanity—always reaching out to help those in need, with less, those with loss. My parents taught me tolerance and open mindedness—in addition to hard work—set a goal and reach it. My parents loved me unconditionally and demonstrated the same love for many others.

I had not intended to become a teacher, but as a substitute teacher—because it seemed easy for a parent with young children to do—I found many of my calls were for Special Education classrooms, and I enjoyed it. I also noticed that many of these students did not enjoy the same attention, resources, or activities that students without disabilities did. So, when my youngest son was identified with a learning disability, I knew where my calling lay. Since then, I have taught for eight years at the secondary levels in both Southern California and Northern, with an additional going on 12 years in Michigan. I came to Michigan as an Educational Specialist in Mild/Moderate Disabilities, received a MA from Eastern Michigan in Educational Psychology, and have now completed my doctorate. I have spent 16 full-time years in college, as my emphasis has changed many times in the early years, but I love learning—and am grateful for the education I have been blessed to receive.

My goal is to reach and hear the lived stories of many more students, who I believe are more capable of helping to shape our educational system in the future then we are.