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GENERATIONAL INFLUENCES ON EDUCATIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF RURAL AFRICAN AMERICANS

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Quentin Romar Tyler

The Graduate School

University of Kentucky

2011

GENERATIONAL INFLUENCES ON EDUCATIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF RURAL
AFRICAN AMERICANS

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Kentucky

By

Quentin Romar Tyler

Lexington, Kentucky

Co-Directors: Dr. Rosalind Harris, Professor of Sociology
And   Dr. Edward Morris, Professor of Sociology

Lexington, Kentucky 2011

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

GENERATIONAL INFLUENCES ON EDUCATIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF RURAL
AFRICAN AMERICANS

This study discussed research exploring intergenerational influences on the educational
experiences and expectations of rural African Americans in Hopkinsville, Kentucky.
Hopkinsville is located in a district that has lagged behind reaching state and national
benchmarks in educational attainment. It is home to one of the largest African American
communities in the state and reflects striking disparities in educational achievement by
race as it struggles to close achievement gaps generally. Through qualitative case study,
this study found that both college track sons and parents shared comparable views on
education while low performing parents and sons did not have the same views. Also, both
college track and low performing adolescent men associated the meaning of a man with
the provider role; however, the most salient finding of this study was the connection
among education, opportunity, race, and the provider role among college track students.
KEYWORDS: Rural, African American, Masculinity, Education, Parents

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GENERATIONAL INFLUENCES ON EDUCATIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF RURAL
AFRICAN AMERICANS

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DISSERTATION

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Chapter 1

Introduction to Problem

As I look out my parents' door and gaze at the sky, I shake my head in disbelief that over a decade has passed since I have called this unique community, Hopkinsville home. Hopkinsville is a rural community with a population of 30,000, consisting of one of the state's highest percentages of African Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Statewide, Hopkinsville was known by many as a key contributor to promoting African Americans in athletics due to its well respected youth programs in football, baseball, and basketball that have produced several professional athletes. The city also allowed quick entry into the workforce with its many industrial manufacturing plants, contributing to 24 percent of jobs in the county and was considered the top employer in the labor market area (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Furthermore, Hopkinsville was known for prominent African American contributors in culture, politics, and education such as Ted Poston, a Black journalist in Roosevelt's cabinet; F.E. Whitney, the first African American pro term mayor in 1970; and Raymond Burse, former president of Kentucky State University and first Black to play rugby at Oxford University. In addition, Hopkinsville has numerous contemporary civic organizations with successful Black entrepreneurs and business people such as Pioneers Incorporated and the Modernettes; both are active in offering scholarships and outreach in their local communities.

My perception of Hopkinsville was that it was an ideal community of close knit families, opportunities for employment and higher education, and was relatively free of crime. However, my perception of an ideal Hopkinsville was quickly challenged when I read the front page of Hopkinsville's *Kentucky New Era*. The article read "21 People

Indicted on Drug Charges," in bold print, with the accused facing a federal penalty of life in prison. In utter disbelief, I began examining the article to find that I knew, by way of grade school or athletics, all but one of the African American men indicted. After sharing the news with family, I realized that I was the only person in complete shock. To my surprise, I was to find that drug arrests were more common than college degrees for African Americans in this rural community. Kentuckyhealthfacts.org reports that Christian County, where Hopkinsville is located, has more drug arrests per 100,000 citizens at 2,566 compared to 1,046 for the state of Kentucky and 700 for the United States overall. According to the 2000 U.S Census, 3,081 people in Hopkinsville had a bachelor's degree or higher, which represented only 16 percent of the total population (the National average was 24.40 percent). The statistics are even more alarming for African Americans in this community with less than 3 percent of the African American population having college degrees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

In fact, the educational outcomes for African Americans, particularly men, are discouraging compared to other segments of the population. African American adolescent male students are at risk of facing a myriad of factors that can potentially affect their future (Smith, 2004: Comer, 2004; Ferguson, 2000). In almost every category of academic failure, African American male adolescents are disproportionately represented (Dallman-Jones, 2002: Entwisle, 2004). African American boys are two to five times more likely to be suspended (and at a younger age) than white students (Noguera, 2003). African American boys are more likely to be classified as mentally retarded or suffering from a learning disability, more likely to be placed in special education (Harry et al.,

2000), and more likely to be absent from advanced-placement and honors courses (Harry et al., 2000).

The trends for African American men revealed to me through the news reports and statistics the importance of using research to explore the influences that were shaping the lives of rural African American men in Hopkinsville. Therefore, I carried out a qualitative study that explored the meanings rural adolescent African American men have placed on their education, as well as the meanings rural African American fathers and mothers in their household have placed in the education of their sons. Statistics suggest that whenever we can improve the schooling experiences for African American students, we have an opportunity to positively affect their life chances (Ladson-Billings, 1997). In order to contextualize the study's focus, a brief background on the challenges facing rural communities follows. A more in-depth discussion on this is developed later in the dissertation.

Challenge for African Americans in Rural Communities

Most images of African American male struggles are urban; however, there are disparities in rural communities that are alarming as well. In particular, rural African Americans lag significantly behind whites and urban African Americans in educational achievement. In 2000, only 8.1 percent of rural African Americans age 25 and over had earned bachelor's degrees or higher, compared to 21.4 percent of rural whites, 34 percent of urban whites, and 19.5 percent of urban African Americans (Brown & Swanson, 2003). These findings are consistent with other studies that suggest impoverished rural African American youth may be at risk for school failure, school dropout, and low educational and occupational attainment (Farmer et al., 2006). In addition, McGranahan

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& Kassel (1997) states that minimal education is one reason that African Americans have been increasingly disadvantaged in the rural economy.

While previous researchers focused directly on school resources and economic opportunities contributing to ways rural African Americans have lagged behind their urban counterparts, it is my assertion that the educational meanings in rural America shaped by racism and their environments that have affected current adolescent African-Americans' educational perceptions and pursuits. Even though there is strong literature that supports the idea that African Americans believe education is important and vital to their community, there are arguments that contend otherwise. For example, Ogbu (1978) posited that by virtue of being victims of a long history of racial oppression, African Americans have failed to develop a strong tradition valuing education. Moreover, Ogbu (1978) asserts that African American parents tend to pass on to their children the belief that they will face the same prejudices they were previously faced with and will not be allowed to secure desirable jobs, regardless of their effort in school.

Clark (1991) contends that the academic achievement of African American male adolescents is critically influenced by the broad social environment, while Baker (2005) and Pickney (2000) state specifically that the home life of African American male adolescents is quite different from that of their white counterparts because they lack resources for meeting educational needs. In addition, compared to parents and leaders in metropolitan communities, adults in rural areas may have different views about the purposes and aims of education and may link student success more directly to community and family needs than to educational and economic attainment (Haller & Virkler, 1993, Howley 1997; Lapan, Tucker, Kim & Kosciulek, 2003). Therefore, it is possible that

parents and community leaders in rural areas may view successful youth outcomes more in terms of meeting family and community goals versus personal achievement goals.

In order to properly address the meanings rural African American mothers, fathers, and sons place on education, the conceptual frameworks utilized in this study will be discussed first. In particular, the literature will focus on Black masculinity, symbolic interactionism, and the socio-educational viewpoints of W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington. Next, the spatial community context of this qualitative study, Hopkinsville, will be described based on current demographic and educational data. This discussion will also include data collected from local archives in order to provide a historical context. This will be followed by reviews of the literature pertaining to general trends in rural America, as well as literature exploring parental involvement in education; and an examination of the intergenerational transmission of educational values. Each of these areas is discussed to set the foundation for the study while leading to the next section, the methodology. The methodology section is then followed by an updated version of the setting and profiles of the participants in the study. Then findings are presented and followed by conclusions and recommendations for future study.

Limitations of Previous Studies

Many studies have examined underachievement relative to parental education level, marital status, and socioeconomic status; however, most fail to look beyond such variables to the values African American parents, particularly fathers, place on academic achievement (Lareau, 2002). Even though previous literature has stated the importance of maternal support concerning future orientation toward education, I show how intergenerational transmission of educational values by rural African American fathers

and mothers has a significant impact as well on the academic achievement of rural youth, particularly men, whether this impact is positive or negative.

The role of the family is especially salient in constructing views on education among this population. Unlike most studies that focus on the family's resources or primarily on maternal support in educational achievement, my research focused on exploring how rural African American adolescent men have placed meaning in their education, as well as how rural African American fathers and mothers in their household have placed meaning in the education of their sons.

Rural African Americans have acquired certain views on education. How have they acquired their views? Have their views been impacted through the meaning that their mothers or fathers in Hopkinsville have attributed to education? Nurmi (1991) posited that parents are important influences on their adolescents' future orientation by setting the normative standards affecting their children's values and goals. The intergenerational factors that are handed down by parents to their African American rural youth greatly affect their educational aspirations. Waites (2009) asserts that an intergenerational perspective is relevant with African American families. It brings an awareness of and attention to kinship, intergenerational relationships, and multigenerational families.   In African American families, there are strengths, values, and practices that are transmitted across generations. This view provided a framework for understanding the past, exploring the current environment and using culturally relevant strategies and practices to empower families.

Overall, research on parental involvement among African American families has been primarily limited to a focus on low-income urban communities and comparisons

with parents of other ethnicities. In an effort to address these limitations, I designed a

qualitative study that explored how young rural African American men have placed

meaning in their education, as well as how rural African American fathers and mothers in

their household have placed meaning in the education of their sons.

Chapter 2

Conceptual and Theoretical Considerations

This study was guided by one overarching research question: What meanings do rural African American fathers and mothers place on education in Hopkinsville, Kentucky and how does this meaning shape their son's meaning of education? The focus here is to identify the meanings of education that mothers, fathers, and sons view and how this affects their academic performance. This was important because although graduation rates appear to be on the rise, completion of high school in some rural areas may still be regarded as a challenge and some students give little thought to college enrollment, particularly in Hopkinsville, Kentucky.

To analyze my research question, I utilized frameworks that assisted in exploring the educational meanings of rural African American fathers, mothers, and sons. Symbolic Interactionism, masculinity, Critical Race Theory, and the socio-educational viewpoints of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois are the frameworks that provided the best guidance in my research question and findings. Critical Race Theory aided my research in examining generations of being an African American in rural America and how racism has affected the educational viewpoints of these rural African American men and women. The meanings of being an African American man are important in constructing views of education. In this particular study, it was essential to understand how interactions among rural adolescent African American men and their parents influence meanings of being a man and how these meanings influence perceptions of education. In addition, some generations of African American men have possibly acquired the meaning of education

from generations of fathers and mothers to be either vocational or classical based on their race.

All of these frames were inter-related in this research question, however symbolic Interactionism was utilized as the overarching framework. In particular, symbolic interactionism utilized meanings of education and masculinity, Critical Race Theory related to masculinity and symbolic interactions by relating meanings of being an African American man based on historical and current interactions. Symbolic Interactionism, Critical race theory, and masculinity all related to the socio-educational viewpoints of Washington and Du Bois, which were possibly acquired through father and son interaction and meanings of being a man in rural America. Collectively, these frameworks formed the best guidance in exploring the meanings rural African American mothers and fathers and sons place on education.

Masculinity

The idea of masculinity as a topic for academic analysis emerged in the 1970s and 1980s in response to a number of changes in the household composition and the labor market in Western society (Campbell and Bell, 2000). In order to truly understand the underlying issues that were affecting African American men in Hopkinsville, importance was placed on the concepts of masculinity in the Black community and its relationship to dominant identities and culture known as hegemonic masculinity. In a study involving African American men, concepts of masculinity are essential to understanding how gender identity is socially constructed in different societal and historical spaces in Hopkinsville.

Literature in masculinity, specifically hegemonic masculinity by Carrigan, Connell, and Lee (1985) assisted in addressing issues on masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is the version of masculinity that is considered legitimate, natural, or unquestionable in a particular set of gender relations. Carrigan (1995) added that masculinity is something that is constituted socially, but which varies dramatically within different social milieu and is imbued with the inequalities of power characteristic of Western society. Hegemonic masculinity is naturalized in the form of the hero and presented through forms that revolve around heroes in sagas, ballads, westerns, thrillers, books, films, television, and in sporting events (Connell,1987).

Hunter and Davis (1994) asserted that revisionists have treated the meaning of manhood as largely one-dimensional and universal with man being the economic provider and head of the family. Further, the idea of what Black men are and what they should be in society is measured not against an ideal identity of a Black man, but against the status and privilege of White men. The result is that we actually know little about how African American men define their roles and what it means to be a Black man in this society, which is equally important in examining their meanings of education.

The concept of Black masculinity has been used by education theorists (Mac an Ghaill, 1995; Sewell, 1995, 1997), by Black feminists (Wallace, 1978; Hooks, 1991) and by Black male academics (Staples, 1982; Mercer & Julien, 1988; West, 1993) to account for the experiences of young Black male pupils and their expression of machismo (Wright, Weeks, McGlaughlin, & Webb, 1998). Similar studies such as Franklin (1985) have looked at Black masculinity in a participant observation study of a Black urban barbershop. The researcher found that the men in the shop associated Black masculinity

with "toughness, athletic prowess, decisiveness, aggressiveness, violence, and powerfulness," but does not mention education. Franklin (1985) also states that Black men are expected to conform to dominant gender role expectations of being successful, competitive, and aggressive while also meeting the Black communities' culturally specific requirements of cooperation, promotion of group, and survival of group, which often conflict. These varied ideas and contexts of manhood lead to complex meanings of what it means to be a man.

In addition, Majors & Billson (1992) and Tatum (2005) noted that Black males often adopt a "cool pose," which includes a nonchalant, tough, hostile, and uncaring demeanor to save face and to cope with external pressures. Cool pose is a defense mechanism that is adopted as a way to cope with oppression and invisibility (Tatum, 2005). Additional studies on masculinity, Harris, Torres, & Allender (1994) found in interviewing White and African American men, that age 18 African American men report similar perspectives about masculinity as do White/European American men, but as they grow older, their views of masculinity tend to diverge from the views held by White Americans. The authors suggest that this divergence may reflect a variation in socialization and learned coping strategies.

In this study, importance was placed on the need to explore the processes through which young Black men experience their educational identities when their relationships with others become predicated upon assumptions about the nature of Black masculinity. It was also important to acknowledge that the way masculinities are responded to, and often lived out in schools, is race specific (Wright, Weeks, McGlaughlin, & Webb, 1998).

Other perspectives such as Heiss & Owens (1972) and Harris, Torres, and

Allender (1994) have indicated that members of racial/ethnic minority groups, rather than

comparing themselves to standards in the White culture, compare themselves more to

members of their own ethnic group. Given that members of racial/ethnic minority

groups, such as African Americans use their own cultural standards to evaluate

themselves, they do not feel devalued by market standards driven by White American

norms (Martinez, 1987). According to Kimmel and Messner (1992), many different

masculinities exist. As previous literature held a homogenous approach to masculinity

generated by White/European American male scholars, this study seeks to place emphasis

on the meaning of rural Black masculinities. It is important to look at Black

masculinities against other Black masculinities because Black men in general will have

within their gender identities, different concepts of masculinity than will White/European

American men (Bernal & Knight, 1993; Katz, 1985; Kochman, 1981; Koslow & Salett,

1989; Harris,Torres, & Allender, 1994).

In addition, there is an intersection of rural and the masculine. Campbell and Bell

(2000) discuss the masculine in the rural as a function of masculinity recognized in rural

spaces and sites. Campbell and Bell (2000) used the example of a farmer being

commonly constructed as "he" although women's labor is central as any in most

agricultural production. Rural masculinity is highly significant in this study because it

enables us to engage with masculinities that are situated in rural space. The common

imaginary of rural masculinity begins with the historic images of cowboys and farmers

but neglects the visuals of African Americans, which is important due to the

transformation of rural communities. Primary industries such as agriculture and forestry

are closely associated with men and masculinity. When these industries are restructuring and decline, one expects meanings of masculinity to be influenced. Brandth (2000) contends that changes in family farms and industries in rural communities have to some extent altered what is masculine and feminine. Previous studies on masculinity and rural America may have concentrated on how technological and structural changes in rural industries have worked to unsettle rational stereotypical models of masculinity (Brandt & Haugen, 2000) or examined the construction and representation of masculinity in rural Australia and New Zealand (Liepins, 2000) but neither have focused on masculinities of rural African Americans, which is pertinent in this particular study.

In addition to the overarching research question, this theoretical framework has allowed me to explore an underlying research question: What meanings do rural African American fathers and mothers place on Black masculinity in Hopkinsville, Kentucky and how does this meaning shape their son's meaning of education? This question was important because there are many conflicting views of what it means to be a man and its relation to education in the African American community. Futhermore, many African American adolescent men have pressures from peers who believe that being a high achiever in school and being intelligent is not masculine and may conflict with cultural expectations within the African American communities (e.g., Majors & Billson, 1992).

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic Interactionsim rests on three premises, which are that *human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things, the meanings of such things arises out of the social interaction that one has with others* and *society and the meanings are created and changed through a process of interpretation* (Blumer,

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1969). Within these interactions, social objects are given symbolic value. This theory is appropriate because it provides a frame of reference for understanding the meaning attached to education and how these meanings influence behavior. Employing this theory assists in understanding how rural African American youth acquire their views through their daily interactions with their respective families, friends, and community, giving education meaning and making decisions based on judgment (Openshaw & Thomas, 1990). As youth interact with their families and within the broader society, they gradually develop a sense of self by seeing the reflection of themselves through the responses of others, which will contribute to their specific perceptions toward education. This cyclical process is referred to as the "looking glass self" (Cooley, 1902). Ultimately, the framework of symbolic interactionism helps reveal the meaning of education that is socially constructed through interaction among rural African American fathers, mothers, and their adolescent sons (Lofland, Snow,& Anderson, 2006) and serves as the overarching frame in exploring what meanings rural African American fathers and mothers place on education in Hopkinsville, Kentucky and how does this meaning shape their son's meaning of education.

Critical Race Theory

In addition to symbolic interactionism, Critical Race Theory can be used to frame minority perceptions toward education in such a way that brings attention to the pervasive racism, discrimination, and inequality that this population has experienced in this country. Critical Race Theory, first introduced to the field of education by Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate, (1995) provides a powerful tool to understand how the subordination and marginalization of people of color is created and maintained in the

United States (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). As Ladson-Billings (1998) asserts, if we look at the way that public education is currently configured, it is possible to see the ways that Critical Race Theory can be a powerful explanatory tool for the sustained inequity that people of color experience, most importantly, how rural African American fathers, mothers, and sons meanings of education are influenced by the construct of race. Deyhle (1999) states that adopting a Critical Race Theory lens in analyzing the education of students is helpful in exposing racism in the community and schools. It also means analyzing how African American students are automatically counseled into low- level classes (Romo and Falbo, 1996) and denied enriching and critical education. A Critical Race Theory framework entails an analysis of race in regard to job ceilings constructed to inhibit African American parents, xenophobia, and anti-affirmation action sentiment in the lives of African American children and their families. Uncovering racism also means proposing radical change under Critical Race Theory. In this particular study, Critical Race Theory provided an important framework in understanding how racism plays in role in African American perceptions of education, meanings of being a Black man in rural America, and past perceptions of education that may have been potentially passed through generations to current adolescent men.

W.E.B. Du Bois & Booker T Washington

Education among African Americans has been a highly debated topic, especially in regard to the types of education that African Americans should receive. During the early early and mid 1900's, African Americans were torn between vocational and classical education. As time progressed, the idea of vocational education, a viable and respected option, has changed in regard to the types of students it has attracted and future

opportunities in employment it may provide. In particular, a previous study performed

by Roscigno and Ainsworth (2005) examined the extent of class, race and gender

inequality in high school vocational education and the consequences for students'

subsequent educational and occupational decisions. The researchers found in their

analyses that significant race, class, and gender disparities exist in vocational educational

placement and that vocational education increases the likelihood of dropping out of high

school and significantly decreases college attendance. In addition, scholars such as

Rojewski and Sheng (1993) presented information on differences in student perceptions

of secondary vocational education. However, neither focused on the influences of either

classical or vocational education on current African American men educational

meanings. Vocational education has often been stigmatized as an institutional dumping

ground, a second class educational alternative, and a dead-end curriculum for non-White

minority students with no other educational or career options (Rojewski and Sheng,

1993). Historically, some have interpreted the vocational education movement as a

scheme by empowered elite to ensure permanence of the existing social order (Rojewski

& Sheng, 1993). Furthermore, even though there is literature that supports negative

outcomes and trajectories for those enrolled in vocational education, this study does not

necessarily equate a vocational education as a negative avenue for African Americans,

but does utilize principles of a vocational education in exploring the educational

perceptions of rural adolescent men.

In researching problems that plague the education of African Americans and

exploring ways to improve their education, it is important to consult African American

educators and their intellectual tradition. African American educators of the past provide

rich sources of ideas relevant to contemporary Black education, particularly because of the persistence of many problems of the past. During a period characterized by intense racial conflict, economic uncertainty, and political unrest, W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington became two of the most influential leaders of the Black race effectively using their intellectual acumen and individual pursuits for the enhancement of their race. Both men were products of environments in which they dwelled and formulated their own ideologies on how best to meet the needs of the socially and economically demoralized African American race.

W. E. B. Du Bois

W.E.B. Du Bois was born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, in 1868. He was the first Black graduate in his high school's history. His education was paid for by four liberal white men who took an interest in Du Bois. Du Bois received a Bachelor of Arts from Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee in 1888, having been turned down by Harvard (Adams & Sydie, 2001). Coming from Massachusetts, Du Bois was unfamiliar with the racial, political, and economic hardships in the South until he enrolled in Fisk and spent summers teaching in rural Tennessee, which subsequently influenced him to write the *Souls of Black Folk* in 1903. Between 1888 and 1895, he completed another Bachelor of Arts and a Doctor of Philosophy at Harvard, in which he kept company with the prominent sociologist Max Weber (Adams & Sydie, 2001; Farganis, 1996).

Du Bois believed that every positive action in his life happened through favorable choices that had been made for him (Adams & Sydie, 2001) For example, Du Bois spoke in *Dark Water* (1920) about his mother making the choice of supporting his higher education as opposed to receiving a steady income from his child labor. Du Bois had

influential people in his life that shaped his educational pursuits and purpose of education.

In *Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois (1903) wrote about being an outcast in his own nation. He wrote historically, analytically, and critically about bridging the gap between White culture and Black society. He felt that his own personal gap could be bridged through education. His educational views were shaped around his two major themes of race and class, but also involved the political economy (Adams & Sydie, 2001). Du Bois' analysis of capitalism provided a foundation for his view of education. He argued that as a result of the transformation of industries, there was economic and political control by large corporate businesses. According to Du Bois (1935), this situation resulted in the failure of real democracy in the South and its perversion in the North. Undoubtedly the most influential Black intellectual of the twentieth century and one of America's finest historians, Du Bois argued that the liberation of African Americans required liberal education and not vocational training.

As racial violence, tension, and segregation increased, Du Bois viewed education as a process of teaching certain values: moderation, an avoidance of luxury, a concern for courtesy, a capacity to endure, and a nurturing love for beauty (Dubois & Aptheker, 2001). Du Bois viewed education as a way to undermine the political system present in America. He called for great energy and initiative for African Americans controlling their own lives and for continued experimentation and innovation, while keeping education's fundamentally radical nature in view (Du Bois, 1903). Du Bois believed that African Americans must organize themselves as race-conscious people in order to win and exercise their freedom through education (Edles & Appelrouth, 2005).

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Du Bois also criticized the Black community, especially parents for not reinforcing the value of formal education (Edles & Appelrouth, 2005; Du Bois, 1999). Du Bois believed the burden for winning freedom and justice for all African Americans rested on the shoulders of those who were best prepared educationally and economically (Edles & Appelrouth, 2005; Du Bois, 1999). He formed an idea called the "talented tenth," in which 10 percent of the African-American population must receive the best education and lead the fight against racial discrimination while educating the masses of their community (Du Bois, 1903).

In relation to college education, Du Bois viewed it as the foundation of all education (Weaver, 1974). His view on education was to ensure that just as far as the race can afford it, we must give youth training designed, above all, to make men of power and of trained and cultivated taste (Weaver, 1974). Ultimately, Du Bois wanted educational training for the production of superior teachers, leaders, and thinkers.

Booker T. Washington

Booker T. Washington's perceptions about education were impacted by his environment, which shaped his personality into what some scholars call an accomodationist. Washington was born a slave in 1856 at Hales Ford, Virginia. Washington had to work his way through college at Hampton Institute for his tuition and room and board learning Puritan virtues, crossing paths with the head of the Institute, General Samuel Chapman Armstrong.

Washington's ideas became reflective of General Armstrong's views. General Armstrong believed that through a system of industrial education, a trained economically successful Black group would emerge, which would be significant and would inspire the

masses of Blacks to seek better conditions (Gardner, 1975). Also, according to Gardner (1975), Washington, as Principal of Tuskegee Institute, followed Armstrong's philosophy, which included training students in farming, brick masonry, Blacksmithing, printing, and in the personal habits of thrift, cleanings and industriousness.

Washington was very different from Du Bois in his approaches, views, and background. According to Meier & Rudwick (1986), Washington adopted an accommodating tone with respect to the wishes of white southerners that Blacks not seek an equal status to that of whites through education or any other means. Washington would not publicly acknowledge the extent of racial prejudice and discrimination.

Washington's educational views were fairly simple. He embraced the ideas of vocational and technical training for all Blacks with the career trajectories in the areas of Blacksmithing, locksmithing, machinery, mechanics, carpentry, brick masonry, plumbing, electricity, and artistry. Washington promoted industrial education over liberal arts education, mirroring his own education at the Hampton Institute (Gardner, 1975). He also encouraged recently freed African Americans to learn a specific vocation in order to gain economic autonomy and status, which ultimately would lead to civil and political rights (Thorpe, 1969). Washington's central theme was that the academic status must be intelligently correlated with the social and industrial environment from which the students came and in which they probably would live and labor (Gardner, 1975).

Additionally, according to Gardner (1975), Washington concluded that all experiences are educational and education is a continual process throughout one's life. He believed that the school system should train its students to be productive, employable, and useful citizens in society. He affirmed the major objectives of any education should

be to induct young people into adulthood in society making them honest, truthful, and just in their relations with their fellow men, and helping them work toward the improvement of society. Washington also believed the curriculum should be shaped by the needs of both individual students as well as the needs and desires of society, aiding in preparing students for the labor market.

Washington also preached that Blacks should remain in the South and continue as farmers and use the land to create cash crops and pursue economic prosperity in the South as opposed to migrating to the North and pursuing civil rights as their ultimate objective (Karenga, 1993). Washington's ultimate desires were vague among Southern whites who mistook his short-term objectives for his long term goals, although his African American supporters understood through tact and direction he hoped to secure the good will of the White man and the eventual recognition of the constitutional rights of the Black race (Meier, 1963).

Washington lectured in Hopkinsville at the Tabernacle on West Seventh Street on November 22, 1909 to an audience of 4500. In the archival documents I collected, the current newspaper at the time, *Hopkinsville Kentuckian* (1909)*, reported that Washington spoke for two hours on the topics of educating Blacks and responsibilities of the White man. Washington voiced that the accomplishments of the Black men of the South would not have been possible without the support, encouragement, and protection of the best White people. Washington also voiced his pleasure with school facilities for Blacks in the cities and towns he has visited. Washington stated the Black race must make themselves a necessity in the field of labor.

> In the matter of labor, our race has an advantage in the South, which I fear it does not rightly appreciate. In the old countries of Europe and in many of the large

cities of the North, people for a large part of the year are without work; they walk streets day by day, seeking employment but cannot find it. In our cases no Negro who wants to find work need go without it. On the other hand, in most cases instead of the Black man having to seek labor, labor seeks him (pg.2).

Washington also mentioned the hesitation of Southern Whites to educate Blacks, but he attempted to answer their doubts in Hopkinsville. Washington asserted that since Blacks cook the White man's food, serve the food on his table and nurse his children, shouldn't the person who cooks, serves, or nurses their child be clean, intelligent, and above all moral? An education, according to Washington, would enable Blacks to become more law abiding, more industrious, and less idle. An education of head, heart and hand: an education will teach every member of the race a trade or special occupation by which a living can be obtained. In conclusion, Washington asserts that it is the White man's responsibility to lead the Black man since it is the Black man that adopts the White man's ideas of civilization by eating his food, professing his religion, using his language, wearing the same kind of clothes, and living in his community.

In this study, the goal was to explore how young rural African American adolescent men have placed meaning in their education, as well as how rural African American fathers and mothers in their household have placed meaning in the education of their sons in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. The debate of classical versus vocational education was included to understand the type of education Hopkinsville's past generations of African Americans obtained. As Waites (2009) asserts, beliefs and views are passed down through generations. As Vocational education increases the likelihood of dropping out of high school and significantly decreases college attendance (Ainsworth & Roscigno, 2005), it is important to explore if views of vocational education were handed down to current adolescent African American men subsequently leading to negative

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meanings and outcomes of education. Thus, by revisiting the two important views of education by W.E.B Dubois (classical education) and Booker T. Washington (vocational education), a second underlying research question emerged. The second research question was: How do parents' views about vocational education influence rural adolescent men's views on education. Parents and educators in many rural areas still argue about the value of physical, laboring work versus professional careers (DeYoung, 2002). In particular, views about which type of education, vocational or college oriented, can potentially affect rural African American adolescents' current educational perceptions.

Futhermore, these four bodies of theory have aided me in placing together an integrated framework needed to explore how young rural African American adolescent men have placed meaning in their education, as well as how rural African American fathers and mothers in their household have placed meaning in the education of their sons in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. I envisioned symbolic interaction as the major framework, but directly linked to the other frameworks.

Chapter 3

Context of Study

 In order to understand the meanings African American mothers, fathers, and sons place on education and the way it shapes their son's meaning of education in Hopkinsville, it is important to view the foundation of African American education in this community and events that have transpired over time. Each rural community is unique (Budge, 2006) and in its early existence, Hopkinsville had many African American contributors and pioneers for education. As time progressed, African Americans have gone from being significant contributors in the field of education to currently being placed at the forefront of educational reform by educational administrators in this community. This chapter provides insight into Hopkinsville's location and formation, the early history of Black education in Hopkinsville, the contributions of Hopkinsville's Black residents, while concluding with Hopkinsville's current demographics, employment statistics, and current educational review.   It is important to include the history and context of African American education in Hopkinsville because the teaching of Black history informs our understanding of the present circumstances of Black people and help points to a direction for the future (Woodson, 1933). Furthermore, a historical context is also important for present day meaning construction.

Hopkinsville: Historical Background

 Hopkinsville has a rich history in terms of education, but in order to fully understand the past, present, and future of education, there has to be a close examination of the configuration of the county. The formation of the county has been significant in the formation of educational beliefs and practices within the county.

Hopkinsville, Kentucky is located in Christian County, which was formed in 1796 from Logan County, Kentucky. It is located in the western region of the state in what is known as the Pennyrile Region, and named after General Samuel Hopkins (Perrin, 1884). Covering a present area of 725 square miles, Christian County is the second largest in the state (United States Census Bureau, 1930).

The town was first known as Elizabeth, Town of Elizabeth or Elizabeth Town, but in the records of the April term of court in 1804, the name of Hopkinsville appeared without any explanation to its origin. The change in name was due to the prior claim of Elizabethtown, Hardin County (Perrin, 1884).

Petrie (1939) notes the population of Christian County, as reported in the census from 1800 to 1930, showed some interesting facts, which must be considered in the building of an efficient system of schools. African Americans were always vital to the community of Hopkinsville, even during the founding of the city with a large population of slaves. In 1810, there were 1766 slaves in the county with 19 free Blacks; in 1820 there were 832 slaves with 8 free Blacks; in 1830; there were 4,336 slaves with 74 free Blacks; and in 1840 there were 5,277 slaves and 72 free Blacks (Petrie, 1939). Prior to 1865, 95 percent of Blacks in this county were slaves (Perrin, 1884). There were usually close ties between the White families and their slaves in Hopkinsville. At the end of the war, the Black population increased more due to the need for agricultural labor in the community. The increase was comparatively rapid and consistent for an agricultural based economy with the Black population gaining more rapidly than the White population until 1880 when the percentage of Blacks declined. Petrie (1939) also notes that a decrease in total population from 1910 to 1930 is almost fully accounted for by the

decrease in the Black population as the result of emigration due to poor economic and industrial conditions. Due to the higher birthrates among Blacks in the county, their high emigration rates were all that kept Blacks from exceeding 50 percent or more of the total population, which in all probability would have changed ideas about educational development for the county. African Americans have played a vital role in the history of Christian county's growth and development but many of their contributions have gone unacknowledged.

According to Petrie (1939), conditions of life greatly influence the trends and developments in education. The lack of education in the early days was due to the geographic, economic and sociological conditions of the county. Prior to 1840, Christian county's social and economic development was similar to other counties in Kentucky and the rudimentary phases of its educational development were similar as well. The first instruction was given in the home, if one parent was or both of the parents were sufficiently educated to direct the children's education. In some homes where the parents were not formally educated, the children received no formal educational training (Petrie, 1939).

As the population increased and a need for formal training arose, ministers and soldiers became instrumental in teaching, efficiently using their homes or churches for school buildings. The content in the earlier part of this period included teaching and reading from Dilworth's Speller Bible and New Testament A, B, C's and figures were taught on the back of wooden paddles (Petrie, 1939).) In addition, Petrie (1939) voiced that education in this period did not contribute as much to society as was needed because little more was taught than the ability to read and write. The school buildings were made

of logs and very poorly constructed. There were no textbooks available and the teachers were all men. Because of poor road conditions, only a small percentage of children were served by schools, and it is estimated that prior to 1838, one half of the children of school age in Kentucky had never been to school (Cubberley, 1919).

From the period of 1840 – 1870, state control and support showed legislation that influenced the development of schools. Despite state control and support, this was a period in which education lacked local interest and incurred opposition from those who believed education was a private rather than a public function (Petrie, 1939). Opposition was also received regarding education based on the belief that it should be controlled locally, not by the state. The teachers were authorized by county commissions and district trustees to be examined primarily through oral examinations and to receive certificates to teach which were valid for one to two years. The curriculum was very limited and conformed essentially to that set up by the Legislature of 1851-1852 which is as follows: The instruction prescribed by the State Board of Education shall not go beyond the elements of a plain education in English, including grammar, arithmetic and geography (Petrie, 1939).

The period of 1870 to 1890 included many changes in the educational program of the county and city. According to Petrie (1939), there was a more rapid increase in the population and state system of common schools. Schools during this period were affected by initiatives to rehabilitate schools affected by the devastation of the Civil War and to provide for Black education, primarily through the Freedman's Society based in the North.

In 1875, the first public school opened in Hopkinsville that provided an education for Blacks age 6 to 16 to go to school. During that year, a census was taken and 500 school age children were found in the county and city in 1875. In 1882, a school board was established that organized Jackson Street School. In 1882, it was built on the site of Booker T Washington School. In 1916, Forbes Manufacturing Company built Attucks High School for $16,600.00 and opened in the fall of 1916, operating for 50 years as a high school. It altered to the Middle School concept in 1967. Mrs. Julia Montgomery, a pioneer in the field and the first female supervisor of Black schools in Kentucky, established the Department of Domestic Science Home Economics at Attucks in 1916.

Early history of Black education in Hopkinsville

C .W. Merriweather, a Black attorney, newspaper publisher, and historic figure of Hopkinsville voiced the following:

> The true history of the earliest efforts of the African American to acquire even the rudiments of an education in Hopkinsville, Ky., with all the facts connected with the birth and development of the educational idea, among a people but a few years removed from bondage, may never be written. Those early pioneers in the field of the first struggles for mental and moral emancipation were more concerned and enraptured with the work in which they were engaged than any probable record or notice which might be made of it in the years to come. The degrading and demoralizing after-effects of slavery and how to successfully combat and eradicate them, constituted a problem, which engaged their time and called for sacrifices of the most unselfish souls of both races. These sacrifices they willingly made, laying the foundation for the present system of education in Hopkinsville and Christian County (Meacham, 1930).

G. A. Champlin became the commissioner and at once proceeded to re-district the balance of the county, raising it from forty to eighty-four districts and the school census from 2,100 to 5,000 in two years (Meacham, 1930). He provided the following information early schooling of African Americans in Hopkinsville, Kentucky.

The first common schools for African-American children were taught in the year 1875, the legislature having in the winter of 1874-75 passed an act known as the Colored School Law. This law gave the African American schools the benefit of certain fines, and the principal part of all taxes paid by the Black race, but was very inadequate, and only provided a fund that paid the small sum of about 50 cents for each child of pupil age, which by the law included all between the ages of six and sixteen years old. On account of the meager fund, the Black people and the friends of their education were very much discouraged The Black people were convinced that much good could be done, even with the small sum applied to their education. The next year, the districts were increased to sixteen, and the census to nearly 1,500, and in about three years the whole county was districted, and the census ran up to nearly 5,000 children. The Black people had a great desire to improve, and took much interest in everything pertaining to education. The act of the Legislature giving additional aid to Black schools enabled the Black people of the county to have common schools taught in nearly all the districts, now forty-four in number. The teachers are much better than formerly; indeed, compare very favorably in qualifications with the teachers in the white schools.

G. A. Champlin also provided the following excerpt on Attucks High School, the

first Black school in Hopkinsville (Meacham, 1930).

The Black people of the city of Hopkinsville have by assistance of the Whites erected a commodious and very good and substantial building, costing, including furniture, grounds. etc., between $2,500 and $3,000. And, with a Principal and a competent corps of teachers, maintain one of the best schools in the State, during eight to ten months in the year. The Black people manifested as much if not more interest in common schools than the White people of the county, and everything considered they have made remarkable improvement. They certainly deserve much credit for what they have done in this way. It is now conceded by all that the Black people ought to be educated in order that they may understand our laws, and thus become better citizens.

In reviewing documents and archives, Hopkinsville did not have any significant educational accomplishments in the African American community after the formation of Attucks High School in 1916 until a huge step toward racial uplift and equality was taken in 1958. While key events in the history of the United States were happening with Brown vs. Board of Education, Hopkinsville was experiencing its own success. In August 1958, public school integration started in Hopkinsville when there were three

Black students enrolled at Belmont and West Elementary schools. The students were Donald Dennis, Paul Dennis, and Linda McHenry. The appearance of the three African American children at the white schools marked the first time students of color had enrolled with Whites in the city's long public school history. According to the *Kentucky New Era* (1958), the Hopkinsville school board, acting under the Supreme Court Case ruling, desegregated the first grade for the 1956-57 session. At the time, approximately 30 percent of Hopkinsville's children of school age were African American, one of the highest percentages in Kentucky (*Kentucky New Era*, 1958). Furthermore, this represented a period that federal troops started enforcing court orders to open all White schools to Blacks across the South (*Kentucky New Era*, 1958).

Hopkinsville's Black Contributions

In the 1820's, Alexander Cross an uneducated former Black slave, was sent to Liberia as a missionary. A Hopkinsville church bought Cross's freedom and financed his mission. In addition, Hopkinsville native Ted Poston is often called the dean of Black journalists, becoming only the third Black reporter hired to a New York City newspaper when he joined the New York Post staff in the 1930s. Poston wrote a series of stories about growing up in segregated Hopkinsville. Net Tuner, a Black Hopkinsville tailor, is credited with inventing the belt vest suspender on Jan. 20, 1932.

According to County Historian, William Turner, African Americans have been instrumental in the success of the city of Hopkinsville since Reconstruction. Turner (1983) stated the following;

> It is important to understand that Blacks had a sense of pride by becoming involved in the daily businesses such as tailors, barbers, journalists, doctors, lawyers, mail carriers, contractors, and grocers. The first Black attorney in the county was Robert Lander. He practiced in the last decade of the 19th century.

Clayborn Merriweather read law as well and was admitted to the Kentucky Bar and practiced in Hopkinsville for 42 years before his death in 1952. Walter Robins was another attorney in Hopkinsville through WWI and into the 1930s. Edgar Foreman was also a practicing attorney in the 1920s. Lewis Scott was also another African American that practiced law in Hopkinsville prior to WWI. (1983, pg.1).

The directory of the city lists a Black man having an automobile repair shop as early as 1914. In addition, according to Turner (1983), Black mailmen carried the mail throughout Hopkinsville. During the years before WWI, many if not most of the city mail route careers were Black. Hopkinsville also witnessed African American's early ownership of confectionary stores before WWII. Many African American Concrete Contractors laid the sidewalks currently present in the city, and road contractors that were necessary for establishing the foundation of Hopkinsville. Dr. M.A. Melton was the first Black dentist listed in the city directory in 1912 and practiced until his death, followed by several other African American dentists in Hopkinsville (1983, pg.3).

African Americans were also present in the drug store industry with evidence first being reported in 1907 with Williams Drug Store. The MaHarry Pharmacy was organized in 1922 by T.M.Taylor and W.M. Slaughter and the Brooks Brothers from the mid 1930s (1983, pg.3).

Tyler Brothers Grocery owner Peter Postell came to Hopkinsville before the Civil War as a slave child and remained in the city until freed, becoming one of the most financially successful businessmen this community ever had. This county also had the first Black county agricultural extension agent in 1921 named

Warren Williams, which contributed to the farming and farm home living of those within the county (1983, pg.4).

Hopkinsville was also home to one of the first hairdressers named Mary Moore. In addition, in 1912, Will Talbert opened the Clayborne Hotel which operated well into the 1930s. Hopkinsville also had an Ice Cream Parlor owned by Rick Mumphry in 1910 (1983, pg.4).

Hopkinsville was also the home of 13 Black newspapers. *The Baptist Monitor* was published in the 1880s by James L. Allensworth. The *Kentucky Monitor* and *The Indicator* were published by E.W. Glass in 1892. Most were weekly papers, but some of them monthly religious papers. The *Major* was printed by H.D. Banks in the old Postell building between 1896 and 1903. The *Morning Daily News* operated from 1902 to 1913 and *The Saturday News* between 1913 and 1918. There was also the *Little Courant*, which was published from 1919 to 1922. *The New Age* published between 1919 and 1924. The *Kentucky News* was printed between 1924 and 1927. *The Hopkinsville Globe* operated from 1932 to 1941 and was published by H.S. Harley and *The Globe Turns* was published by Alonzo Glass in 1941 (1983, pg.9). In the early nineteenth century there were thirteen African American newspapers circulating in the city and county; however, Hopkinsville currently does not have even one African American newspaper.

In the Nursing field, Georgia Buckner was the first African American practical nurse and Mr. Mamie Moore was the first African American registered

nurse in 1957. Dr. W.M Levered was the first Black man to practice medicine in

Hopkinsville from 1890 until about 1914 (1983, pg.6).

There were eight African American men prominent in Hopkinsville's

political history; they served on the city council beginning in 1897. On the fiscal

court there have been six African American men in prominent political positions

since the early part of the 19th century. J.W. Moore was 1st magistrate from 1st

district. Also, Mr. F.E. Whitney served as the first Black Mayor of the city of

Hopkinsville being elected first in 1970 and then in 1972. Mr. F.E. Whitney was

the first licensed realtor in 1948 as well (1983, pg.7).

Current Hopkinsville

Based on the 2000 census, there were 30,089 people in Hopkinsville. The racial

makeup of the city was 66.05 percent White, and 34 percent African American, while the

state of Kentucky has only 7.7 percent African American and the United States, 12.8

percent. The median income for a household in the city was $30,419 and the median

income for a family was $37,598. The per capita income for the city was $15,796.

About 13.6 percent of families and 16.8 percent of the population were below the poverty

line, including 23.6 percent of those under the age 18.

Hopkinsville and Christian County hold unique places in additional statewide

Census 2000 tabulations. With a high overall number of African Americans, 30.4 percent

in the county and 34.1 percent in the city, both areas rank high statewide in a common

social science measure of diversity (Gold, n.d.) Christian County is the most ethnically

and racially diverse county in the state, according to a diversity index calculated from

Census Bureau numbers (Gold, n.d.). By the same measure, other cities in the county,

Oak Grove and Pembroke, are among the 10 most diverse cities in the state. The county

also ranks as one of the most integrated, using the dissimilarity index, a measure of racial

separation (Gold, n.d.).

Current Hopkinsville Educational Review

In order to understand Hopkinsville's current educational status, it is important to

examine the county's Kentucky Postsecondary education profile for 2008-2010, the

district profile, and the county's "2008 No Child Left Behind" Adequate Yearly Progress

Report. Christian County School District is the 10th largest in the state of Kentucky. The

district consists of ten elementary schools, three middle schools, and two high schools.

The district also has a Career and Technical Center, Alternative School, Day Treatment

Facility, and Optional High School.

In viewing the most recent year available for the district report card 2007 & 2008,

the district met annual measurable objectives in all areas of Reading, Mathematics, and

Participation rates among all races except for African Americans in Reading.

According to the education profile for 2008-2010, Christian County had 22.8

percent of its population with less than a high school diploma or equivalent while

Kentucky has 25.9 percent and the US, 19.6 percent. Thirty-three percent of Christian

County has a high school diploma or equivalent while Kentucky has slightly more at 33.5

percent. Christian County also has fewer college degree holders at 12.5 percent than the

state of Kentucky at 17.1 percent and the U.S. at 24.4 percent. Christian County also

lagged behind the state in college readiness with 57 percent of its population entering

college with developmental needs in one or more subjects with the state of Kentucky at

45.9 percent. Christian County had more students enrolled in Kentucky Community and Technical College than the enrollment combined of all other post-secondary institutions.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) continues the emphasis established in the previous reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1994) on holding all students to the same academic standards. The 2001 legislation builds on the foundation laid by the 1994 reauthorization and expands the federal role in public education by requiring stronger school accountability, more stringent qualifications for teachers, and an emphasis on programs and strategies with demonstrated effectiveness. The legislation focused on ensuring all students meet state standards by 2014 and that achievement gaps based on ethnicity, race, income, and language are closed. The provisions of the law were designed to ensure that all students make adequate yearly progress toward achieving proficiency on state standards within 12 years.

Even though all schools and districts may have problems reaching NCLB goals, rural districts and schools create a unique challenge, including Hopkinsville. In viewing the No Child Left Behind Adequate Yearly Progress Report for 2008, Christian County met 15 out of 19 target goals (78.9 percent). Under the NCLB Act, a school district must make 100 percent of its target goals in order to qualify as having made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Every year since 2002-2003, Christian County had not made yearly progress and is considered Tier 3, which correlates to having four years of not making Adequate Yearly Progress.

Hopkinsville is a community that has had many African American contributions that are unknown to many as is the very existence of many rural minority communities in

Kentucky. A study by Rural Sociological Society Task Force on Persistent rural Poverty indicates that "rural sociologists have never shown much interest in rural minority communities (Rural Sociological Society Task Force on Persistent Rural Poverty," Persistent Poverty in Rural America, 1993). The neglect of this issue along with the changes of rural communities play a vital role in the education of rural African Americans that this study seeks to address.

Chapter 4

Literature Review

This review is based on more than empirically grounded articles, chapters, and books. This chapter of the dissertation begins by revisiting the important changes that have occurred in rural America. Rural communities have changed and rural areas are more diverse (Adams, 2003) and the actual differences and similarities between rural and urban communities are multifaceted and complex (Champion & Hugo, 2004). Rural America's changes impact those that reside in these locations and have the ability to affect these residents' view of education and even potentially affect rural students' achievement (Budge, 2006). Scientists from a variety of disciplines have confirmed that our behavior, emotions, dispositions, and thoughts are "indeed shaped not just by our genes and neurochemistry, history, and relationships, but also by our surroundings" (Gallagher, 1993, pg 12). The existing literature helps to inform this work because it offers critical insight into rural communities, parent involvement, and intergenerational transmission of educational values.

This literature review is divided into three sections. The first section provides a detailed look at the social and economic changes in rural America. The next section begins by discussing parental involvement followed by a short discussion on African American parent involvement. The final section of the literature review highlights the ways in which educational values are transferred through generations. Collectively, this literature review discusses the environments of rural African Americans, their parents' involvements in their education, and shows gaps in the literature that are indicative of the need for further research in this area.

Social and Economic Change in Rural America

Rural education researchers acknowledged that it is difficult to establish a

universal set of characteristics to describe or define rural schools and communities

(Herzog & Pittman, 2003; Lewis, 2003; Sherwood, 2000). Nevertheless, many rural

places possess similar strengths and face similar challenges, such as those in agriculture.

Agriculture has been the foundation of life, communities, towns, cities, and even nations.

According to Dimitri, Effland, and Conklin (2005), early 20th century agriculture was

labor intensive, and it took place on a large number of small, diversified farms in rural

areas where more than half of the U.S. population lived. These farms employed close to

half of the U.S. workforce, and produced an average of five different commodities. The

agricultural sector of the 21st century, on the other hand, is concentrated on a small

number of large, specialized farms in rural areas where less than a fourth of the U.S.

population lives. Large-scale farms seemingly became the norm with consolidation

leading to the decline of small farms, and farm related jobs, subsequently leading to the

weakening and demoralizing of rural communities and American life (Feser & Sweeny,

1998; O'Hare, 1988). In 1900, two-thirds of all workers were employed in agriculture

and manufacturing, mostly holding manual or routine jobs in the field or factory (Gibbs,

Kusmin, & Comartie, 2005). By 2000, less than 40 percent of the U.S. workforce was

employed in low-skill occupations (Gibbs, Kusmin, & Comartie, 2005). Yet, standard

census data comparing these areas may inadequately reflect the social and psychological

challenges faced by contemporary rural communities (Champion & Hugo, 2004).

Impacts of Change on Education in Rural Communities

As resources declined and rural communities changed, farming families were no longer able to contribute to the funding of schools, causing the state to supplement funds to meet equitable education standards (Fanning, 1995). The pressure for equitable distribution of limited state funding led to funding and accreditation formulas that were tough for rural community schools to meet, thus leading to the consolidating of schools as the ultimate solution (Fanning, 1995). Lost in the shuffle of school consolidation was the very uniqueness of small schools, the feeling of community, inclusiveness, and belongingness. Consequently, minority youth were among those affected by the changes in rural America because they benefited most from small schools (Fanning, 1995).

In examining the literature on rural America, rural youth have experienced inequalities that have affected their aspirations and meanings of education. Duncan (2001) found in the Mississippi Delta and the Appalachian Mountains that stratification along economic and racial lines can significantly limit the degree to which impoverished rural youth have access to the types of communities' social capital that promote educational and career attainment. In Duncan's (2001) descriptions in the Mississippi Delta, several of the parents indicated that community services and support for children are inadequate and it is necessary for youth to rely on the support of family members than vocational services and community programs to help them develop skills to become productive adults. Thus, Duncan's study provides support that families are important resources for rural youth's views and meanings of education.

Additional studies have examined rural youth and parent influences amongst changes in rural communities and agriculture. Chenowith & Galliher (2004) focused on the direct and indirect influences of environmental factors upon the academic aspirations of Appalachian youth. The researchers found that family, peer and school contexts, and broader cultural influences were all implicated in predicting rural Appalachian student's academic aspirations. In addition, family and peer contexts emerged as more salient predictors of college aspirations for males. Secondly, Singh and Dika (2003) focused on rural Caucasian youth in their exploration of social networks and sources of social support for rural high school adolescents and how these are related to educational academic support and emotional support provided by network members. They found that academic support and emotional support provided by network members explained significant, though moderate, variance in educational outcomes.

Furthermore, Farmer, Dadisman, Latendresse, Thompson, Irvin, and Zhang (2006) queried community adults about their perceptions of successful early adult outcomes for rural African American adolescents from two low resource communities in the Deep South. The study found that adults in two impoverished rural communities viewed successful early adulthood outcomes as being strongly linked to supporting the needs of the family and the community. They also acknowledged significant limits in the resources and opportunities in the community. Parents, teachers, and community leaders all agreed that postsecondary education or vocational training is particularly critical for helping community youth to establish productive and independent lives. Further, without additional training, African American youth from these two communities do not have the skills that would make them marketable in metropolitan areas. Therefore, a college

education or some other form of career vocational education was viewed as essential to being successful adults and important in terms of cultivating youth's capacity to give back to the community.

Brody, Stoneman, and Flor (1995) focused on rural African American mothers and fathers using a large sample of 90 rural youth ages 9-12. Findings were important in stating that parental educational attainment was linked with family financial resources and parental involvement with the adolescent's school.

Finally, Swanson, Harris, Skees, and Williamson (1994) assessed the importance of legacy, defined as the social values, cultural framing assumptions, hopes, and fears passed from one generation to the next among rural African Americans. Legacy was measured quantitatively as the concentration of African Americans in counties across thirteen southern states. Explanatory variables associated with labor force structure and social well-being were used in this study. This study contends that legacy continues to exert a powerful influence on the families and individuals with roots in the rural South who continue to be the most disadvantaged. Each of these studies contributed to the literature in examining educational aspirations among Caucasian and African Americans.

The Education Disconnect in Rural Communities

Families' resources include parental education levels and incomes. Rural and urban African Americans student's educational achievements are both directly affected by their parents' education and their family income. However, rural youth and families often see less direct relationships between education and economic opportunities (DeYoung, 1995a; Seal & Harmon, 1995). According to Brown (2003), parents of rural students tend to have low personal achievement and aspirations, which leads to lower aspirations for

their children. For example, students whose parents have gone to college have an 80 percent chance of going to college themselves; however, those students whose parents only graduated from high school have only a 33 percent chance of attending college (Brown, 2003). Furthermore, due to low educational attainment of parents among rural students, rural cultures tend to have lower expectations of their children's career options, which may give way to students' learned helplessness; the belief that they cannot succeed no matter what they do (Williams, 2003). Additional research voices that students living in rural areas of the United States have lower levels of educational aspirations, achievement and attainment than their non -rural counterparts (Blackwell & McLaughlin, 1999; Roscigno & Crowley, 2001). In addition, rural adolescents perceive that furthering their education does not translate into a significantly improved standard of living (Blackwell & McLaughlin, 1999: Deyoung 1995: Roscigno & Crowley, 2001; Seal & Harmon, 1995).

Parental involvement in schools can play a critical role in academic achievement among African Americans. A study of 296 schools in Missouri (Sun, Hobbs & Elder, 1994) found that parental involvement was higher in rural than in urban communities. In contrast, findings from a large national survey of eighth grade students suggest that parental involvement tends to be higher in urban and suburban communities than in rural communities (National Center for Education Statistics, 1994). Furthermore, Maynard, & Howley (1997) contend that the poverty of many rural communities limits parents' ability to provide for their children and interact with schools. Research proves to be inconclusive in determining whether rural or urban parents are more involved in school. However,

there is substantial evidence that claims a lack of parental involvement in both areas can serve as possible barriers in African Americans' academic achievement.

Parental Influences on Children's Well Being

There is considerable empirical evidence that supports the idea that factors reflecting family life are associated with child social behavior, aspirations, and growth. For example, McLanahan & Sandefur (1994) state that children from intact families have advantages in both educational attainment and social well-being. In addition, Parcel and Menaghan (1993, 1994a, 1994b; Menaghan & Parcel, 1991) voiced that children's home environments reflect parental investment in child well-being. Parental investments in age-appropriate cognitive stimulation is an affectively warm style of interacting with children, and in general cleanliness and safety of the home environment combine to promote lower levels of child behavior problems (Parcel & Menaghan, 1993,1994a, 1994b).

In examining literature on parental influences on child well-being, Otto and Atkinson (1997) found that high levels of parent- child connection and parental regulation of child activity promote adolescent development. Specifically related to fathers in a recent longitudinal study, the importance of parent- child interaction ultimately led some policy analysts to suggest that uninvolved fatherhood is the root of a myriad of contemporary social problems and to call for strengthening fathers' family roles as a solution (Harris & Marmer, 1996; Moynihan, 1965; Snarey, 1993; Yeung, Hill, & Duncan, 2000).

Furthermore, Becher's (1986) literature review on parent involvement found that there was "substantial evidence" which shows that students whose parents are involved in

their children's schooling have increased academic performance and overall cognitive development. Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has found that levels of education and parent involvement in schools have significant influence on student performance. The NAEP data report a 30 scale point differential on standardized achievement tests between students with involved parents compared to those students whose parents were not (Dietel, 2006). Research has shown that parent involvement has significant influence on student achievement (Barnard, 2004). In addition, researchers have found that parent involvement is associated with a greater likelihood of aspiring to attend college and actually enrolling (Cabrera & Steven,2000; Horn, 1998) as well as higher grades (Lee, 1993: Muller & Kerbow,1993),and lower likelihood of high school dropout and higher school attendance (McNeal, 1999).

In other studies, involvement of parents at home has resulted in fewer consistent conclusions on academic outcomes. For example, Barnard (2004) found those parents' reports of their involvement at home, including reading, cooking, discussing, and going on outings with children were not significantly associated with students' academic attainment. McWayne et al. (2004), however, showed that parents' reports of educational involvement at home, defined as providing a supportive home learning environment, were positively associated with teachers' ratings of children's reading and mathematics achievement. Other researchers have found that parents' attitudes (e.g., their educational expectations and aspirations for their children) are associated with academic achievement as well (Fan, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Feuerstein, 2000). Most researchers and educators have long agreed that when parents get involved in education, children try harder, achieve more at school, and have higher aspirations for themselves (Epstein,

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1995). African American students reported they are more influenced by their family's educational plans for them as opposed to the ideas of teachers, peer groups, or counselors (Cheng & Starks, 2002). The aforementioned literature supports the idea that families have an influence on the perceptions of youth.

Because mothers are more likely to interact with their children and to have custody when partnerships dissolve (Seltzer, 1991), most research has emphasized the roles of women within their families. Much less attention has been paid to the involvement of men with children, over and above their traditionally ascribed role as financial provider (Cooksey and Fondell, 1996), but fathers have important contributions to make in children's lives. According to Goldscheider and Waite (1991), social expectations of the fathers' roles in the families have changed considerably over the past thirty years. Previously expected to be mainly an economic provider, the new father now is expected to also provide day-to-day physical and emotional care to children as an equal partner. These observations strengthen the rationale for focusing on fathers in this study and for employing the theoretical guidance provided by the masculinities literature.

Fathers Influences on their Children's Lives

In examining the literature on fathers' influence on their children's Lives, Roy (2006) conducted a study using life history interviews with 40 low income, non-custodial African American men in three age cohorts. Using four elements of a life course perspective, he explored how stories that men told of their fathers' life experiences shaped their own paternal identities. Three narrative themes, stability, liminality, and inquiry gave meaning to men's struggles to become involved fathers and linked them to similar challenges faced by their father's years earlier. Specifically, one fifth of all men

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in the study drew readily on narratives of their fathers' stability. Fathers stayed in marriages and employment for decades and participants in the study framed their fathers' traditional values and normative commitments as spouses and providers. More than half of the middle and youngest cohort of men drew on stories of liminal father figures who were never truly in or out of their lives. Fathers in this area were said to have sacrificed family and household ties as a result of the extreme demands of employment as sole providers. Men struggled with ambiguous expectations of their fathers, who were involved in both legitimate and street lifestyles. Slightly more than one third of the men in this study used narratives shaped by inquiry about fathers whom they had never known. Differences in narrative construction between cohorts suggest how sociohistorical context defines opportunities for men to become involved parents. Sociohistorical shifts in recent decades, such as the rise and decline of the sole breadwinner role, declines in men's wages and the flow of mothers into the paid labor force have altered normative roles for generations of men within families (Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 1999).

Few studies have examined men's dual perspectives on being fathered and being a father. Daly (1995) found that middle class white men may distance themselves from their father's experiences. Researchers have seldom focused on the experiences of fathers and sons in minority and or low income families (Bowman & Sanders, 1998). In particular, multiple generations of these men have faced social dislocation through unemployment and discrimination often leading to relationships dissolving and transient lifestyles (Coley, 2001; Lerman & Sorensen, 2000). A life course perspective for families of color, which prioritizes time and context, may explicitly acknowledge such

socio-historical changes as they shape relationships between members of extended family networks (Dilworth Anderson, Burton & Boulin Johnson, 1993).

African American Parental Involvement in Education

Additional works have documented African American parental involvement in education. Diamond and Gomez (2004) found in their case study analysis of 18 students and their families that working class parents tended to see school and home as distinct realms and also found that working class parents did not deem it appropriate to make demands on the school or to engage in explicitly educated activities at home. Also, Lareau and Horvat (1999) found in a case study of parents' involvement with third grade students that some Black parents were deeply concerned about the historical legacy of discrimination against Blacks in schooling. In this study of White and Black parents, race appeared to play an independent role in parents' ability to comply with educators' requests. In addition, Sanders's (1997) research with African American parent involvement found that parents were successful in promoting the children's racial and ethnic socialization helped to promote their academic success. Datnow and Cooper (1996) examined the levels of parent involvement of African American parents in a predominantly White school setting, and found that the usage of peer networks and consistent identity affirmation were vital in helping their children succeed academically, but that they still trailed their white peers on most academics. Moreover, Yan (1999) investigated levels of parent involvement using four constructs of parent involvement (parent-teen interaction, parent-school interactions, interactions with other parents, and family norms) to measure involvement. Yan found that African American parents

demonstrated higher or equivalent levels of parent involvement when compared to White parents.

Another study by Diamond, Wang, and Gomez (2004) examined parent involvement between African American and Chinese American middle class parents. Their findings revealed that although both groups of parents shared similar aspirations for their children, their involvement strategies were different. African American families tended to demonstrate involvement through home and school based involvement and intervened more in their children's school. The research also found that Chinese American families were less likely to be active in schools, but manifested their involvement through home based activities. Finally, Howard & Reynolds (2008) found by interviewing focus groups and interviews that middle class African American parents felt the sting of race and racism as they seek to advocate on behalf of their children despite their middle class status. Other parents believed that there was little need to rock the boat in predominantly white settings, and thus were removed from the process of being involved in schools. Several parents stated the need to be involved to show their counterparts from other ethnic and racial backgrounds that their children has just as much access to a high quality education as any other groups. As the research suggests, parent's involvement in their children's schooling has served as a mainstay within African American communities (Anderson 1988; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 1996, 2000) and is a focus in which this study has been conducted.

Intergenerational Transmission of Educational Values

The next area will provide background on the intergenerational transmission of educational values. African Americans are influenced greatly by multiple generations.

Waites (2009) conveys that family networks, composed of several generations (three or more) have been a source of strength for African American families. Multigenerations providing support and care for family members and fictive kin (non-blood relatives) across the life course have been well documented (Billingsley, 1992; Billingsley & Morrison-Rodriguez, 1998; Hill, 1971, 1993, 1998, 1999, Martin & Martin, 1985; McAdoo, 1998, Schiele, 1996, 2000). Born out of African traditions and adaptation to harsh environment, multigenerational families have preserved in the face of disparity and oppression spanning 400 years of slavery; years of Jim Crow, and decades of segregation, marginalization and intentional and unintentional racism (Waites, 2009: Christian, 1995).

In examining the voluminous amount of literature concerning itself with intergenerational transmission, Hermida (2007) described the intergenerational transmission of educational attainment in Guatemala using regression analysis. The variables including the mean of schooling the sample of children compared to the schooling of their parents were used as a measure of equality of opportunity in Guatemalan society. The sample included those born in rural and urban areas and were balanced in terms of ethnicity and gender over four cohorts from 1900 to 1978. Hermida also used ordinary least squares, which showed that educational achievement exhibits higher persistence from generation to generation among indigenous people.

Particularly relevant to intergenerational transmission, William Sewell and colleagues produced a series of articles at the University of Wisconsin, in which they introduced an empirical model, known as the Wisconsin model, depicting the processes by which family background disadvantages are transmitted across generations. The model involved family and school-based socialization processes as the guides linking

social origins with status positions in adulthood. Sewell and colleagues concluded that through relationships with teachers, family members and friends, and self-reflexively in reaction to their own record of school performance, young people form expectations regarding their future schooling and career prospects. These expectations, in turn, propel youth toward stratified educational and occupational destinations (Bozick et. al, 2010).

Using the Wisconsin model as a framework in *Framing the Future: Revisiting the Place of Educational Expectations in Status Attainment*, Bozick and colleagues revisited the Wisconsin model of status attainment from a life course developmental perspective. The researchers ran a regression analysis using data of a Beginning School Study which has been monitoring the life progress of a cohort of Baltimore school children since the fall of 1982. The study included 720 rising first-graders who were followed throughout their elementary, middle and secondary school careers and into young adulthood. By analyzing data of youth back to the first grade, the researchers were able to gain additional insight. They found that many youth consistently expect to attend college as early as fourth grade, the expectations of middle and low SES youth are less stable, and across years the prevalence of their exposure to socialization influences mitigates against college ambitions, and long term stable expectations are more efficient in forecasting college enrollment than are changing, volatile expectations. Additionally, the researchers found that family and school based socialization processes indeed contribute to social reproduction through children's educational expectations, but the process starts much earlier and includes dynamics outside the scope of the original status attainment studies.

In addition, Pettit, Yu, Dodge, and Bates (2009) examined intergenerational links in the level of educational attainment. Their particular interest was whether family

background characteristics, parenting in early childhood, and early adolescence and school adjustment and performance in middle childhood accounted for continuity and amplified or attenuated continuity. In summary, they found substantial evidence of cross-generational continuity in educational attainment in the context of a prospective longitudinal study that spanned 15 years.

Furthermore, Smith (1992) tested the relationship between parent offspring concordance on educational goals and several variables, which might be expected to affect the effectiveness of parental socialization. The author used multiple regression and data were obtained through pencil and paper questionnaires. The results suggest a pattern in maternal but not paternal goals, and paternal but not maternal overt encouragement of education has an effect on children's educational expectations. It appears in this study that paternal influence requires overt advocacy of goals but the maternal influence may occur without open attempts at persuasion. The multiple regression results indicate considerable relationships between parental variables and children's educational goals, but of course relationships do not necessarily reflect absolute agreement between parents and their children.

Yang (2004) conducted a study on different generations of Asian Americans and how they differ in educational attainment. The study included quantitative methods, which found that there is indeed a third generation decline in the educational attainment of Asian Americans. Finally, Restuccia and Urrutia (2002) provided a quantitative model of intergenerational human capital transmission that focused on three sources: innate ability, early education, and college education. They found that approximately one half of the intergenerational correlation in earnings is accounted for by parental investment in

education, particularly in early education. The model indicated that an increase in public resources devoted to early education has a larger impact on earnings mobility than does an increase in college subsidies.

As our society ages, multigenerational families will be more common, resulting in longer years of shared lives across generations (Bengtson, 2001; Bengston & Roberts, 1991). Waites (2009) asserts that there will be almost equal bands of older adults, middle generation adults, young adults, adolescents, and children as we move deeper into the 21st century (US. Census Bureau, 2004). This statistic holds true for African Americans with the number of African American elders, age 65 and older increasing. It is important to understand how older generations are passing down educational perceptions to current rural African American youth.

Purpose for This Study

There is a need for more studies in rural school systems based on the review of the literature. The overwhelming majority of research in the area of parental involvement has been conducted in urban and suburban school districts. Therefore, choosing a rural school system helps to fill a gap in the professional literature. In addition, this rural school district has a relatively high number of marginally involved parents because of its high poverty rate. During the 2006 -2007 School Year, about 89% of the students in the Christian County school system were enrolled in the free and reduced price lunch program. Research shows that parents who live in poverty are less likely to participate in their children's education. Finally, this specific rural school district is located near the center of the Alabama Black Belt counties and in some respects, may be reflective of surrounding Black Belt counties.

Futhermore, this study focused on the meanings placed on education and masculinity of rural adolescent African American men. Normally, the studies of men tend to focus disproportionately on white men, neglecting the issues pertinent to men of color, particular African American men. When studies do focus on African- American men, these men are urban. This study will not only focus on rural African American men, but unravel meanings of rural African American masculinity.

When gender identity is examined in African American men, concepts drawn from the study of White men are typically generalized to the experiences of African American men (Diemer, 2002). According to Messner (1992), masculinity in the United States is constructed differently by race, culture, class, ethnicity, and age. Without understanding these differences in masculinity, we are at risk of collapsing all masculinities into one dominant hegemonic version. This study attempted to contribute to the literature by examining issues germane to African American men and the uniqueness of rural African American masculinity.

In examining education, there are many factors that influence how men perceive an education. Fathers' perceptions of an education and their meanings of masculinity appear to play an important role in their son's perceptions; however, previous studies have failed to focus on African American men and the use of qualitative methodology to understand their meanings of education and the meanings of masculinity. Additionally, there have been a number of studies that have examined intergenerational transmission of educational values, but they have failed to provide depth in regard to such perceptions by rural African American men.

Other research in the area inadequately addresses the historical consequences of rural African Americans in its research methodology. This particular study allowed the reader to explicitly understand how legacy and transformation in agriculture directly affects the selected social and economic factors of rural African Americans and focuses on ways to improve rural African Americans quality of life through education.

Chapter 5

Methodology

This study was initially guided by the following research question: What

meanings do rural African American fathers and mothers place on education in

Hopkinsville, Kentucky and how does this meaning shape their son's meaning of

education?   Within the broad context of this research question, this study was guided

with a refinement of the initial research question.   Additional underlying questions were

sought out to answer: How does a parents' view about vocational education influence

rural adolescent men's views on education? In particular, I revisited the two important

views of education by W.E.B Dubois (classical education) and Booker T. Washington

(vocational education) and identified ways in which beliefs about these views are passed

down through generations and potential influences they may have on those currently in

this community. Parents and educators in many rural areas still argue about the value of

physical, laboring work versus professional careers (DeYoung, 2002). In particular,

views about which type of education, vocational or college oriented, is viewed more

positively can potentially affect rural African American adolescents' current educational

perceptions. This question was motivated by the belief that vocational involvement

increases the likelihood of dropping out of high school, thus significantly decreasing

college attendance (Ainsworth & Roscigno, 2005). The next underlying question

included: How does a mother, father, or son's view of what is means to be a man affect

their view on education? This question was important because many African American

men have pressures from peers who believe that being a high achiever and being

intelligent is not masculine and may conflict with cultural expectations within the African

American communities (e.g., Majors & Billson, 1992). The respective research questions of masculinity and the beliefs about vocational or classical education of African American men and women played a role in understanding the overarching research question, which was "What meanings do rural African American fathers and mothers of adolescent men place on education in Hopkinsville, Kentucky and how this meaning shapes their sons' meaning of education.

In order to unpack the significance of educational experiences as they relate to rural African American men, a qualitative approach was used. In this chapter the research design is explained, including an overview, the setting in which the study took place, examples of other qualitative studies using African American families, the method of participant selection, the researcher's role, data collection activities, data collection, data analysis, provisions for trustworthiness, and a summary.

Design Overview

In order to adequately address the research question, I used a qualitative research design. The decision to focus on qualitative research design stems from the fact that this design is chosen precisely because I am interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing. The primary goal of qualitative research is to understand social phenomena from the participants' perspectives (Merriam, 1988). This understanding will be achieved by interviewing the participants and by interpreting participants' meanings for experiences, perceptions, and events through a contextual frame. Participants' meanings include their feelings, beliefs, ideas, thoughts, and actions (Merriam, 1988). Some qualitative research aims for more than understanding the phenomena and also generates theory. Here, the objective is solely to provide a

description of the meanings attached to education and identify patterns among them. I will use qualitative research methods' interactive strategies consisting of focus groups and in-depth interviews. These interactive research strategies are flexible, using various combinations of techniques to obtain valid data, which will allow the researcher to adjust decisions about data collection strategies during the study.

Mosley-Howard & Evans (2000) used a qualitative research design to paint a personal diverse view of relationships within the African American family from the perspective of four African American families, who, through an interview, shared part of their families' stories. The researchers also used a qualitative study because of the desire to examine these issues from the participants' perspective. Borg, Gall, and Gall (1993) pointed to the strength of this type of research as lending themselves to a richer, more in depth understanding of the findings. In addition, implicit within the case study approach is a post- positivistic lens where "truth" emerges in dialogue with study participants. Because there is a concentration on a few participants, the external validity of qualitative study may be limited. The benefit, however, is being able to understand the participants' story at a much deeper level. Mosley-Howard & Evans (2000) states that qualitative research is particularly appropriate for the study of African American families because historically, quantitative studies focused on statistical reports of demographic variables. Previous research often did not lend a voice to reporting the qualitative nature of the African American family experience. This study attempts to add a more in- depth authentic view of how Black families view their lives and futures.

Setting of Research

My choice of conducting a qualitative study has been guided by my focus on context, culture, and the community of people in this specific region, Hopkinsville, Kentucky. In this qualitative study, it is important for me to describe and analyze the setting in which the participants in my study form their educational beliefs. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) state the qualitative researcher believes that human actions are strongly influenced by the settings in which they occur. The researcher cannot understand human behavior without understanding the framework within which subjects interpret their thoughts, feelings, and actions (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006).

In particular, the setting, Hopkinsville, is located in Christian County. Christian County is in the southwestern part of Kentucky along the border of Tennessee and the Fort Campbell military reservation overlaps into the county. According to the 2000 census, the county has a population of about 72,000 residents, and Hopkinsville with a population of almost 31,000 residents is the largest city in the county. The population in the county is about 70 percent white. African Americans are the largest minority group, comprising about one-fourth of the county's population, and most live in the City of Hopkinsville. Attendance rates have been lower in Christian County than Kentucky since 2000. With the exception of the 2002-2003 school year, dropout rates have been higher in all reported years since 1999 in Christian County than Kentucky. For the 2003-2004 school year, Christian County's dropout rate was 4.3 percent compared to Kentucky's 3.4 percent. In 2004, 61.6 percent of Christian County's school children receive free or reduced price lunch, compared to 48.9 percent in Kentucky. Moreover, a lower percentage of Christian County high school graduates are pursuing a four year degree or two year degree than the state of Kentucky.

Participant Selection

The subjects in this study consisted of nine families of African American sons and fathers and two families of African American mothers and sons. The two families of African American mothers and sons were chosen because those sons did not have a father in the household. All the participants in the study were chosen using purposive sampling. Because the purpose of the study was to understand the meanings rural adolescent African American men place on education and the meanings their mothers and fathers in their household place on education, the inclusion criteria for participation in the study was based on the following; identified by school administrators as college track, vocational track, or low performance student, in the $9^{t:h}$, $10^{th:}$, $11^{th:}$, or 12th grades at the time of the study, and who identified themselves as an African American, and lived in Hopkinsville. The participants were initially selected by school administrators to participate in focus groups dependent upon whether they were in a college track, vocational track, or considered a low performing student. After participating in the focus groups, I selected participants based on availability for the in-depth interviews because they were likely to provide rich and depthful information on a range of issues. Additional interviews with key informants were carried out to provide a rich background and contextual foundation of Hopkinsville. They consisted of a past member of Christian County Board of Education, a Director of Transportation Services for Christian County, a Christian County Assistant Superintendent, a Christian County Historian, and a Christian County Librarian. The study had IRB approval and the participants in the study had school and parental consent, as well as confidentiality agreements. The following table

displays the total number of participants in the study by breaking down in the respective

schools and also by mothers and fathers.

Table 5.1 Total Participants in Study

School	Students	Fathers	Mothers
	College Track		
Hopkinsville High	5	1	0
Christian County High	9	2	2
Sub Total	14	3	2
	Low Performing		
Hopkinsville High	6	0	3
Christian County High	6	2	0
Sub Total	12	2	3
Total	26	5	5

Researchers Role

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), it is important to include the

researcher's social relationship with the participants. As a graduate of Hopkinsville High

School, I was granted access to the schools in the area. I met with the Assistant

Superintendent and informed her of my study. She had received feedback from area

teachers and community leaders of my respectable name and reputation during my years

in Hopkinsville.   In addition, I had a great relationship with the Assistant Principal of

Hopkinsville High School, who was my former basketball coach. These connections

allowed me instant access to a pool of participants and assisted in establishing rapport

with each of the subjects and their parents by explaining where I was raised, where I went

to school, and that I was conducting this study to give back to my home community.

McMillan and Schumacher (2006) state that the preferred research role is that of a person who is unknown to the site, an outsider; However, I cite that my personal and professional experiences enabled me to empathize with the participants and gain better access. The researcher is responsible for collecting data (Merriam, 1998), and responsible for conducting interviews, observations, and focus groups. In addition, the researcher reviewed and analyzed all data collected from focus groups, one on one interviews with students, community members, and Christian County District administrators.

Data Collection

The data collection in qualitative research is extensive, drawing on multiple sources of information such as observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials. Yin (1989) recommends six types of information: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artifacts. In this particular study, I utilized all except direct observations.

Since my intention was to develop an in-depth understanding of the nature and meaning of the father and son or mother and son relationship, I selected face to face interviewing as the primary source of collecting data, the most effective way to acquire in-depth data essential to qualitative research. The face to face interview encounter provides the richest data source for the human science researcher seeking to understand human experience (Polkinghore, 1983). Also, I collected data using focus groups for each of college track, vocational track, and low performing students, which has been mentioned in the previous paragraphs to increase the quality and richness of the data. Also, Christian County School Administrators, community members, and a Christian

County Board of Education member were also interviewed as part of this study. In addition to providing a historical perspective of Hopkinsville, I engaged in document and artifact analysis.

The object of gathering qualitative research data is to collect narratives – linguistic data. Linguistic data reflects the meanings that emerge through human experiences (Polkinhorne, 1983). Probes elicited elaboration of detail, further explanations, and clarification of responses (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

Qualitative studies are noted for generating mounds of data. In managing my data, I used an electronic system to retrieve the data and assembled the coded data in one place. I used NVivo, which classifies, sorts, and arranges information, allowing more time to explore trends, build and test theories, and ultimately arrive at answers to questions.

Focus Groups

To begin my study, I conducted five focus groups consisting of African American adolescent men in the $9^{th,}$ 10th, 11th,or 12th grade. Each focus group was recorded using a digital audio recorder and each participant was provided a $20.00 Walmart gift card for their participation. Each participant was reminded that their audio was being recorded and that they could stop their participation in the interview at any time and still receive their Walmart gift card.

Focus groups provided a better understanding of my research aims and assessment of the interview questions. Focus groups are purposively sampled groups of people that are interviewed, rather than an individual interview (McMillan & Shumacher, 2006). By creating a social environment in which group members are stimulated by one

another's perceptions and ideas, I increased the quality and richness of data through this strategy. In-depth interviewers use focus group interviewing as a confirmation technique. Group members can critique the questions and suggest relevant items that might be missing, or offer feedback on the quality of the questions and response categories. This process refined my instrument.

Focus groups also allowed the exploration of administrator to student interaction and to explore narratives on race, engaging questions were raised in relation to the Critical Race Theory frame. These stories and voices are the rich data by which a Critical Race Theory lens can unveil and explain African American men's perceptions toward education. The size of the focus groups consisted of approximately 4-5 participants based on the recommendation from McMillan and Shumacher (2006) and lasted from 30 to 45 minutes. There were a total of five focus groups; two per Hopkinsville High School and Christian County High School, one for the college oriented track and one for low performing students, and one additional focus group at the Christian County Vocational and Career High School. This method was helpful in exploring the question of "*What does it mean to be a man, what does an education mean, and how race, family and community played a role in these meanings?*" The following table displays a breakdown of each focus group participant in the study.

Table 5.2 Focus Group Participants in Study

School	Students	# of African Americans in School	Total School Population
	College Track		
Hopkinsville High	4	188	1105
Christian County High	5	204	1304
Sub Total	9	392	2409
	Low Performing		
Hopkinsville High	3		
Christian County High	4		
Christian Co Vocational	*Vocational Education*		
	2		
Sub Total	9		
Total	20	392	2409

In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were the primary form of data collection in this study. McMillan & Schumacher (2006) state that in-depth interviews are open-response questions to obtain data from participants' meanings, how participants conceive their meanings, and how they explain or make sense of the important events in their lives. Interviews empower the interviewee by creating a dialogue between interviewer and interviewee. Within this process, research subjects can ask for question clarification, while interviewers can ask follow-up questions.

In this particular study, Fairhurst and Good's (1991) ethnographic case study data collection procedures were utilized through interviews. One hour interviews were conducted one on one with each of the fathers, and sons and mothers when a father was

not available in the home.   Each interview was recorded using a digital audio recorder. I

conducted twenty semi-structured interviews; five fathers, five mothers, and 10 African

American adolescent men. Each interview participant was given a $30.00 Walmart gift

card for their participation. Furthermore, the interviews consisted of a general discussion;

broad, non –judgmental, open- ended questions were asked. For example, "describe a

typical day in your household with your father" or "I am interested in your meaning of

education." " I would like to talk to you about what type of education you believe is

successful in this community and how you acquired these views, what does it mean to

you be a man."   The interviews were more conversations around certain topics that

allowed the interviewer to pursue interviewees' interests as they arose. Following the

interview, I reviewed my notes and wrote reflections on the interview experience. At this

point, I began to interpret and analyze responses.

The final aspect of parental educational involvement was focused on parents'

educational expectations for their children, concentrating on their attitudes or beliefs

instead of their specific behaviors. An example question used in the study: "How far do

you expect your son to go in terms of educational achievement?" The question for the

son was adapted accordingly to reflect how they felt about themselves and their fathers.

The following table lists the participants for the in-depth interviews.

Table 5.3 In-depth Interview Participants in Study

School	Students College Track	Fathers	Mothers
Hopkinsville High	1	1	0
Christian County High	4	2	2
Sub Total	5	3	2
	Low Performing		
Hopkinsville High	3	0	3
Christian County High	2	2	0
Sub Total	5	2	3
Total	10	5	5

Document and Artifact Collection

Artifact Collection is a non interactive strategy for obtaining qualitative data and are considered tangible manifestations that describe people's experience, knowledge, actions, and values (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Moreover, in this study there were personal documents and official documents that aided in explaining the history of African Americans in Hopkinsville as well as the current demographics and educational statistics of Hopkinsville, Christian County.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis reviewing both manifest and latent content (Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Sandelowski, 2000; Woods & Catanzaro, 1988). The following steps guided the analysis; the content of each of the completed interviews was reviewed to find themes, patterns, and ideas provoked by the data (Amar & Alexy, 2005). First, priori codes were developed from the relevant literature and

questions posed by the interview guide. These codes included meanings on education, meanings of masculinity, internal desire for educational achievement, and external factors as internal influences. However, qualitative description holds that codes are data-derived, meaning they are generated from the data gained from participants. Therefore, codes emerging from the data demanded precedence over the pre-existing codes developed by the researcher. Each interview was thoroughly reviewed to familiarize the researcher with the data. All of the interviews were analyzed for key, reoccurring phrases and key words, which resulted in several major codes. These codes were reviewed again and placed into relevant thematic categories with appropriate sub-themes that link concepts together (Kerr & Fothergill-Bourbonnais, 2002).

Participant Consent

In this research study, IRB approval was granted and participants gave their full consent to be part of this study. From the beginning of the study, the assistant superintendents, principals, students, parents, and community members were all given full disclosure of the purpose of the study along with permission forms to sign. The assistant superintendent was given an overview of the study and interview questions. After receiving permission to conduct the study from the assistant superintendent, she informed each of the principals of Hopkinsville High School, Christian County High School, and Christian County Career and Tech Vocational school the criteria for the focus groups, time allotment for the interviews. I followed up with a scheduled conference with the assistant superintendent to address any concerns that she may have and inquired about their own study the Christian County Board of Education was conducting to determine if culture was a barrier to learning. Their mixed-method study

was entitled "Cultural Audit."   Once the assistant superintendent and principals of the respective high schools gave their approval, I begin my purposive sampling of adolescent African American men in the 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade and gained the consent of each student and parent and began my study.

Provisions for Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is crucial to ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability of data and findings. In order to guarantee an accurate representation of participants' views in the data, it was imperative to establish trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To address issues related to credibility, I engaged in persistent interaction with participants, triangulation, and validity verification (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation was used in data collection and data analysis. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that triangulation is a method of collecting data from different sources to confirm or authenticate data. Additionally, triangulation strengthens the design and reliability of the qualitative studies by combining research techniques of interviewing, focus groups, and note taking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In this study, I used multiple methodological strategies and multiple data collection strategies. Specifically, I used in-depth interviews, focus groups, document and artifact analysis, and participant checks for validity and clarity. Focus groups were used to validate interview questions, collect rich data, and for further selection of participants in the study. Member checks ensured that the interview transcripts and notes were accurate reflections of their experiences and further allowed the participants to actively engage in the data collection and analysis to ensure clarity in their perceptions toward education (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). As such, Transferability can be attempted by

future researchers exploring similar questions and potentially finding similar themes and patterns. Conformability was enhanced through the member checks and evaluating the presence of a logical progression of the research goals, procedures, and findings. For the current project, the research aims were adequately addressed by the participants through the procedures described from which relevant conclusions are formed.

Summary

This chapter included a description of the methodology utilized in this study. A qualitative research designed was employed using observations, focus groups, in-depth interviews, and document and artifact collection. After receiving approval from the assistant superintendent, I proceeded with purposive sampling of focus groups consisting of African American men in each of the respective areas; college oriented track, vocational agriculture track, and low performing students at Hopkinsville High School, Christian County High School, and Christian County Career and Vocational Tech School. After conducting the focus groups, I carefully selected participants from the focus group along with their father or mother if father was not present in their home for the in-depth interviews. Data collection and data analysis consisted of information obtained from the focus groups, in-depth interviews with the sons and their fathers or mothers, and local community members. The next chapter will provide a detailed description of the setting of the study as well as profiles of the participants.

Chapter 6

Description of the Setting

Introduction

      This chapter will be divided into two sections. The first section includes the happenings that occurred during the time the researcher spent in Hopkinsville. The second section gives differing perspectives of issues regarding education for Hopkinsville's African American population by examining the views of a board of education member and Christian County school administrators. Alternative names were used for the students, parents, and administrators that participated in this study.

During Data Collection

      I began the focus groups the last month of the school year and started conducting in-depth interviews the first part of the summer. During the time of collecting data, Hopkinsville was experiencing a crime wave that validated the city's ownership as one of the highest crime rates in the state. According to the FBI Uniform Crime Rate database for 2004, both the violent and property crime rates in the City of Hopkinsville are high compared to the state of Kentucky. In addition, violent crime rates were slightly higher than the overall rate in the nation, but the property crime rates of Hopkinsville are significantly higher overall than the nation (FBI Uniform Crime Rate, 2004).

      As I approached my first interview involving low performing students, I was made aware of the crime rate in Hopkinsville, specifically involving adolescent African American men. At the time of the interview, the news reported *Three Juveniles Injured During Woodland Heights Shooting.* This incident happened across town at Woodland Heights Apartment. Three young African American men sustained injuries in a shooting.

The injuries included two fifteen year olds with gunshot wounds and a sixteen year old with assault wounds. Later, information was leaked which informed the public that the two suspects in connection with the shooting were a 20-year old African American male and a18-year-old male.

Later in the month, the news reported *Jessup Street man shot near his home.* An 18-year-old African American man was shot on the same street where of one of the interview subjects in this research study lived. A neighborhood resident stated he saw a group of 15 to 20 young African American men, ranging in age from about 16 to their early 20s in an alley behind his house followed by four or five gun shots. The suspect that was shot voiced that the young men were gathered because they believed four men were about to fight.

In the same neighborhood five weeks earlier, an African American woman was shot to death and two others were injured in the same neighborhood.

In the same month, the news reported *Police Arrest Suspect in Fourth Street Shooting.* This event involved a Hopkinsville African American man, age 26, who was arrested after allegedly firing a gun at another Hopkinsville African American man. The victim stated that he was visiting a female friend and another African American man saw him and started shooting at him.

The next month there were multiple shootings as well. The news reported *Police arrest Juvenile Suspect in Elm Street shooting,* which involved a 14-year-old African American boy, who was shot in the neck, subsequently leading to police officials arresting a 17-year-old African American male. A couple of days later, the news reported *Hopkinsville Man Shot in Clarksville.* This event involved an unknown African

American male shooting a 27 year old Hopkinsville man in the upper torso while he was looking for a club. The victim stated that a car pulled up beside him and started shooting him for no reason. The incidents that occurred during the data collection support claim that Hopkinsville not only has issues with crime, but the crimes appear to involve a disproportionate number of young African American males. Furthermore, the Competitive Realties Report (2005) states that in 2003, Hopkinsville had a violent crime rate that was much higher than elsewhere in Kentucky. Additionally, from 2002 to 2003 the Hopkinsville's crime rate increased by 17.3 percent. Through this research, I felt that improving views of education was a possible way to reverse the trend of crime that was plaguing this community. Additionally, the Center on Crime, Community, and Culture states in *Education as Crime Prevention* (2003) that a quality education was one of the most effective forms of crime prevention.

Importance was placed in being knowledgeable of Hopkinsville's crime rate because the research was conducted in the high schools of Hopkinsville and in the homes of the subjects. During data collection, the researcher developed relationships and interacted with students, faculty, parents, and community members while in Hopkinsville and at the high schools. The three high schools in Hopkinsville are Christian County High School, Hopkinsville High School, and Christian County Career and Technology High School. According to the Kentucky Department of Education, the enrollment for each of the schools is 1304, 1105, and 667 respectively. According to the Christian County Board of Education, Christian County High School has 251 African American males while Hopkinsville High School has 188 African American males. According to the 2003 Human Rights Commission Report, *Analysis of the Racial Achievement Gap In*

Kentucky Urban Schools, Hopkinsville is second in the state with 35 % of its students

African American and fourth in population of total African American students enrolled in

public education.

Table 6.1: Kentucky School Districts with the Largest Numbers of African American Students

County	Total Enrollment	White	Percent White	African American	Percent African American
Jefferson	89,081	55,459	62.3	29,393	33.0
Fayette	31,725	22,402	70.6	7,336	23.1
Hardin	12,584	9,875	78.5	1,864	14.8
Christian	8,794	5,343	60.8	3,120	35.5
Henderson	6,913	6,144	88.9	652	9.4
Shelby	4,891	4,095	83.7	518	10.6
Covington	4,665	3,685	79.0	914	19.6
Owensboro	3,928	3,072	78.2	680	17.3
Bowling Green	3,413	2,324	68.1	790	23.1
Paducah	3,114	1,476	47.4	1,509	48.5
Bardstown	1,773	1,309	73.8	436	24.6
Hazard	1,016	855	84.2	121	11.9

Source: Kentucky Human Rights Commission

Christian County School District Administrators

Three administrators participated in interviews and provided different

perspectives on the educational barriers of African Americans in this community as well

as barriers to education.

This first interview involved a person who I am going to refer to as Beth. Beth

was a woman with many roles, such as former member of Christian County Board of

Education, community leader, educator, mother, and wife of a Vice President of a bank in

Hopkinsville. She had an array of professional experiences in and out of the schools. The

interview was made possible through community contacts. The participant in the study

gave an excellent insight as an African American parent in Hopkinsville and the struggles

she encountered in the community. She moved to Hopkinsville in 1974 after marrying

into a prominent African American family. She is also a member of an African American

Sorority graduate chapter in Hopkinsville, Kentucky.   Her sorority is one of the more

active African American Sororities in Hopkinsville. She has a daughter that graduated

from law school and a son that graduated with a degree in education. She lives in the

upper socioeconomic level in a home located near Hopkinsville High School.

Regarding the issues facing African Americans and barriers in education, she

spoke of racism in Hopkinsville and parent involvement as factors contributing to low

academic achievement. She also stated that Hopkinsville has a slave plantation

mentality. African Americans are purposely made unaware of scholarships and

opportunities and that many African American parents feel that schools are racist toward

Black children (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). In addition, she stated," only a select few can

know of the opportunities, but not all." It appeared through the information she provided

that it was important to have African Americans in key positions to assist those that may

lack knowledge about education and opportunities in education. She stated, "If it was not

for an African American guidance counselor, my daughter would not be aware of

scholarship opportunities." She also stated "it is important for parents to be involved in

students' education." "Parents should be involved in PTA, councils, and athletics and

African American parents should be able to defend their kids and make sure things are

going right." That's what she did and she mentioned other parents as well in the

community, such as my parents.

Regarding the community, Beth mentioned that the African American community

businesses declined as a result of the leaders passing away and the inability to pass their

businesses down to the next generation. Overall, the participant placed importance in the

need for African Americans to be involved at all levels of the school and to be aware of issues regarding their children. The participant concludes with the following statement, "School teachers and administrators respect African American kids more if they know their parents are there."

The next profile that I will share involved the interview with Janet Tomek, Christian County Assistant Superintendent. The purpose of the interview was gain approval for my study and to learn about the Cultural Audits, the Christian County School District had initially focused on low performing, high minority, low socioeconomic students. Ms. Tomek stated, "The district wanted to determine if culture was a barrier to learning." "A focus of the audits was to evaluate the relationships among teachers to teachers, teachers to students, and teachers to administrators."

The Cultural Audits were important in turning around academics in Christian County. They were initiated at Indian Hills Elementary School. After the initial audit, the district had brutal facts about culture and academics which resulted in the school district reviewing and forming a leadership team at Indian Hills School to address the issues the audit found. The formation of the team resulted in a 15 point gain, which was the highest of any school. After experiencing progress from the initial audit, the Christian County School District emulated the same process in six other schools in the district. The initial model was developed by Chris Wagner of Western Kentucky University. The data collection consisted of interviewing stakeholders and community members, observations of classrooms, observing culture (feel of classroom), how students respond to students and teachers. Ms Tomek stated, "Participation was not very good and they attempted to go to neighborhoods themselves and we couldn't get the

parents involved." The team involved in the audit consisted of Kentucky Department of Education employees, GAP coordinator for the state, African Americans and white, and Central Office Staff to assists.

Any school that was in assistance because of No Child Left Behind which included all high schools, all three middle schools, Martin Luther King Elementary School and Crofton Elementary participated in the Cultural Audit. The school district customized the audit tool toward needs, equity, and high school. Additional information that was mentioned was that the Superintendent went around the Advanced Placement classes and noticed there were not any African American males attending college prep classes and wanted to increase African American male participation in Advanced Placement classes.

Christian County School District asked two particular people, Janae Layne, Louise Byrd, Gap Coordinator, to design an instrument just for Christian County, in which they did. They designed instrument around five areas for successful schools, equity, leadership, teacher, and learning, relationships and parent involvement. Overall, Ms. Tomek did not share the current findings of the cultural audits being conducting in Christian County, but I did come away with a a belief that parent involvement is an issue among African Americans in Hopkinsville, Kentucky and that the Christian Count Board of Education are seeking ways to improve education among its African American population.

The next interview involved the former Director of Transportation, Eli. Eli worked in the school system for over 20 years and this interview provided excellent insight into the background of the African American community. He spoke at length on

the current issues he has witnessed affecting African Americans in the Christian County

School District. Eli began with an account of Hopkinsville when he was growing up in

the mid 1900's.

> Hopkinsville was thriving. The city was owned by blacks from 1st street to 7th street. As older blacks died out, the land was either gave to whites or sold to whites for low prices. Blacks such as Dan Massey, Roselle Leavell, and P.C. Brooks controlled the Black community. Blacks had their own black skating ring, and bowling alley.

> As a child, the participant lived in the Black community on First Street. On the

conditions of racism, Eli stated the following;

> Didn't feel racism, felt that the Black community had theirs, and the white community they had theirs. In schools, textbooks were handed down from schools, we had dedicated black teachers. They didn't care if we were 25; they made sure we had it. I went to the all black high school, Attucks, through 11th grade.

> Eli goes on to mention the importance of knowing not only the history in the

African American community, but Black History. Black History shows a sense of pride.

> In Attucks, the students were taught Black history and were able to realize what so many Blacks did in past. We were punished in schools and spanked because the teachers cared.

> Eli talked about a sense of ownership in the Black community. How Attucks

High School was built by Black citizens and how much the school did for the community

and what the education did for the community. He provided the following;

> Attucks was a heaven for Black kids, had own rights. When we went there, had to learn. We got a better education than kids today. If we don't understand, we can even go to teachers' homes. Instead of handing you a book, they explained it.

> Eli conveyed his love for Attucks High School, and that as a member of Attucks,

they felt they prevailed, were competitive, had heritage, and were proud. He mentioned

that when they marched, the whole town marched behind them. Attucks believed in God,

after pledge of Allegiance, they said the Lord's Prayer. Eli concluded by saying, "when we lost our schools, we lost our pride. People say desegregation is good, I say no it isn't."

In 1966 he had the option to go to CCHS or HHS, stating that he and his peers at Attucks were athletes and they needed athletes because he played quarterback and the schools needed one.

Eli gave a quick comparison on current African American kids and his time growing up. He goes on to state, "Black kids don't know who they are and that while I was growing up, the students as a whole had someone to look up to, we had a Black community."

Eli then goes on to elaborate on one of the problems facing the current African American community and Black males.

> Take a successful Black man today, he won't pull up Black man, will leave community, not build it up, and separate us. When I was growing up, parents were dedicated with education, took time and parents today don't take time, especially with Black males.

Eli worked for over 20 years in school system and mentioned participating in parent teacher conferences in which there were no fathers, sometimes no mothers, but grandmothers. Eli mentioned:

> Today, parents are not like that, don't care if their kids are in school or not. Schools teach you how to live, churches show you. Society wise, Black parents are own worst enemies. We have no ambition for our own kids. I've seen drugs come in and destroy communities.

Eli viewed Hopkinsville as a community not friendly to kids and offered this concluding statement on his outlook of Hopkinsville's African American parents and children. "If Black parents don't step up, take control of kids in the school system, Black

kids in the community are doomed."   His reason for the statement was that a student does not have rights, but if parents direct you, defend you, then everyone is afforded rights.

After interviewing Beth, Janie Tomek, and Eli, several commonalities arose as well as differing perspectives on the issues affecting African Americans and education in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. Eli was the only administrator interviewed that was from Hopkinsville. He gave background on Hopkinsville from a historical perspective to current conditions. He worked in the school system for over twenty years. Secondly, Janie Tomek was not from Hopkinsville, but she gave an in-depth view of current conditions of Hopkinsville's African American population and current initiatives they have in place to analyze African American barriers to education. Lastly, Beth gave the perspective from a mother of two African American children who have successfully maneuvered through Hopkinsville's educational system.

Collectively, the participants spoke at length about the lack of parental involvement in Hopkinsville's African American community while Beth and Eli conveyed in detail the importance of African American parents to be involved in the education of their children to access their full opportunities. These perspectives are important to my study because they showed a diversity of views of parental involvement from a white female, an older African American male and middle aged African American female who have different roles in the community. In addition, they gave a relevant history of African-Americans in Hopkinsville, and each respectively addressed what they felt are the problems facing African American education in Hopkinsville. The chapter

will introduce the participants in this research study, beginning with those adolescent men who attended Hopkinsville High School.

Chapter 7

Data Collection

In this chapter, I describe the process of data collection and introduce the African American sons, fathers, and mothers that participated in the in-depth interviews and focus groups. In particular, the beginning of this chapter describes the process employed by carrying out focus groups and interviews. The next section of this chapter discusses focus group data in detail. Given the population I was interviewing, many ideas came up. The students had difficulty staying on task or even answering the questions that were being asked, thus causing the data to be light in comments relevant to my data analysis, which was guided by my theoretical framework and research questions.

Hopkinsville High School

I will begin this section by introducing Hopkinsville High School. Hopkinsville High School is located off Koffman Drive. According to the Kentucky Department of Education, HHS population consists of 1105 students, which includes 188 of those students being African American men. HHS contains grades 9th-12 and the majority of African American students that attend this high school derive from the Durrent Avenue (D.A.) neighborhood, Thoughbred Acres, Calvin Manor Apartments, Oak Grove, and 18th street areas. Two Focus groups were conducted at Hopkinsville High School that consisted of a total of nine African American adolescent men. Four students from Hopkinsville High School were chosen from the focus groups to participate in the study due to their availability and willingness to participate in the study. The following paragraphs describe general information on the focus groups.

HHS Focus Groups

    College Track Students

The first focus group at Hopkinsville High School involved four African American college track students that were all in their junior year. The students were selected by the Assistant Principal at Hopkinsville High School. As the students entered the interview room, they were told to introduce themselves one at a time by the Assistant principal. The focus group participants had differing personalities. The main purpose of this focus group was to redefine my questions that I was going to ask in the in-depth interviews while also selecting the participants that I was going to interview one on one in this research study. In examining their behaviors, two of the males were receptive to the questions that I posed and two were kind of reserved. In order to gain information about their background, I asked if they had fathers or grandfathers in their home. In response to the questions, I found that of the four males, three had fathers that resided in Hopkinsville. The one male that did not have a father in his home had a grandfather in Hopkinsville. However, the student who had a grandfather that lived in Hopkinsville had the only grandfather currently living. The two students that were vocal tended to look me more in the eye and spoke first and often. The reserved males sat closer to me and placed their head down on the table several times throughout the interview. In addition, two of the adolescent males wore school colors while one wore a professional basketball jersey and the other one had on blue jeans and a plaid shirt. The interview lasted forty-five minutes and the interview room was located next to the principal's office.

Several questions were posed to the group. I begin the conversation by asking the students how they found out about advanced placement courses. Collectively, the students spoke of the importance of guidance counselors and teachers in their career directions and how these staff members played an important role in their lives by

informing them of the opportunities and classes to develop their skills and push them academically. I intended to learn as much as possible about the students during the focus group process. I asked the students about their fathers' employment, and only one participant answered the question by saying his dad was in military.

As I proceeded through the focus group interview, I initiated the conversation by giving my background about being a former student at Hopkinsville High School, where I had lived out as a student at HHS and activities I was involved in. I then proceeded by asking the students what an education meant to them.   A theme that arose out of the focus group was that an education was associated with their future lives. Some of the comments went even more specific and mentioned going to college or getting a job because of education. Several of the excerpts are below;

HHS High Perfor. Focus Group: Education is very important in future, good job, work toward a craft.

HHS High Perfor. FG: Purpose or your future, work for your future.

HHS High Perfor. FG: New technology, education, being adults, knowing what job you can do.

HHS High Perfor. FG: Going to college.

I wanted to gain information about the students' relationships with their fathers in regard to their belief about education. The next question that I posed to the group was what type of education does your father have and what is your father's belief about education.   Only one student had a father that had "some" college, while one participant's father did not finish high school, and one student stated that his dad finished high school and the other student voiced that his mother had a high school diploma. In

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asking about father's view of education, the common theme that arose from this

conversation was generational improvement. The participants' fathers wanted their sons

to have a better life than they did. Some of the excerpts are below;

HHS High Perfor. FG: My dad says education is important and wants me to be better than him.

HHS High Perfor. FG: My father never finished high school, he doesn't want us to be like him.

Additionally, I inquired about the barriers that they felt existed in schools and in

the community. The students spoke of problems with peers, racism in schools, and being

labeled because of who they hung with. An additional barrier that I did not anticipate in

this rural community that was mentioned was the prevalence of gangs. The participants

referred to gangs and drug activity in rural areas as well as teachers as potential barriers.

Furthermore, I proceeded to ask students their views about masculinity. "What is

a man, and what is a man in Hopkinsville according to their peers." The common themes

that emerge from asking about masculinity were independence and presentation or

appearance. It appeared that the students associated a man with sports and appearance,

but also the image of being a man in a uniform, suit, or shirt and tie. These images were

placed in their head by parents, teachers, and television. Secondly, the students felt that a

man acted on his own, independently from anyone else. The following excerpts display

their perspectives on independence and physically appearance. The first two statements

displays focus group participants' perspectives on being independent while the latter

focuses on presentation of a man.

HHS High Perfor. FG: A man can handle business, being independent is a man.

HHS High Perform. FG: Take up own actions.

HHS High Perfor. FG: Way they carry themselves.

HHS High Perfor. FG: How they present themselves.

At the conclusion of the first focus group, insight was gained on rural African American masculinity, education, and barriers to education for African American men in Hopkinsville. I also gained additional insight into the participants that I wanted to select to continue the next portion of my study, the in-depth interviews.

Low Performing Students

The second focus group consisted of students that were considered low performing by teachers and administrators at Hopkinsville High School. The Assistant Principal of Hopkinsville High School scheduled the interviews to immediately follow each other. The low performing focus group consisted of three students; two in the 9th and one in the tenth grade.   The second group was easily distracted as they tinkered with their cell phones and kept looking out the door. It was interesting that of the three, two of the low performing students played football. Only one student lived with his father who had a Master's degree. The low performing focus group participants appeared to be very knowledgeable about Bachelor's and Master's degrees in comparison to the college track focus group participants. I followed the same procedure to begin the interviews by introducing myself, my connection to the community, and the purpose of my study. I then proceeded by asking the participants "What an education meant to them?" The themes that arose from the low performance focus group was that they did not have an actual meaning of education and when they did, it reflected the situations that they are currently experiencing or have experienced in their lives. The following statements were voiced by low performing focus group participants to describe what an education meant to them.

HHS Low Perform Focus Group: An education means everything.

HHS Low Perform FG: An education means not stuck on streets

HHS Low Perform FG: An education is something that you have to have

When the low performing participants were asked how much education ensured

success, the common theme involved around at least a high school degree even though

the participants spoke at length about college degrees meaning success and having an

impact on their future. When asked what potential barriers for education existed for

African American adolescent men in Hopkinsville, the common themes included racism,

gangs, and drug activity.   The following low performing focus group participants gave

their perspective of barriers to education. They first elaborated on drugs and then on the

racism in the community.

HHS Low Perform FG: Barriers to education for me is drug dealers riding around in big cars,
makes you want that life they have.

HHS Low Perform FG: Couple of weeks ago, Little River Days celebration was going on, and big groups of Blacks were told we looked as gangs by police. If you wear same color, told to disperse, white groups aren't told to do same things.

HHS Low Perform FG: Perception is that we always up to something bad. White kids can sit in parking lots of malls and car wash, but Black kids can't. It has an effect on you.

Collectively, the responses of the low performing group were short. One student

was physically imposing and he controlled the conversation with the other participants

seeking approval to answer any questions and often agreeing with him. It appeared that

the students were unaware of what type of education their father had and the meaning he

may have placed on education. The majority of the students in the low performing focus

group did not have a relationship with their father and when they did, conversations about

education were at a minimal. The students did view education as a success and were pretty respectful in making eye contact throughout the interview. After I mentioned the history of Hopkinsville, students were very knowledgeable of things in Hopkinsville and even mentioned African American facts that they heard about. All participants thought workforce education was a good thing.

Additional questions about masculinity were asked of the low performing participants and the common theme that arose was that the participants did not have a meaning of a man or gave a meaning associated with their home environment. Two low performing students gave their perspective of what it meant to be a man.

HHS Low Perform FG: A man means the way you are brought up at home.

HHS Low Perform FG: A man is doing chores around home.

The low performing focus group at Hopkinsville High School proved to be beneficial to the remainder of the study and in the selection of the participants in the low performing focus group.   The next area will look at the focus groups at Christian County High School.

Christian County Focus Groups

College Track Students

This section of the report highlights the profiles and some initial findings from the college track and low performance focus groups at Christian County High School. Christian County High School was somewhat different from Hopkinsville High School. I went to Hopkinsville High School but this was my first time in Christian County High School. Hopkinsville High School's administrators were more visible than Christian County's administrators, but as soon as the secretaries realized I was there to conduct

interviews, they immediately took care of me. They provided sandwich trays, cookies, chips, and sodas for the participants of the focus groups. The men all came in one at time and were instructed by the guidance counselor to shake my hand upon arrival. I recognized one of the five students as an athlete that has committed to play football at a major university. They all played sports and seemed very confident and open. Two out of the five students wore athletic gear that represented CCHS (Christian County High School). The men exhibited confidence and a swagger and wanted me to know that Christian County's athletic programs were successful in sports this past year. They talked about how high their grades were and how they had to make good grades to stay eligible in sports. Furthermore, when asked what an education meant to them, the common theme that arose was opportunities. The participants felt that education was a way for them to experience something different, to better their life, and to reach their goals. Below are some excerpts of the CCHS college track student's views of education.

High Perf. FG: An education means another world.

High Perf. FG: I think an education means more opportunities to better life

High Perf. FG: To get money you need an education.

In inquiring about vocational education, the college track focus group participants did not view vocational education as a viable option and did not consider it as enough to succeed in today's society. A common theme that arose when asking the students about education and how they believed were needed was that they were aware of their current environments, especially in Hopkinsville. They looked at the economic situations in Hopkinsville, and made their educational decisions on how much education to succeed based on that.

High Perf. FG: In Hopkinsville, might need a Masters degree to succeed, an Associates degree not enough.

High Perf. FG: Hopkinsville has a low graduation rate, low skill, and Hopkinsville doesn't have a job market.

High Perf. FG: A degree is wasted around here.

The participants in this high performing focus group felt they were the best students in the school because they were athletes and smart. Collectively, the participants mentioned that their mothers played a role in their life. In addition, they mentioned having guidance counselors at CCHS that appeared to be helpful, but really were not. However, they did mention that some teachers were helpful in their pursuit of education because they were athletes and trying to do something positive with their lives. When asked, "Who were the most influential people in their life regarding education," the participants mentioned that their step fathers and their mothers were the most important people in their lives.

Low Performing "

The Christian County low performing focus group was the second group to be interviewed.   Two of the four participants played football. The low performing students at CCHS were the most vocal with the session lasting over 45 minutes. Their parents were either high school dropouts or in jail. All of the students knew the importance of college but our dialogue centered on topics they were more familiar with such as gangs and drugs. One student in particular spoke about how the current CCHS football coach, an African American man, was an important figure in his life. The appearance of the focus group did not reflect the first group. The first group had on clothing that represented their high school while this particular group of students wore baggy jeans,

gold chains, and t-shirts that appeared to have been older and dingy. One student

mentioned church as an influence in his life. When asked about the meaning of

education, this low performing focus group comments reflected that of the low

performing focus group from Hopkinsville High School. The theme that arose was that

their meanings of education were representative of the experiences in their life and their

ability to overcome them. The following focus group participant gave his perspective.

LowPerf.Fg: An education means you can prevail over anything, dad dropped out of
high school, mom legally blind… an education means having an education.

When asked about vocational education, the students collectively thought that

having a trade was successful. Music and a career using hands were mentioned as means

of employment. Initially, they ridiculed each other's answers. They spoke about at

lengths about the current conditions and appearances of Hopkinsville, one student in

particular mentioned that he did not have a family, but did have the football team.

The next section first begins with a detailed table of all the participants selected

for in-depth interviews in this study followed by their profiles and descriptions.

Table 7.2 Participant Names and Profiles

College Track Students (Age)	Parents (Age)	School Grade	Low Performance Students (Age)	Parents (Age)	School Grade
Dennis(17)	Phillip(38)	HHS 11th	Kenan(17)	Rita(34)	HHS 11th
Jason(17)	Donald(54)	HHS 11th	Ron(16)	Rica(34)	HHS 10th
Marcus(17)	Michelle(46)	CCHS 11th	Garry(15)	Patricia48)	HHS 9th
Dan(17)	Princess(36)	CCHS 11th	Jamie Jr(16)	Jamie(48)	CCHS 10th
Trent(17)	Martin(44)	CCHS 12th	Willie(15)	Andre(48)	CCHS 10th

HHS Student Participants and Parents (In-depth Interviews)

Dennis, Phillip

A total of ten in-depth interviews were conducted with parents and sons from Hopkinsville High School. The first in-depth interview was conducted with a college track and high performing African American male, Dennis and his father, Phillip. Dennis was 17 years old and Phillip was 38 years old. At the time of the focus group, Dennis used the address in the Durret Avenue neighborhood, but the interview was conducted in their new address outside of Hopkinsville on a farm. While I interviewed Dennis, his mother and father stayed in the same room. Phillip has been laid off from work for a while and is currently looking for work. Dennis's mother is white and his father is Black. Dennis identifies as Black. The family was very hospitable during the interviews, offering me beverages several times throughout the interview process. Dennis and I went through the interview while his father observed. Initially, Phillip was at the table and I informed him that this interview was going to only consist of Dennis and I with his permission. Dennis's personality was reserved and quiet. Dennis spoke only when I asked a question and did not elaborate on the questions unless probes were utilized. Observing Dennis and his families' living situations, I would surmise that they lived in the lower bracket of the socioeconomic level.

Dennis's comments mirrored that of the focus groups. He stated the importance of an education for his future and that he did not take school seriously until after the 9th grade. Dennis mentioned that his living situations and his peers from his past neighborhood were motivators for improvement in his grades. He wanted a better life for him and his family. Additionally, Dennis mentioned gangs as barriers that affect young African American men's perception of education in Hopkinsville. His father has been

influential in his perceptions of education and his dad always cites the importance of taking care of responsibilities in the meaning of being a man.

Dennis's father agreed to participate in the interview. Phillip was 38 years of age, unemployed and has only completed 11 grades of school. Phillip talked at length about his neighborhood influence of gangs over family, drugs, robbing, and stealing. In addition, Phillip mentioned that during his time growing up, he did not care about education and education did not mean a thing. He spoke about not having a father present in the early part of his life until he was about 17. An incident occurred in which his dad stopped him while he was high off drugs. Phillip mentioned that the conversation he had with his father influenced him to turned his life around. In addition, Phillip spoke frequently of drugs being involved in his life and in Hopkinsville. He was very knowledgeable of gangs because he was in one, but he wanted a better life for his family. Phillip voiced that drugs and gangs are currently worse in Hopkinsville than his time growing up. Barriers that Phillip feels are affecting African American young men perceptions of education are racism, peers, and family. Furthermore, Phillip stated that his father, his great uncle and men in his church were very influential in his life.

Garry, Patricia

The next pair of interviews involved a low performing African American male, Garry and his mother, Patricia. Garry was 15 years old and his mother Patricia was 48. Garry was considered a low performing student and the youngest participant in this research study. Patricia was asked to participate in the study because Garry did not have a father in the household. The home of Garry and Patricia was located in Durret Avenue neighborhood, considered to be one of the worst neighborhoods in Hopkinsville. Garry's

living situations weren't the best and mirrored the rest of the houses in his neighborhood. As I maneuvered through the neighborhood passing by Garry's house, I noticed several people congregating in the streets and sitting on porches of the houses. As I arrived at Garry's house, his 19 year old sister and 13 year old brother were on the porch. His 19 year old sister asked me questions about who I was and that she never seen me before. I think she believed I was closer to her age than the 29 years old that my birth certificate would have read. I mentioned some names that I thought she would recognize from the neighborhood that I attended school with. After minutes of conversation and giving my background, Garry's sister and I were able to connect and she led me to Garry.

As I began the conversation with Garry, his mother came from inside the house and introduced herself to me. She asked the other two to give us some privacy while we conducted the interviews. I decided to conduct the interview with Garry on the porch because it was isolated from his family and it allowed me to observe the neighborhood settings. I recalled from the focus group session Garry placing all his attention on his cell phone as he did during this interview session. He provided brief answers to the responses to my questions, but he answered all questions with no sir. Garry would take time and think about all questions he answered instead of just giving an answer. In answering questions about his grades, Garry said that he gets all good grades except for a C in math. He stated that his mother constantly reminds him about the importance of his grades subsequently causing Garry to mention that at times he feels that he lets her down when he receives bad grades.

In reference to a male figure, Garry talked at length about the positive influence his uncle has in his life, seeing him about once a week to mow his grass. Garry says that

he speaks to his father about every two to three weeks. As the conversation progressed, Garry became more verbal. When I asked him about a workforce education, Garry felt that a workforce education was enough to succeed and that college was necessary for Black men to succeed. Garry was very knowledgeable of gangs and did not speak too negatively about them. Garry said there was not any pressure to join gangs and that there are gangs in Hopkinsville, and there are possibilities to be in gangs and have good grades. As Garry and I talked on the porch, I could overhear his mother conversing with someone in the house about a shooting that had taken place about thirty minutes ago across the town in Woodland Heights Housing Project. The incident involved both a 16 year old and 15 year old male, who were shot in the leg and head. I asked Garry if his uncle would be upset if he found out he was in gang and Garry said his uncle would just talk to him about it. I proceeded to ask Garry if his father would be upset if he was in a gang, and Garry replied that his father would not expect him to be in gang. After engaging in a conversation with Garry, I proceeded into the house to conduct an interview with Garry's mom Patricia.

At the time of the interview, Patricia was 48 years old and had been employed as a school bus driver for the last two years. She has been a resident of Hopkinsville since 1985 and was very informative of gangs and street life in Hopkinsville. Since news had just been reported about a shooting across town involving young African American men, our interview began with dialogue on gang life. She referred to gang members as misunderstood children and that community members want to reach out to gang members but are scared to do so. She said that houses get egged for interfering in the dealings of

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gangs. In referring back to her childhood, Patricia says that her mother and father were both strong individuals and that her father taught her responsibility.

Patricia had some interesting comments on how much education was needed to be successful. She said a 12 year education and that a college education was not for everybody. She also said that a workforce education was enough education to ensure success. In addition, Patricia stated the she sits down with her children and watches Lifetime, so her children can see the problems that form in the world and will be more willing to talk to her about their problems. Patricia also made some interesting comments about what it means to be a man. She stated, "A man must take care of his kids, even if they are not in his houses." "Place their kid's needs in front of their own." As I finished the interview with Patricia, she pointed to a picture of Garry in his ROTC uniform. She was obviously proud of the picture and stated that this picture, a representation of the military, could be a viable and ideal option for Garry.

Jason, Donald

The next participants in the research study from Hopkinsville High School were Jason (17) and his father, Donald (54). Jason is a college track student and his father works 3-11 during the week at a temporary factory job.

As I walked in Jason's house, I was shocked that Donald was going to participate in the interview today. Initially, Jason's mom stated that Donald's work schedule made it impossible for him to be a participant in the study during the week and that he would only be available to be interviewed on Saturdays. I decided to interview Donald first due to his work schedule. He felt comfortable engaging in conversations about political issues and referred to the economy and recession and the importance of Obama being the

president. Donald referred to drugs and crime plaguing the Black community and the lack of opportunities. He also mentioned currently working a temporary job. He is originally from Washington D.C. and went back and forth from Hopkinsville and Washington D.C. Additional background on Donald included that he's retired from the National Guard. Donald was the only person that I had to interrupt because he would get off topic at times. Donald had learned a trade in school and felt that it was enough to be successful. Donald spoke at lengths about the importance of being a Black man and the importance of pursuing an education. He concluded the interview by asking me if I could tutor his other son in Math and that he appreciated me conducting the interviews, stating it's importance to the Black community

As I finished the interview with Donald, Jason entered the room and sat down. Jason seemed eager to began the interview and tell his story. Jason plays football for HHS was a junior at the time of the interview. He was very intelligent and spoke frequently about his religion playing a important role in his belief and pursuit of education. He was very knowledgeable of the history of African Americans in Hopkinsville. He mentioned that he acquired his knowledge of the history of African Americans in a class provided by HHS. Josh also mentioned that he heard the class has been discontinued. Jason mentioned that a class in African American history would motivate blacks to pursue opportunities in education and motivate them to achieve more. Josh was one of two more vocal students in the high performing focus groups. At the time of the focus group, Josh wore school colors and continued the trend of wearing school colors during this interview. Josh talked at lengths about meeting past African American Hopkinsville High School football players and that he viewed them as role

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models and even mentioned that he felt I was a role model because I was an African American male from Hopkinsville, pursuing higher education, and conducting this study.

Ron, Kenan

After having difficulty reaching students from the low performance focus groups, I relied on my community contacts to conduct the final two in-depth interviews with students from Hopkinsville High School, Ron (16) and Kenan (17). I remember Ron and Kenan as small children. I've seen them as young as four years old. The last time I saw Kenan was at his older cousin's Dental School graduation two years ago. However, it has been over eight years since I have had the opportunity to sit down and engage in meaningful dialogue with Kenan.

Kenan's and Ron's interview took place at the home of their grandmother. Kenan has no communication with his father while Ron has contact with his father around three times a week. The mothers of Ron and Kenan are twins, so in order to interview them, this interview was going to consist of both Ron and Kenan followed by their mothers. As I entered the home, I gave the grandmother a hug, complemented her on how well she looked, and then proceeded into the dining room area to conduct the interviews. The home is located on Central Avenue, in the Durret Avenue neighborhood. The characteristics of the interview site included the neighborhood center and local police department across the street from the home of the interview.

The center is a location where kids would go to just hang out throughout the day. Outside the center, there are four basketball courts in which everyone would gather all parts of the day to play basketball. I remember my days in Hopkinsville when I would spend hours perfecting my basketball game at these basketball courts. The basketball

courts are surrounded by fences, so there were only two ways to enter and leave the facility. Central Avenue has a lot of traffic and I recalled days and nights in which I would sit on the porch with Sam, Kenan and Ron's older cousin, and we would witness the new and hottest cars pass by playing loud music and notice people walk down the street all hours of the night.

Sam was raised by his grandmother and his grandfather. His grandfather passed over three years ago, but I remember his grandfather playing a significant role in not only Sam's life, but also in the life of the mothers of Ron and Kenan. Sam's grandfather was the head of the house and the disciplinarian in the family. Regardless of the living conditions and surroundings of Sam, his grandfather encouraged Sam to always do better. I can recall on countless occasions during my adolescent years having talks with Sam's grandfather on my future plans and he would occasionally talk about his life as a child in Hopkinsville.

As I started the interviews, I asked Kenan and Ron to accompany me to the dining room to conduct the interview. I knew I was pressed for time, so I decided to interview Ron and Kenan at the same time while their mothers were in the adjacent room talking to their grandmother. Even though Kenan and Ron appeared to spend a lot of time together, there are obviously differences in their behavior. Ron has more confidence and direction than Kenan. Kenan is 17 heading into the 11th grade and Ron is 16 and heading into the 10th grade. Throughout the interview, Kenan and Ron told jokes and played with their cell phones. Ron had tattoos with his initials and a basketball on his left and right arm. Kenan reeked of black and mild cigars.

As the interview progressed, it was very difficult to get Kenan and Ron to elaborate on their questions. Kenan mentioned that he did not like school because he hated to get up early, but now he likes school a little bit better. He also mentioned that he did not feel equal in school, but he felt equal on the streets. I asked Kenan if he participated in any sports at Hopkinsville High School. Kenan mentioned that he played football his freshman year. I proceeded to ask Kenan if anyone talked to him regularly about education. Kenan voiced that his older cousin and his grandmother would have conversations with him about school and he felt that he would do better in school if his older cousin resided in Hopkinsville. He also mentioned that he wanted to get into trade school this year because he likes what they have to offer. Our conversation continued on the community of Hopkinsville. Kenan voiced that he felt like his community did not have an impact of his grades positively or negatively. It appears that the low performing participants believe that their community has no impact on their grades because they choose not to be a follower and not do what everyone else does in their community. In addition, I asked Kenan what he wanted to do in five years and he responded by saying that he wanted to be a businessman in five years.

The next interview involved Ron, who plays football and basketball for HHS. Ron has had many influences in his life that have helped him such as his basketball coach, the assistant principal, and his guidance counselors.

In inquiring about masculinity, Ron could not provide a definition of a man. He stated that he did not know. So I proceeded to ask Ron what he wanted to be when he got out of high school, and he responded by saying an athletic director or a sports player. He said he is going to start next year in varsity football, so athletics are very important in his

life. During the interview Kenan told a joke about Ron's hair. Ron responded by saying, "I still get chicks." Ron stated that he likes school and being around his friends. Collectively, Ron and Kenan spoke about gang influence and its affect in the schools and that sometimes they have fear in on schools because of gangs and drugs. Ron mentioned a particular instance in which the school went on lockdown due to administration receiving a tip that someone had a gun. Ron mentioned that a number of students use drugs at his school. It appears that both students have minimal contact outside of school with adults that talk in depth about academics. Ron's father asked him questions about school as well as his mother but may not have the knowledge to speak in depth regarding subject matter and career aspirations and motivate and challenge the kid in school. Kenan does not have a male influence to talk to him about school outside of Sam who lives three hours away. Kenan does not appear to take things seriously and does not have an idea of future aspirations.

Rita, Rica

During my adolescent years, I remember seeing the twins, Rita and Rica, consistently over Sam's grandmother house when I would visit. I did not engage in much conversation other than saying hello. I knew that they were participating in the interviews as a favor to Sam, their cousin. As I explained my study, I asked Kenan's mother, Rita, how she was doing and she said she was tired, so I knew that her being tired had the potential to affect her answers and that I had to conduct the interviews at the same time as I was pressed for time. Rita and Rica (34) are both unemployed and their highest level of education completed was 11th grade. The twins were interested in my study due to their eye contact, and willingness to ask for clarification of questions. Their

phone kept ringing during the interviews and I even noticed that one of the ring tones was the latest rap songs. Ron's mother, Rica, had a more positive experience with the school than Kenan's mother, Rita. She said that the school would call her often to say good things about Ron while Kenan's mother, Rita, would get calls about Kenan's negative behavior. I asked Kenan's mother her definition of a man and she said "no good," with a laugh. Both women stated that peers, drugs, and racism are barriers in their kids' lives. Ron's mother said that the kids behave during the school year, but its hard keeping them out of trouble during the summer months. Both women had no contact with their father growing up and mentioned their mother as the most influential adult in their life. I noticed that asking questions about their relationship with their father made the twins uncomfortable so I chose not to probe any farther on the topics.

Christian County High School

The next section of this chapter outlines the profiles from the participants of Christian County High School, which is located off of Glass Avenue in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. According to the Kentucky Department of Education, CCHS population consists of 1304, in which 251 of those students being African American men. CCHS contains grades 9th-12 and the majority of African American students attend this high school from the Forest Park Subdivision, Rose Acres, Waddell Village, Rozelle Leavel housing units, "The Hill," Crofton, Pennyrile Apartments, Moore's Court, First Street Area, and Gainesville area.

CCHS Student Participants and Parents

Marcus, Michelle

The first Christian County High School participant discussed in this study is Marcus. Marcus was seventeen at the time of the interview and was considered a college track

student. Marcus received an athletic scholarship to attend a major college university in the fall. He was one of the more confident kids at CCHS, standing around 6'3 and having a muscular build. Marcus appears to be a role model to other students at his school. He lived in a good area of Hopkinsville, outside of the inner city and in a new neighborhood. I knew I recognized Marcus's mother, who was the former Hopkinsville High School Women's freshman basketball coach.

Marcus and his family represented the middle class of Hopkinsville. His mother, Michelle, was in the kitchen where she could see and hear the interview that took place between Marcus and myself. As I entered the house, I informed Marcus and his mother what my study was about and my background about growing up in Hopkinsville. This method allowed the subject to gain comfort to start the interview process. Marcus spoke at length about how both his mother and father have college degrees. His mom has a BS and MS in Education. He lives with his stepfather who has also been very instrumental in his life and he views education positively and felt all African Americans did but just did not want to work at it because of lack of interest or laziness.

When Marcus was asked potential barriers to education for African Americans in Hopkinsville such as racism, he did not view Hopkinsville schools as racist, but the community as racist. Marcus stated that Gangs are prevalent and influence people because smart kids do not want to seem uncool to their peers. Additionally, sports played a significant role in Marcus taking his education seriously. Marcus did not view any barriers in education and was unaware of the history of Hopkinsville.

Marcus's mother, Michelle agreed to participate in the study since his stepfather had not arrived home from work. She's from a nearby small town, but taught in the

Christian County School Districts for over 12 years. She credited her parents with instilling educational values and views. Even though Marcus viewed workforce education as unsuccessful, his mother thought it was okay, the main reason being that her current husband has been working in a factory for over 20 years. She also mentioned opportunities not being vocalized in the African American community and parents being unaware of how to take advantage of them. She also stated that racism was prevalent, but she did not experience it because she was an athlete. She instilled education in her kids and felt that her husband, her children's stepfather, played a role in her kids' lives. Marcus's mom was very helpful in offering future discussions if necessary. She knew a lot about education and even offered dinner.

Dan, Princess

The next interview was with Dan (18) and his mother Princess (36). Dan was a unique individual in that he seemed really intelligent and knowledgeable for his age. Dan played football and is going into his senior year at CCHS. Dan is considered a student that is on a college track. He takes advanced placement classes. Dan has never met his father and his mother has been the main influence in his upbringing. Dan has a sister that is four years older than him and his mother had his sister at age 13. Dan stayed in a fairly new home on a secluded road outside of Hopkinsville. Dan mentioned his uncle, who lives on the same road, quite frequently throughout the interview. He was not timid or shy throughout the interview even when questions were asked about his family, particularly his father. As the interview progressed, Princess came into the room. She was very nice and receptive and credited Dan's academics to taking advantage of programs offered through the schools and the community. Princess did not have a

relationship with her father, but she mentioned having a strong mother. Dan mentioned his future aspirations of Biomedical Engineering at the University of Kentucky or University of Louisville. However, Dan mentioned that his mother wants him to attend Morehouse College in Atlanta. She stated there is something about a Morehouse man that makes it more appealing." Dan was very knowledgeable of gangs, but chose not to get involved in that. I definitely know that Dan will be successful in whatever he decides to do. Dan's mother was very knowledgeable of college even though she did not attend. His sister attended some community college. Princess, herself, has set goals of Dan attending college.

Trent, Martin

The next interview I conducted ended up being the two that I spent the most time talking to. I ended up traveling to Clarksville, Tennessee and talking to Trent. Trent is 18 years old and now a high school graduate of CCHS. Trent was a senior at the initial interview at CCHS. Trent had a 3.8 grade point average and played basketball and football for CCHS. Trent was on a college track with an aspiration of going to college as an Accountant. Trent lives with his mom and step dad, who are both influential in his life. However, Trent's dad lives right down the street from him. They live in a 200,000 dollar home and it appeared to be in the upper middle class income bracket of those who I interviewed. Trent mentioned several times that he was going to be totally honest during the interview process. The interview took place in the business room with Trent's two year old brother coming in and out of the room. As I pulled up to their house, there were three cars present in the driveway. As I walked into the room in which the interview was being conducted, I noticed a picture of Martin Luther King on the wall.

Trent seemed comfortable and open during the interview process. During the focus groups, Trent was one of the more vocal students expressing his views. He exhibited confidence and talked about his transition in school, explaining that his grades were always high when he was in classes that had a limited number of African Americans. Trent also mentioned that the only other time his grades suffered was when his grandmother passed. Furthermore, Trent mentioned that as an athlete with high grades, he felt he was on top of the world.

Moreover, Trent hung out with gang members and stated that he has seen all region basketball players and straight A's students turn into gang bangers. Trent described his step dad as being pro Black and also stated that when he was in the Black neighborhood, those around wanted him to be successful, but it changed when he moved out of the Black neighborhood. In addition, Trent mentioned engaging in dialogue with his cousin and wife who both went to college. His cousin made the quote that a Black man needs to have as much education as possible.

Trent's dad, Martin, was 44 years old and graduated from HHS in 1984. Trent's dad felt very comfortable talking to me. He said he is pro Black and did not want to seem racist in his comments. He has an associate's degree and is currently pursuing his bachelor's degree at a nearby university.   Martin is a former factory worker and mentioned that the Black community has suffered because the current leaders have been picked by white leaders and have not given back to the Black community. Martin voiced that the leaders are not holding programs that would be beneficial to the Black communities. Martin named specific individuals and gave examples. Martin directed me toward individuals that would help my study, the past Christian County Director of

Transportation Services, an individual that has been in the school system for over twenty years. After I finished the interview with Martin, he followed-up our discussion with an email on additional insights on education, Hopkinsville, and the African American community.

Jamie, Jamie Jr.

The next interview was with Jamie, the father of a low performing student at Christian County High School. He is 48 years old and has been working in a factory with cake, brownie, and muffin mix the past two years. Jamie resides in an area that has been home of three shootings in the last month. As I pulled up to the home, Jamie Jr (16) was walking down the street while his sister was on the porch. They called Jamie Jr. on his cell phone to tell him I was there to conduct the interview.

As I conducted the first interview with Jamie Sr., both of his kids were in the room. Jamie, his son, and his daughter all live in the house. The mother of the children was not mentioned in the interviews nor does she reside in the home. Noticeably, Jamie wore a religious shirt and induced religion in many of his responses. Jamie mentioned that work was the main problem in Hopkinsville and that unemployment caused a huge amount of issues in the Black community. On several occasions Jamie would mentioned that work was readily available for all ages when he was growing up and that now there is a lack of jobs and opportunities, so kids are resorting to gangs, drugs, and other things. Jamie stated, "There is not anything for kids to do." He even mentioned that he dropped out of high school for a year to work and that his father put him out of the house because he dropped out of school.

In examining the relationship among Jamie and his son, Jamie appeared to be accommodating to his son, informing him that the interview would not take that long. Jamie said that Jamie Jr.'s education was important to obtain a job in the future. Also, Jamie voiced that the Hopkinsville's community has changed greatly. He experienced a tighter knit community when he was going to school.

As Jamie sat back in his chair, I informed him that I would now be conducting an interview with his son and if it was possible that I could speak with him alone. Jamie Jr. was a low performing student, sixteen years old, and a rising sophomore. He was very open and intrigued by the whole interview because he felt the interview gave him an opportunity to be heard.

In discussing education, Jamie Jr. voiced his lack of attentiveness and seriousness in the classroom while attending several schools. First, he spoke of his experiences in an alternative school, which taught him to not talk back to teachers because he felt that was what the teachers wanted you to do in alternative school. Jamie Jr. felt that teachers enjoyed punishing students in alternative school to teach them a lesson. Next, Jamie Jr. mentioned that he first started at a Trigg County Elementary school, but moved at age 9 to Hopkinsville. He voiced that he did not really care about school until he was approached by a basketball coach that showed interest in him because of his height. The interactions with the coach continued as played in the Sweet Sixteen State Basketball Tournament last year in Rupp Arena, home of the University of Kentucky Basketball team. Jamie Jr. felt that attending the tournament allowed him to experience a great atmosphere and inspired him to do better in his life. Jamie Jr. stated that he does enough work in school to stay eligible for athletics; however, he mentioned college as a possible

destination. Furthermore, racism has been absent in Jamie Jr.'s school experiences. He said there was no racism in schools, but drugs and gangs play a role in his peers' lives. They attempted to influence his life, but he stated, "I stay away from all that, I'm smarter."

Andre, Willie

The next low performing student and parent interview came with Andre (48) and his son, Willie (15). They lived on the West side of town, down the street from Christian County High School. As I pulled up in the parking lot, I met Andre as he stepped out of his truck. I walked toward the apartment with Andre; he stopped me from entering the apartment till he received approval from his wife for me to enter. He said that he wanted to make sure she was decent. Andre was very cordial and helpful in my study. He is currently disabled and unable to work. He had been previously employed in a factor for over 18 years.

Andre's father was a sharecropper, which influenced his perception of education. He lived in the Durret Avenue area before moving over to the East Side of Hopkinsville. He learned a trade in high school involving machinery. He also spoke at lengths on the transition of Hopkinsville's community, specifically mentioning how the elderly fail to partake in events he's grown accustomed to them doing, such as walking the streets or sitting on the porches of their homes. He stated that they are frightened to get involved n the lives of Hopkinsville youth. He mentioned that in the past if he acted up in one neighborhood, he would get punished there and then receive a punishment when he arrived home. Andre stated, "The phone call from community members always beat him home."

When asked about his father's education, Andre mentioned that his father had trouble reading and had only a 7th or 8th grade education. His father wanted to make sure Andre had enough education to read. Due to his obligations at home, Andre placed emphasis on finishing high school then returning back to the family farm to assist his father, who was bothered by illness. I noticed Andre's attitude was very passive when it came to his son's education. He stated on numerous occasions that education was important, but also said that that he hoped his son would get it together soon. Furthermore, Andre stated that his son received opportunities because of his behavior. He was well- mannered, which was viewed positively by those in schools and in the community. I was under the belief that Andre cared about his son's education, but did not understand the educational process himself and was victim of simply being unaware. He pushed his son in the area of work more than actual education.

As soon as I finished the interview with Andre, Willie walked into the house. Willie had just arrived from his summer job working in landscaping and construction. I asked Willie, "How did you receive the job." He replied, "My uncle asked if I wanted to do some extra work to make money, I agreed, and have been working for the past two weeks." Willie was very well mannered and shook my hand when he came in and answered every question with a yes sir. Just by talking to him, I would have thought he was a college track student due to his manners. Willie talked at lengths about how he does well at school, but at times he resorts back to his old ways of making his classmates laugh by joking. Willie stated that he liked making his peers laugh because he made him feel good and popular. He plays football for CCHS and also plays AAU basketball. If it was not for my community contact, I would not have been aware of the subject's bad

grades. He repeatedly told me he was doing well in school. The family asked me on several occasions if I wanted something to drink. They were very hospitable and Andre consistently spoke of the significance of God in his definition of being a man.

Chapter 8

Findings

Before findings are discussed, I reflect on my background in this chapter because of its significance in relation to my findings. In particular, I show how my interests in African-American educated formed and how the findings in this study resonate with my background.

My interest in the education of African American men has evolved over time. I have had many experiences that have formed my views both socially and professionally. My decision to explore the influences on the educational perceptions of rural African American men stem from my experiences of growing up as a rural African American male in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. As these men and women in this study shared their experiences, I not only compared their experiences with each others for commonalities, but I also compared them with mine.

I begin my education at Morningside Elementary, went to Hopkinsville Middle School, and then Hopkinsville High School. As most of the participants informed me of their educational experiences from the start, education was instilled very early. My father worked on an army base twenty minutes away from Hopkinsville and carried us on his income while my mother stayed at home and took care of the household duties. My mother was there to place my sister and I on the bus in the morning and to see us off the bus in the evening. My mother would encourage us and carefully go over our homework with us. I recall a time that I was punished in the first grade for taking extra work off the teacher's desk without her permission and completing them for extra practice just because I liked doing the work. My mother was visible at my schools and my father

played the role of a stern disciplinarian. I remember being disciplined as early as elementary school when I would receive below satisfactory marks in my classes.

As I entered middle school, I was placed in advanced placement classes. I was the only African American male in the majority of my classes. Being the only African American male in my class did not bother me, but it was my African American peers that seemed to be bothered. There were times that I was made fun of and looked down upon by my peers. But every time I decided to stray away from being a good student, my father played a role in my realizing that education was the most important thing to me and my way to a better life.

My father not only placed emphasis in education, but he placed emphasis in hard work and what it meant to be a man. I had weekly chores such as mowing the lawn, taking out the trash, and picking up around the house. These chores taught me responsibility. In addition, I was involved in baseball and basketball youth leagues. Subsequently, I participated in boys' basketball and baseball as a member of Hopkinsville Middle and Hopkinsville High School. Even though I did not have the most talent, my father would work countless hours training me in the areas of running, shooting a basketball, throwing a baseball, and understanding the basics of the game.

The time with my father had a greater influence on my educational experiences and meanings of a man than the influences that affected my peers. As I attended Hopkinsville High School, I was subjected to many influences. I first encountered the perception of what it meant to be a man among my fellow African American male peers. In my early years of high school, friends would talk about how many women they were involved with, how they sold drugs, and their involvement in gangs with the older kids. I

would sit with another friend of mine and would view our African American peers riding in big cars and loud music and imagine a life in which we were in the spotlight. My friend was an African American male as well and had a grandfather, whom he lived with, that preached the importance of a college education.

Drugs, gangs, money, family life, and sports all sent my friends in different avenues. Several were selling drugs, several were in gangs, and several worked on farms during the year and only went to school when they had too. It was a norm for some of my African American men in this community to place school behind work and wait till after Labor Day, which was tobacco cutting time, to attend school. As I attended the University of Kentucky, I had the opportunity to interact with other African American men that felt positive about education, which was different from Hopkinsville. In Hopkinsville, I felt I was one of the few African American adolescent males that felt positive about education, especially as an opportunity to make a better life for myself and my family. Furthermore, my experiences in Hopkinsville and the University of Kentucky aided in realizing three items that formalized this study; education means different things to different people, the meaning of hard physical labor compared to a college degree influences African American youth in Hopkinsville, and community and family meanings of masculinity and education have a direct influence on adolescent perceptions of education in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. Collectively, these experiences serve as a way to explain the themes and commonalities found in this study.

Data Analysis

Hopkinsville High School, Christian County High School, Christian County Vocational Tech and Career School, and the homes of community Hopkinsville residents

proved to be a rich source of data for the purposes of this qualitative study. After the data were collected from the five focus groups, twenty-two individually taped interviews, and archival documents, I began to code for themes among the college track students and parents and the low performing students and parents. I also coded separate themes for mothers and fathers to determine if there was a difference in their perspectives on masculinity, education, or workforce education. A qualitative research study design was implemented and themes were used in open coding around the questions this research had set out to answer.

As a result of coding for themes, I found that both college track and low performing adolescent men associated the meaning of a man with the provider role; however, the most salient finding of this study was the connection among education, opportunity, race, and the provider role among college track students. While aware of the effects of racism in their rural community, participants from the college track group and their parents gave voice to the notion that as Black men they could fulfill their provider role and improve their quality of life by using personal responsibility and opportunities that were provided through education (Diemer, 2002). As found in Diemer's study (2002), college track parents and sons realized the need to make use of existing opportunity and line up future opportunity through education. In particular, the education that many of these adolescent men were pursuing or aspired to pursue served as the best way to ensure future opportunities in employment and was a large part of the college track participants' masculine identity. Additionally, the college track students felt that education was a buffer against racism and a way to deal with racism that they felt was present in this community.

Moreover, the college track students felt strongly about education. They felt education led to opportunities, which led to them to being able to fulfill their provider role (Diemer, 2002). To these college track participants, their meaning of a man meant that of responsibility and provider and not that of the archetype masculinity of physical toughness, sexual prowess, or aggressiveness normally associated with African American men in this community. In addition, race played an important role in their meanings of education for the college track students. They believed education was a necessity and equipped them with tools that ensured they could be successful and earn a living as a Black man.

The view of race playing an important role in education contrasted with previous research, particularly the popular view of Fordham and Ogbu (1986). These researchers posited that discrimination and experiences led African Americans to develop an oppositional collective or social identity that conflicts with educational achievement. By contrast, in this particular study, the college track students' African American identity motivated their educational pursuits and further realization that education was a necessity as a Black man to receive opportunities and provide for themselves and their future families.

In comparing and contrasting the views of the college track parents and sons, the college track parents' matched that of their sons in the areas of provider, opportunity, and race. Through their interactions and conversations, college track adolescent men's views of education were positively shaped by their parents beliefs about education. However, the college track parents included religion as a theme, which was mentioned frequently by mothers in their meanings of a man. The college track adolescent men voiced that

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they learned their views from their parents and that their meanings played a role in their particular beliefs.

Among low performing students, they felt that a meaning of a man was of a provider, but did not relate education as a means to provide. However, the low performing students collectively viewed responsibility as a theme that was connected to being a provider. In addition, their meanings of education, manhood, and workforce education all related to their respective home environments they had experienced or were currently experiencing. Another theme among the low performing students was survival. The low performing students did not relate education or workforce education to being a provider as did the college track students but viewed education as a means of survival. Furthermore, the low performing students felt that if they could obtain a high school education, they could achieve anything. In addition, the low performing students did not associate their meanings of masculinity or education to race even though they did mention racism was very prevalent in their community but not particularly in schools. The low performing students referenced being treated unfairly by local law enforcement, which led them to believe that race was a problem in this rural community.

The research questions asked allowed an in- depth examination of Hopkinsville's community and brought visibility to a transition among masculinity that has potentially affected this African American Community. Hopkinsville was once a community that was rooted in hard work, educational pursuits, ownership of Black businesses, and a sense of achievement. Many of the older community African American men and women in this study voiced that that when they grew up, they experienced a different Hopkinsville that consisted of a strong Black community. But after conversing with the

adolescent men in Hopkinsville, the rooted masculinity of hard work, educational

achievement by African American men, and Black entrepreneurship had been routed to

differing views about the community, work, and education. The new masculinity in

Hopkinsville had been routed to one of making quick fast money, participating in gangs,

sleeping with numerous women, and engaging in random acts of violence to prove

toughness. This new masculinity, which is addressed later in this analysis through the

concepts of rooted and routed by Laoire & Fielding (2006), was evident in this

community by the amount of drug arrests, violent crimes, and low educational outcomes

among the African American youth.

In addition, the participants in this study collectively voiced that there were

barriers to education in Hopkinsville. The barriers were racism in the community and

schools, gangs, knowledge about opportunities, lack of positive role models, and the idea

of simply being a rural community which limits awareness to a world outside of

Hopkinsville. In addition, the data analysis revealed that the spatial context and

availability of an adult male in the sons' lives correlated with academic achievement of

the students, particularly whether they were college track or low performing. Also,

academic achievement of the students in this study correlated with the neighborhood of

the adolescent men. The college track adolescent men in this study lived in the suburban

areas while the low performing students lived in areas of Hopkinsville that were

considered inner city with the highest concentration of African Americans. The next

section will discuss in detail the themes among college track participants and low

performing participants.

The remainder of this chapter discusses the following themes among college track participants: providing, responsibility, opportunity, and race followed by low performing participant themes: providing and responsibility, home environment, and survival while concluding with a discussion on mothers and fathers of rural African-American adolescent men, Hopkinsville's African- American transformation of masculinity, and rurality as a barrier to education.

College Track

Providing

During consultation with college track sons and parents, providing for their families was a theme that emerged. The College track students and parents felt it was important for a man to be able to provide for his family currently and in the future. Providing has been a role that has had a long lasting history among men in the United States. Research conducted by Benard (1981) has traced the origin of the male provider role to the 1840's while an additional study by Farmer (1978) has argued that the provider role is a superordinate role for American men, regardless of race or social class. The college track men in this study felt that being a provider was at the forefront in what it meant to be a man. They felt that in order to be a man, it was important to provide for your family as well as for yourself. Throughout the study, employment was mentioned among the college track adolescent men. Several of the college track mens' fathers were either in a temporary job or unemployed. The college track adolescent men understood the importance of providing for their families despite the difficulty of the labor market their fathers were currently experiencing. For example, a Christian County High School college track focus group participant stated, "To be a man, you have to work, provide for

family." Another Christian County college track focus group participant stated, "Part of being a man is making end's meet, and getting an education is being equipped with tools such as an education to provide." Trent, a high performing college track student from Christian County High School also stated "A man does what he has to do to provide, whether for himself or his family, to provide means doing whatever it takes to provide for your family. To be a man you have to earn a living." Martin, father of college track student Trey stated "A man provides for his family." These findings of the college track adolescent men and parents were consistent with other research such as Cazenvae, who found in a study of 54 African American letter carriers that participants equated a man with providing for one's family; furthermore, the provider role emerged as the most salient aspect of these men's identity (1979, 1981).

Responsibility

Throughout this study, several additional themes emerged that were related to the theme, providing. In particular, responsibility was a theme that arose and seemed to be linked to the provider role based on the responses among the college track participants and low performing participants in this study. Specifically, the college track participants in the study associated masculinity and education with being responsible and also with the provider role. It appeared that part of being responsible was realizing the importance of education, handling business in and out of classroom, taking up for your actions, whether having children or being punished for a crime, and providing for your family. In a similar study, Cazenvae (1979) also found that responsibility was a theme in his study of 54 African American letter carriers as they expressed what it meant to be a man. Marcus, a college track student at Christian County High School and Jason, a college

track student at Hopkinsville High School, both stated respectively "A man takes responsibility for actions, help family take responsibility of family's action." "A man takes care of responsibilities, be accountable for actions."   In addition, a theme of responsibility also arose among several college track parents. They felt responsibility was an important factor in their meaning of a man and important in being a role model for young men in this community. Responsibility was associated with taking ownership of your son, teaching him good morals and passing to him what it meant to be a man. Trent's father Martin stated, "First it's a male's responsibility to be accountable for all of his actions…who instructs, directs, and encourages his family." While Donald, father of Josh, a college track student at HHS stated;

> A man is someone whose is brought up with morals, take care of responsibilities… a young boy needs a role model, a father. So it can be passed on to his son, the best role model of a father is that, spends time, teach him the right way. A son watches his father. A father that sees his father doing the best he can do, counseling him. My father chastised me, many times.

A man meant to some fathers that they had to put aside some of the things that they use to do in order to be there for their son. Phillip, father of HHS College track student Dennis, stated, "A definition of a man is quit doing childish things, man can take care of own responsibilities, stop robbing, stealing."

Opportunity

Another theme that arose from the college track participants and their parents was opportunity. Many of the college track sons and parents felt that an education meant an opportunity for them to have a better life either for themselves or for their family. Many of the participants felt that Hopkinsville did not have many opportunities due to the economy and that an education meant an opportunity to leave the community and pursue

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opportunities elsewhere. In addition, an education was viewed as a way to fulfill the provider role. These participants in the study expressed an appreciation for the opportunities that they experienced but also noticed that education was a buffer against discrimination and that opportunities are not available for everyone. Further, the college track participants viewed an education as an opportunity to go to college and obtain the ideal job. Marcus, a college track student from CCHS, linked opportunity and being able to provide by stating, "In Hopkinsville, it's harder here, less to work with being a man, more pressure to succeed. There is not much opportunity. If you are not up to par, may not be able to provide." Marcus went on to state the importance of obtaining additional education with opportunity to provide in future.   "Education means a whole lot… Can't really get a lot with high school education… a basic job." While Dan stated, "For me, I see a lot of people that has been here all their life. I feel it is my duty to go out get an education and bring what I learned back to my community." Finally, in relation to education being an opportunity, Josh stated, "An education is a sense of power, I can get a job."

Opportunity was a theme among college track parents as well. They felt that an education was a way to open doors that otherwise would not be open. Marcus's mother Michelle stated, "An education is extremely important, no one can really take from me, doors open." Princess, mother of Dan, felt that education was important regarding job markets, even within her own pursuits of employment and Hopkinsville's lack of jobs: "An education means a lot for my kids. Don't have many jobs in Hopkinsville. I want to go back, Lab Tech, or something." As parents stated, an education was an opportunity to get employment and to have a better quality of life.

When asked about vocational education, a majority of college track parents and

students thought it was good, but felt it did not provide enough opportunities and that a

student may never get the opportunity to use the trade. Martin voiced;

> Trade no, it's not going to make you successful… what's going to make you
> successful are   opportunities …you can teach a monkey to jump rope, but never
> getting the opportunity, you can't jump. Not downing vocational education, it's
> important, but learning a trade have to be a given an opportunity to use it.

Martin's son Trent, voiced similar views on vocational education.

> Vocational education can't lead to success, no not at all, welding you can only do
> one job and that's weld, but if you get a Bachelors degree in Accounting, you can
> do other things. As a welder, you a welder for the rest of your life… Finance, you
> can manage a business.

> Marcus, a CCHS college track participant, also stated, "A vocational education is

not enough…No, need more than that to succeed, back then you could, but need college

education now."

The college track participants and their parents both viewed education as an

opportunity regarding future employment and a way to pursue a better life. These

findings were consistent with Diemer (2002), who examined the identity construction of

7 African American men ages 20-47. Participants in Diemer's study also emphasized

education as awareness of educational and occupational opportunities.

Race

Race was another theme that arose when asking college track students and

parents' meanings of masculinity, education, and vocational education. Race was

inextricably linked to each of these areas as well as the aforementioned themes. The

Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano, 1998) was used as a

conceptual framework to examine African American voices in this study, their meanings

of education, masculinity, and views of vocational education. This theory centers the discussion of inequalities within the context of race and racism (Sleeter & Delgado-Bernal, 2003). This theory allowed the researcher to examine neutrality, fairness, meritocracy in the education of African Americans (Parker, Deyhle, & Villenas, 1999). Additionally, as a conceptual framework, Critical Race Theory allowed an examining of meanings from an African American perspective in a manner that recognizes the intersection of race and gender.

Race was a factor in every aspect of the college track men's answers. They felt that as a Black man, higher education would remove labels of a thug or trouble maker. A college track focus group participant at HHS stated, "Having a degree, you are not labeled as being ghetto, not a thug." They also felt that higher education would equate them with success. A college track focus group participant at HHS stated, "If you're a Black person, if you get a degree, people will think you are successful. Dennis, a HHS college track participant stated, "College is good for African American men… society… way people talk about education, statistics of African Americans in education." Most importantly, they felt that education was insurance against discrimination (Diemer, 2002).

In addition, many of the college track participants felt there was racism in their community and in schools. They also felt that many Blacks were not aware of opportunities because of their race. Dan stated, "I have noticed in programs I am in, youth leadership, 30 students in program… only 4 are Black." Moreover, Supples and Smith (1995) found in three recent community assessments of rural communities that racism was a predominant theme. Furthermore, college track participants felt that African

Americans in their own community did not want them to succeed. Dan, college track

CCHS student, stated, "There is racism in Hopkinsville, not necessarily Black vs. White,

but Black vs. Black, so many people don't want other Blacks to succeed, more own

community." These students felt that race played a role in their beliefs about education

and education gave them a sense of power as a Black man. Trent, a college track student

at Christian County high school stated, "As an African American male, feel on top,

athlete on top, grades means even more on top, respect." Many of the participants

learned what it meant to be a Black man from fathers and hardships that may occur.

Trent stated;

> My father is a pro Black person, he really focuses on the Black man, Black man
> trying to make it in this economy and he tells me about these hard times and what
> he has been through and how the road will be easier for me than them. He
> influence has been good on me because I just don't want to be another statistic.

In addition, a theme of race emerged from consultation with the college track

parents as well. They voiced engaging routinely in conversations with their sons about

being a Black man in Hopkinsville and the importance of education as a buffer against

discrimination. They felt that a Black man cannot depend on any outside resources to

help them and that education is needed because many of the Black leaders of the past are

no longer around. Furthermore, the college track parents routinely referenced to being a

"Black" male as oppose to just being a man. The parents collectively voiced that a Black

man has a uniquely difficult experience because of their race in today's society. Donald,

father of college track student Jason, stated, "Black woman is not a threat, Black man is

the dominant sex. Average Black man can't depend on government to pull itself up by

bootstraps, we have to equip ourselves with an education. The Black leaders are no

longer in existence." Others felt that race played a role in the education of Blacks today.

Eli, former director of transportation services stated:

> Black kids don't know who they are… We had someone to look up to, we had a Black community… Take a successful Black man today, he won't pull up Black man, will leave community, not build it up, and separate us… When I came up, my parents were dedicated with education… took time. Parents today don't take time… especially with Black males…

Martin, father of CCHS College Track student Trent, stated "When I was growing up, there were successful Black communities in Hopkinsville, now no successful Black communities." Many of the parents also associated race with the theme, opportunities. They felt that Blacks don't know of opportunities or do not know how to take advantage of them. Michelle, mother of college track student Marcus, stated:

> Hopkinsville has grown, more opportunities, but we as African Americans don't take advantage. Not announced enough and Blacks are afraid to take advantage. I come from nearby town and county and came to Hopkinsville to pursue opportunities… people should be doing the same thing.

Race played a role in the perceptions of education among college track students, administrators, and parents. Furthermore, the fathers and mothers of college track students set high expectations for their sons. Several fathers and mothers mentioned that college was the only option and visualized their son at a particular school with a particular major. Michelle, parent of CCHS college track participant Marcus stated, "My older son just finished first year of college, called home and said he didn't know he had any other option besides college…In my kids, the only option is college." In addition, parents of college track students did not want their sons to make the same mistakes that they did. Students recognized the life that their parents had and wanted a better life. College track students and their parents were aware of the current economy and viewed an education as a way to confront current economic conditions. Moreover, another

commonality of college track parents was that they viewed education connected to race and gender. In particular, these college track students and parents highlight how race shapes experience of gender and how gender shapes experience of race. Futhermore, an education was a way for a Black man to have a better life, escape traditional labels such as thug and ghetto, and to control their future.

Dan, a CCHS college track student, felt that many of his African American peers believed that because they were African American, they did not have the tools to succeed as whites, which are views similar to Fordham and Ogbu (1986). These scholars, Fordham and Ogbu, suggested that discrimination and experiences, such as a limited opportunity structure and job ceilings, lead African Americans to develop an oppositional collective or social identity. Furthermore, research by Taylor, Casten, Flickenger, Rober, and Fulmore (1994) found that school learning is viewed as a "subtractive process" in which individuals must sacrifice something of their collective sense of identity in favor of cultural frames of reference having negative implications for academic achievement. The findings in this particular study among high performance adolescent males were inconsistent with the notion that African-American social identities have a negative impact on students' achievement.   The college track students had a high sense of African American identity. Furthermore, they felt that their African American identity inspired them to achieve and have greater aspirations in life.   Moreover, they felt that as African Americans they had to try harder than their white counterparts. In addition, research by Bowman and Howard (1985) obtained evidence showing that parental support for the development of an African American identity was positively associated with students' grade reports. Brown suggested that racial consciousness and identification may entail

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feelings of pride and self-respect concerning the features and accomplishments of one's racial group. Ethnic identity development may be related positively to African American adolescents' well being and psychosocial adjustment and may positively influence their school performance (Taylor, et. al, 1994).

Low Performing

Providing and Responsibility

Several similar themes emerged among the low performing students. Providing and responsibility were jointly mentioned along with home environment and survival. Low performing students' theme of providing and responsibility matched that of college track students. In addition, the views of the low performing students are also supported by the findings in Cazenave's study (1979, 1981) of providing and responsibility as a theme. However in comparing the low performing students with the college track students, the former did not associate an education with providing or view an education as an opportunity to provide. The low performing students felt that a man was a person that takes care of responsibilities and provides for his family. Furthermore, low performing students' themes did not reflect that of their parents, which had a theme of opportunity. Low performing parents had themes of responsibility and opportunity while the college track parents themes precisely matched that of their sons. In viewing responses of the emerging theme of providing and responsibility, Willie, a low performing CCHS student stated, "A man is somebody that takes care of responsibility." Ron, a low performing HHS student, stated, "A man takes care of his bills." In addition, several of the participants in the low performing group had difficulty conveying their meaning of being a man. They expressed meanings of being a man being related to their

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experiences they were subjected to such as being there for their son, paying bills, or

dealing with the repercussions of being in trouble. Furthermore, some of the low

performing men even mentioned that getting in trouble made them feel like more of a

man and respected in the eyes of their peers. Kenan, a low performing student at HHS

stated, "A man isn't a follower, a leader, if get into trouble, stand up for it."   Several of

the low performing students had been to the principal's office several times or disciplined

in school, which made them feel good about themselves. Willie Jr, a low performing

college track student stated, "I get in trouble because I like making kid's laugh in

school… its cool… and getting into trouble is not really bad… it gets me respect."

In addition, the parents of low performing students provided similar responses to

their sons in omitting education. They related responsibility with family and the provider

role instead of education. Several of their responses included being with only one

woman, taking care of kids, and paying bills. Patricia, mother of low performing student

Garry, stated;

> Man is someone that takes on responsibility, stay in children life, keep roof on
> family life, keep roof on own head, be a leader, set an example, daughter or son.
> So children can be like daddy taught me this, not easy…. If have family
> somewhere else, take care of other children too. Work two to three jobs if have
> too… Welfare don't take care of kids.

Home Environment

Both low performing participants and parents of low performing students placed

emphasis on a high school diploma, but left college as an option to the student. In

addition, many low performing students did not know how much education their father

had, nor had any discussions with their father or mother about their parents' education.

However, many of the low performing students felt that a man was there physically for

their kids. A low performing CCHS Focus group participant stated, "A man is someone that has a kid and is there for their kid." Furthemore, the importance of a man being home was stated by Garry, "It is important for a man to do chores around the home, to be there for family." Another HHS Focus group participant associated a man with the way you are raised at home. Others felt that if you were raised by an unsuccessful man at home, you were likely to follow in the same footsteps. A low performing HHS focus group participant stated, "If you got a dead beat dad, chances are you going to be a deadbeat dad."

Survival

The low performing students associated an education and being a man in Hopkinsville with survival. They felt that if they received an education, it was a success. A CCHS focus group participant stated, "Education means you can prevail over anything, dad dropped out of high school, mom legally blind, an education means having an education." He associated an education with an obstacle that he had to overcome in his life along with other things in life. In addition, Garry, low performing HHS student, stated, "An education is a requirement to make it in life. To have an education is an achievement." Other participants thought an education was a reflection of whether things were ideal in life. Ron, low performing HHS participant, stated, "How life is going."

Opportunity

The theme of opportunity was not present among low performing students, but was a theme among low performing parents. The low performing parents felt an education, whether vocational or classical was an opportunity to find a job and linked an education with a better life and future. Rita, mother of low performing Kenan stated, "I

tell my kids, education is the main thing they have to have to get a good job." Jamie Sr,

father of Jamie Jr, talked at lengths about how education gave him an opportunity in his

current job. He stated;

> Education is the best thing to happen. I quit school for one year, got a job… back
> then there was plenty of work. I went back and graduated, thank God because job
> I have now requires you to have a High School diploma. You will not find work
> without a GED or high school diploma. I got my current job because I have an
> education.

These findings were consistent with Lareau (2000), who in interviews with parents found

that low performing parents and children had differing views of education and lower-

educated parents were actually deeply upset by their children's education failures.

In addition, many of the low performing students liked the idea of working with

their hands. They became aware of vocational education through guidance counselors

and teachers, while college track students learned about workforce education from

parents or close relative. Interestingly, the students did not view an education as an

opportunity but felt a vocational education was a good thing.

Mothers versus Fathers

This section of this chapter consisted of a comparison among the meanings fathers

and mothers placed on education, masculinity and vocational education. In this study,

five mothers and five fathers were interviewed. Three of the mothers were a parent of

college track sons and two were low performing. Collectively, mothers and fathers both

viewed education as important and way to provide for family. Rita, stated," Education is

the main thing, have to have to get a good job." In addition, Michelle stated, "Education

is extremely important, no one can really take from me, doors open. Fathers also viewed

education as important and a foundation that cannot be taken away. Martin stated;

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Education means a lot, Pastor told me two things that you must have as a black man, God in your heart and education in head, can't nothing stop you. Can't no one take away what you learned, your knowledge, education is very important.

In addition, both mothers and fathers viewed education and masculinity as a responsibility. In their meaning of education, fathers felt that it was important as a man to provide for your family, to be there for your kids, and take care of responsibilities. Patrick, father of college track student Dennis, stated, "A definition of a man is to quit doing childish things, a man can take care of own responsibilities. Moreover, mothers felt it was important as well to be there for family and take care of kids and being with one woman. Princess, mother of college track student, Dan, stated, "A man is a confident person with the ability to learn and grow, man of God, successful, always want him to be there for his kids, one woman." In addition, Patricia, mother of low performing student, Garry, stated;

A man makes sure children eat first, have shoes first. A man can go to bed, sleep and relax because he knows he has done all that. A woman shouldn't have the burden themselves.

The only difference among mothers and fathers were that mothers' meanings of what it means to be a man included religion in their definition of man and included characteristics such as trust and communication. Michelle, mother of college track student Marcus, stated, "My definition of a man is true, honest, God fearing, and has excellent communication skills." Meanwhile, fathers placed emphasis on being a teacher and role model of their sons. Martin, father of college track student, Trent, voiced, "First it's a male's responsibility to instruct, direct, encourage his family." Furthermore, Donald, father of high performing student, Jason, stated;

A father, so it can be passed on to his son, the best role model of a father spends time, teach him the right way. A son watches his father. A son that sees his father doing the best he can do, counseling him.

In this study, the examination of mothers and fathers revealed that there is no difference in how African American mothers and fathers participate in meanings of manhood and masculinity. Black mothers participated in every aspect of the development of manhood and masculinity and there was no real evidence that supports the supposition that mothers and fathers approach the process differently based on gender (Hrabowski, Maton, and Grief, 1998). Further, two women in this study were mothers of college track students. Princess and Michelle raised their children resulting in high grades and positive self images which differed with beliefs found by the Federal interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (1998) that fatherless children over the past decades have reported violence in male children, worsening school behaviors, difficulties with peers, and poor life choices. Below are tables that display the views of Mothers and Fathers in Education and Masculinity.

Table 8.1 Mothers versus Fathers

African American Mothers Views of Education	*African American's Fathers View of Education*
Education means a lot for my kids *Education is extremely important* *Knowledge* *Learning how to read better* *12 years is a must*	*Education means a lot* *Education means more than when I was in school* *Best thing to happen*

African American Mothers Views of Masculinity	*African American Fathers' View of Masculinity*
True, honest, God fearing, excellent communication skills *Confident person with the ability to learn and grow* *Man of God* *Successful* *One woman* *Be there for his kids* Mature, responsible, stay in kids life, keep roof on head, be a leader, Set example Stand on own two feet, don't criticize a woman Don't beat a woman Providing Take care of responsibilities, kids, bills	*Someone whose brought up with morals,* *Take care of responsibilities* *Quit doing childish things* *Stop robbing, stealing, a man works for his* *Accountability for actions* *Instructor* *Teacher* *Director* *Encourager* *motivates his family as well s those around him*

Masculinity

Findings in this study suggest that issues of race and gender are central to any discussion regarding African American men and education (Davis, 2003; Delpit, 1988; Fine, 1991;Fordham,1996; Mickelson, 1991;Williams, 1996). The findings in this study are similar to other studies in that the negative experiences, outcomes, perceptions, and schooling experiences of African American men are viewed to varying degrees as products of structural factors, results of cultural adaptations to systemic pressures and maladaptive definitions of masculinity (Davis, 2003; Boykin & Bailey, 2000, Hare & Hare, 1985, Majors & Mancini Billson, 1992). What has emerged in this focus of the educational meanings of rural adolescent African American men is an archetype of masculine behavior that is either deficient or distorted under the weight of racism, lack of employment opportunities, and negative identity development (Davis, 2003; Hunter & Davis, 1992). Many of the African American parents in this study had positive meanings of manhood and associated a man with hard work, education, responsibility, and providing for a family.

In addition to the provider role, masculine identities were at the forefront for these African American men after analyzing the themes. I found that some of the masculinities in this community are hegemonic in nature, that is they are the most powerful, or consistent within a particular social context, and thus are influential in the marginalization of less powerful or subordinate masculinities (Laoire & Fielding, 2006). For example, many of the African American adolescent men in this study felt that being a man among their peers in Hopkinsville were based on meanings that contrasted with the meanings they had been taught by their parents. They voiced that their peers have alternative meanings of a man such as being tough, having negative views of about education, and selling drugs. Particularly, a Christian County college track focus group participant stated, "My peers view that a man means tough, means getting girls." While another college track participant stated, "Guys here think a man is having sex with women, fighting." The shifting and contingent relations between masculinity and men and power became clear when I examined the differing masculinities in a Hopkinsville. Many of the men interviewed expressed that gangs were influencing adolescent men in Hopkinsville because they had power and because their parents weren't in their life. Dennis, HHS college track student stated, "Barriers for African American men to education in Hopkinsville are gang influence. Parents weren't good parents, relied on gang influence as families. See a lot of gangs… being in gangs can influence people's grades." In addition, Marcus, a CCHS college track student stated, "Gangs affect education." A real smart guy can be in a gang, but he doesn't want to be uncool to those in gang and that won't help him expand his knowledge."

The setting in which this study took place has had considerable economic restructuring and social recomposition. Not only has this rural community experienced increased agricultural commercialization and industrialization like other communities, but the quality of life has been threatened by gangs, crime, and drugs. In addition, there has been transition away from a close knit community to a community that has seen many of its citizens afraid to come out after hours. These economic changes coupled with social changes have significant implications, especially among African American adolescent men.

The ways in which the two groups of young people, college track and low performing students viewed their environments were highly significant. Discussions with the adolescent men growing up in rural Hopkinsville revealed their real life situations consisted of conflict and contradiction for them and their African American male peers. They collectively described their environments consisting of racism, drugs, and gang involvement while also complaining about a lack of things to do and the restrictiveness of local society. Many of the young men spoke about the role of sport, including their involvement in basketball or football teams, as an important focus in their lives. However, the college track students specifically stated that education was central to their lives. Given the gendered nature of those that were interviewed, it was evident that I could link such movements in their life and social relations to the construction of masculinities. After searching for the correct explanation, it was evident that these connections are most clearly seen if analyzed through the dual critical concept of rootedness and routedness.

Rooted vs Routed

In this study, a strong sense of local culture and history reflected a preoccupation with an authentic rooted form of Hopkinsville. Hopkinsville was once a community that was rooted in hard work, educational pursuits, ownership of Black businesses, and a sense of achievement. Many of the older community African American men in this study voiced that that when they grew up, they experienced a Hopkinsville consisting of a strong Black community, education, and hard work. But after conversing with current adolescent men in Hopkinsville, it was evident that the rooted masculinity among the low performing students and many of the peers had been routed to differing views about the community, hard work, and education. The new masculinity was one of making quick fast money, sleeping with numerous women, and engaging in random acts of violence to prove toughness.

The commonalities among the college track adolescents and their parents were that they viewed an education as a way to improve their future and escape an identity of man that has been routed among many of the current generation of African American men in Hopkinsville. The parents in this study were influential in maintaining this rooted masculinity. For example, Donald, father of HHS college track student Josh stated, "I had problems with my son, but I didn't give up on him." The parents of the college track students voiced that they collectively spoke with their sons about meanings of masculinity and education to prevent external influences affecting their sons.

The low performing students and their parents expressed emphasis in their current conditions for meanings of being a man and did not express education as a way to escape this new rooted masculinity. Additionally, many of the low performing parents were not

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involved in their sons' lives or simply hoped that their sons would change their behavior on their own. A low performing HHS focus group participant spoke briefly about his lack of father involvement, "Father didn't influence me, I influenced myself."

For these young men in Hopkinsville, the decision to pursue higher education and have a positive perception about education is tied to the extent to which they are able locate themselves within this rooted masculinity and stay there with the influence of their parents. In turn, not having a positive perception, meaning, or aspiration to do well in school was seen as an expression of a lack of an attachment to the original rooted masculinity in Hopkinsville and a route to a new masculinity.

In examining similar demographic dynamics in Norway, Marian Vila (2006) argued that the modernization of rural society has involved changes in farmer's life modes and life courses.

She states that the current economic shift in rural areas also challenges traditional patriarchal household structures and therefore, it can be argued, challenges traditional gender roles and identities. One way of coping with the contradiction between a rooted masculinity and changing structures of rural life is constantly to adapt the discourses of rootedness to changing demands (Laoire & Fielding, 2006). For some rural African American men, therefore, while their identity may be rooted in positive perceptions about education, it has been shifted and adapted as it is routed through their community interactions and lack of effective interactions by their fathers and mothers. A low performing HHS focus group participant stated how seeing drug dealers ride on twenty-four inch rims influenced him. "Everyone wants to be like a drug dealer, riding on twenty fours."

Rootednesss and routedness are concepts that have assisted in examining the influences that form identities (Laoire & Fielding, 2006). According to Laoire and Fielding (2006), identities and more generally cultures have roots or origins that are typically seen as timeless, traditional, authentic, and natural. Similarly, identities and cultures also have routes or the constantly shifting economic social, cultural and political patterns that make them subject to restructuring, alteration, reframing, or rerouting.

 Laoire and Fielding (2006) voiced that rooted masculinities operate as hegemonic masculinities, because although a rooted masculinity may be under threat, it still has the power to marginalize the voices of many young people. In particular, many of the low performing students and parents in this study had positive meanings of education, but were unable to verbally express what an education and being a man were and could not partake in it because it conflicted with their masculine identity. The ideas of low performing men and their parents mirror that of Mickelson (1990), who found that African American adolescents' abstract and concrete attitudes about their education reflected an attitude-achievement paradox, which is characterized by a positive regard for education despite having lower levels of academic performance and educational attainments.

While research shows that African American youth begin school like all children with an interest in learning and an ability to do so (Kunjufu, 1984), somewhere along their educational journey, their interest may decline based on the larger systemic barriers to education and the devaluing that occurs in school for some of these youth (Pine & Hilliard, 1990). As the findings in this study suggest, the poor academic performance and meaning of education of African American men in Hopkinsville, Kentucky can be

contributed to youth perceiving schooling activities as irrelevant to their masculine sense of self (Noguera, 2003).

Rurality

One of the barriers to education that the adolescent men and parents collectively mentioned in this study is the idea of Hopkinsville being a rural community. Rural Communities are at resource disadvantages at family and school levels that reflect rural labor market opportunities. Such an economic structure has been shown elsewhere to have strong consequences for socioeconomic status, family structure, and resources available to schools (e.g., DeYoung 1987; Lichter 1989; Lobao 1990; Meyer and Lobao 1997; Roscigno 1999; Tomaskovic-Devey 1987). Futhermore, the view of being a rural community affecting education is important because over half of the school districts in the United States are located in rural areas and over 20% of the nation's students are educated in rural schools, which could potentially act as barriers to education for other rural African-American youth across the nation (Provasnik et al., 2007). In addition, being rural provides community inhabitants with extended travel distances and a lack of public transportation, which can reduce the use of available activities and resources in the community (Mahoney et al., 2005).

In this particular study, many of the rural African American adolescents lived in poverty, which supports research that suggests rural children have a greater likelihood of living in poverty than metropolitan youth (Lichter & Johnson, 2007; O'Hare & Savage, 2006). Occupational status, an important element of socioeconomic status affected many participants in this study, is lower for rural families and is also closely related to rural poverty (Tickamyer & Duncan, 1990). This community has experienced a struggling

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economy with declining manufacturing jobs, employment in part-time and varied hour jobs and persistent unemployment and underemployment which has also contributed to rural disadvantage (Cotter, 2002; Findeis, Rauniyar, & Hsu, 1996; Jensen, Findeis, Hsu, & Schachter, 1999; Jensen & Slack, 2003; Kusmin & Parker, 2006; McLaughlin & Coleman-Jensen, 2008). Rural Communities have problems attracting big businesses due to its low skill labor and educational attainment which has been an increasing problem. Jamie Sr., father of CCHS low performing student Jamie, stated, "Hopkinsville always had plenty of work to do. Always ways to work in Hopkinsville in the past… Whether it was stripping tobacco or whatever. Not a whole lot of work currently."

Many of the adolescent men in this study were aware of their families economic conditions and believed that Hopkinsville as a whole was a victim of "rural" life. They felt that Hopkinsville did not have a lot of businesses, was small, and was not known for its' education. Furthermore, they felt Hopkinsville did not have a prevalence of positive African American role models outside of athletics. Marcus, a CCHS college track participant stated, "Hopkinsville doesn't have a lot of businesses… pretty small….It is not known for its education unless you go to Heritage Christian or UHA, both private schools." Dan, a CCHS college track participant also stated, "My perception of Hopkinsville is that it is a nice place to be for a small town, but you have to go outside to find an opportunity, it is an easy place to go to the army in Hopkinsville, a big city like Clarksville has opportunities." Dan continues to make a connection among gender and place, "In Hopkinsville it is harder here, less to work with being a man, more pressure to succeed." The students felt that collectively, Hopkinsville impeded their peers' status to

achieve because they felt that an education was not supported by this rural community and that an education was not a way to ensure opportunity. Dan continues to state;

> This community is not as involved as others in education…. In testing, no reward for high scores, not even rewarding you enough for having high grades…more likely to see athlete in front page of paper, only small section for school or grades.

Chapter Summary

Hopkinsville has transitioned from a prosperous community for African Americans to a community that currently consists of drugs, crime, and low educational achievement. Throughout the interviews, several parents felt that the change of community has had an impact on the educational perceptions of current students. Hopkinsville was once a community that was tight knit, inclusive, and consisted of several African American role models and businesses. Education was at the forefront of this community and teachers played an important role in ensuring students received a quality education. While there may be opportunities currently in Hopkinsville, participants suggests that African Americans in this community are not aware of them, or simply do not know how to take advantage of them. Moreover, Hopkinsville has had experiences similar issues as the rest of rural America among the availability of low skill labor and the availability of jobs. Many college track participants and parents viewed education as a responsibility, an opportunity for a Black man to fulfill the provider role and was an important buffer against discrimination and present conditions in Hopkinsville. Low performing students viewed an education as survival and did not view it as an opportunity to provide, but did view a man as being responsible, provider, and a reflection of their home environments.

Following this chapter summary are tables on meanings provided by Participants and their mothers and fathers.

Table 8.2 Adolescent and Parent Views on Education

College Track Adolescent Men's List Describing Meaning of Education	*Low Performing Adolescent Men's List Describing Meaning of Education*
Knowing getting knowledge to hone skills, mastering your craft, ability to master your craft *Means very important in future, good job, work toward a craft, sport* *Purpose or your future, work for your future.* *Foundation to start building your own life* *Provide for yourself and your family* *New technology, education, being adults, knowing what job you can do* *Learning to be more successful* *Going to college, power, more advanced, do what you want to do* *If you are black, means your successful* *Not labeled as a thug* *Everything, an education takes you father in life*	*Means a lot* *How life is going* *I really don't know* *Means you can prevail over anything* *Education means having an education* *Education means you can accept economy* *you don't have an education you can't succeed*
College Track Men' Parents List Describing Meaning of Education	*Low Performing Men' Parents List Describing meaning of Education*
A lot, can't nothing stop you *Important for the future* *Extremely important,* *Education is survival* *Means more now for my kids*	*Main thing* *have to have to get a good job* *12 years is a must* *college is not for everyone* *Best things to happen*

Chapter 9

Summary, Conclusion, Recommendations for Educators

This study was guided by one overarching research question: What meanings do rural African American fathers and mothers place on education in Hopkinsville, Kentucky and how does this meaning shape their son's meaning of education? However, within the broad context of this research question, this study was guided with a refinement of the initial research question. Additional underlying questions were sought out to answer: How does a parents' view about vocational education influence rural adolescent men's views on education? In particular, I revisited the two important views of education by W.E.B Dubois (classical education) and Booker T. Washington (vocational education) and identified ways in which beliefs about these views are passed down through generations and potential influences they may have on those currently in this community. The next underlying question was: How does a mother, father, or son's view of what is means to be a man affect their view on education? This question was important because many African American men have pressures from peers who believe that being a high achiever and being intelligent is not masculine and may conflict with cultural expectations within the African American communities (e.g., Majors & Billson, 1992). The respective research questions of masculinity and the beliefs about vocational or classical education of African American men and women played a role in understanding the overarching research question. This chapter will include an overview of the study, conclusions, recommendations for educators, and recommendations for further study.

Summary

Research is needed in this area due to the call of previous studies that recommend future investigations that examine factors, such as parental involvement, that contribute to academic achievement in geographically, ethnically, and economically diverse rural samples (Farmer et al., 2006). In an effort to contribute to the understanding of rural African American men perceptions of education, this qualitative research documented and explored the effects that generational influences have on rural African American adolescent men's perceptions of education in Hopkinsville, Kentucky.

African American men face far more dire situations than is portrayed by common employment and education statistics (Muwakkil, 2006). This study attempted to fill in the gaps of previous research and produce detailed information on rural African American men and education in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. According to Muwakkil (2006), African Americans are in the midst of a social crisis that threatens the very viability of the African American community. Researchers have noted that more Black men are in prison in America than are in college (The Black and White of Justice, Freedom Magazine). In 1995, 16 percent of Black men in their 20's who did not attend college were in jail or prison; by 2004, 21 percent were incarcerated. By their mid-30's, 6 in 10 black men who had dropped out of school had spent time in prison (Eckholm, 2010). According to a report of the National Criminal Justice Commission on Imprisonment and Race, if current incarceration rates continue, by the year 2020, 63.3% of all Black men in the U.S. ages 18-34 will be behind bars.

More than 90 percent of all African American students enrolled in Kentucky's public schools are concentrated in just ten (10) of the state's 176 school districts. According to a recent study by the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights, Hopkinsville was in the top

five school districts with the largest number of African American students enrolled. Hopkinsville's Christian County has proved to benefit from this study due to its African American student population and its position as a district that has lagged behind state benchmarks in student assessments and struggled to close achievement gaps (Hoffman, 2010).

The researcher was driven to explore meanings placed on education of rural adolescent African American men in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. As a result, a qualitative research design was implemented to examine both students (college track and low performing) and their parents' meanings on the topic. Focus groups, in-depth interviews and document and artifact collection were collected over the course of year from June 2009-June 2010. A purposive sampling was employed to select student, parent, and administrator participants. Students had to be a) an African American male, b) selected as college track or low performing student by district administrators, and c) reside in Hopkinsville. Twenty five students participated in the focus group. In addition, ten students participated in the in-depth interviews ranging from 15-18 in age with a mean age of 16.7. Ten parents participated in the study with a range of ages from 34- 54 with a mean age of 42.6. While the goal of the study was to explore meanings African American male adolescents and their fathers, several of the student participants did not have fathers in the home, causing their mothers to be interviewed.

Upon securing district consent from the assistant superintendent to conduct the study, the principals at the respective schools, were contacted and times were scheduled to conduct the study. The principals readily agreed to select students and allow focus groups to be conducted at their schools; Hopkinsville, Christian County High School and Christian County Vocational and Career and Technical School. Based on the richness of

responses, and availability of the parents, students were then selected to participate in the in-depth interviews.

Before any interviews were conducted, I explained the purpose of my study and the reasons I wanted to conduct my study. The students in the focus group all signed their consent forms to participate. The same method was used prior to the in-depth interviews.

Once each interview was transcribed, I began coding for similar themes. Through analyzing the data, themes arose out of the research questions. Among college track students, the themes of providing, responsibility, opportunity, and race arose. Among low performing students providing and responsibility, home environment, and survival arose.

Provider Role

As the data collection proceeded and data were analyzed for themes, two overarching issues surfaced. First, college track men and parents endorsed the importance of African American men being in provider roles, having family responsibility and involvement (Bowman, 1985; Cazenave, 1979, 1984; Coles, 1977: Smith & Midlarsky, 1985). In addition, linking meanings of education to supporting the needs of the family are consistent with other research that focused on the education of rural youth (e.g., Haller & Virkler, 1993, Lapan et al., 2003). Participants equated being a man and education with the economic provider role. While aware of their conditions of racism, college track students and their parents voiced that they could still fulfill the provider role by taking responsibility and using education. Futhermore, the college track students and parents in this study realized that education was an opportunity to improve their lives currently and in the future in this rural community. As Diemer (2002) found in

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his study, education served as the best way to ensure future opportunity and was a large part of the participants' identities. Additionally, participants viewed education as a buffer against racism that was present in this rural community. Concluding, education led to opportunity, which led to fulfilling the provider role.

Responsibility

Responsibility was an additional theme among the college track students and parents. When asked their respective meanings of a man and education, the college track participants in the study associated masculinity and education with being responsible and the provider role. The college track students and parents both thought that achieving well in school was a responsible behavior for a Black man.

Opportunity

Opportunity was also a theme that arose among the college track participants and their parents when asked meanings of education and of a man. The college track adolescent men and parents collectively believed that as a Black man, an education was an opportunity to fulfill the provider role and make a better life for them and their family. Consequently, the low performing students and parents had differing views of education being an opportunity as a Black man to fulfill the provider role. The low performing parents believed an education was an opportunity, but did not voice that it was essential as a Black man to obtain as did the high performing students and parents. In addition, the low performing students did not see an education as an opportunity but did view it as a means of survival or a requirement.

Race

　　Race was an additional commonality among college track students and their

parents. The findings in this study suggest that perceptions of education are influenced

by the intersection of race and gender. The college track students and parents made

routine comments on being a "Black" man and the importance of being "Black" in

obtaining an education to secure future employment. Additionally, the college track

students and parents felt that education served as a buffer against racial discrimination.

In addition, they used race quite frequently to describe their meanings of a man, citing

differences in what it meant to be a White man and a Black man. The college track

adolescent men stated that their parents explained to them the importance of a Black man

to acquire as much education as possible in order to have future employment

opportunities.

　　The low performing students and parents did not mention race in relation to

education nor in their meanings of a man. However, the low performing students

referenced race in a community context. They felt that they were being discriminated

against by local law enforcement when they attended community events in Hopkinsville.

In particular, the low performing students did not feel racism was in their schools or state

that it was important as a "Black" man to achieve or acquire an education.

Vocational versus Classical Education

　　Questions were asked of participants to revisit the two important views of

education by W.E.B Dubois (classical education) and Booker T. Washington (vocational

education) and identify ways in which beliefs about these views are passed down through

generations and potential influences they may have on those currently in this community.

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Views about which type of education, vocational or college oriented, can potentially

affect rural African American adolescents' current educational perceptions.

The participants and their parents were asked if a vocational education was

enough to be successful. Students and parents were uncertain about what a workforce

education is and felt it limited career options among college track students and parents.

Many of the low performing students in this study were made aware of a workforce

education through school guidance counselors, where as college track students learned

about a workforce education from parents and those in the community. Low performing

students and their parents did not know what a workforce education actually was, but

heard that it was a good thing.   Generally, parents of low performing parents were just

happy for their sons to be participating in something. Also, workforce education was an

alternative means to college because several parents stated the financial aspects of college

as barriers as well stating that college is not for everyone. Several low performing

students enjoyed the fact that a workforce education allowed them to use their hands.

The theme of opportunity arose when asking about workforce education. The college

track students and parents felt that a workforce education limited their future employment

opportunities although they did view a workforce education as a positive.

Masculinity

Additional interest in this study revolved around masculinity and education. In

particular, a question was posed in identifying how rural African-American men in this

community viewed what it means to be a man and if this outlook affects their meanings

of education. The college track students associated what it meant to be a man with taking

care of their family both emotionally and financially. Also, the image of a man was

important among the college track students as well as being viewed as responsible in the community. Most importantly, the college track students always mentioned "Black" or associated their meanings of a man with being a Black man. The college track students and parents believed that race and gender were connected in their particular case.

Furthermore, this study highlighted a change in the meanings of a man across generations and identified an archetype of masculine behavior. Many of the African American parents and college track students in this study had positive meanings of manhood and associated a man with hard work, education, responsibility and providing for a family. However, many of the low performing adolescent men could not vocalize their meanings of a man and appeared to be uncomfortable when asked their meaning of a man. In addition, many of the African American adolescent men were consistent in their views of describing a man among their peers in Hopkinsville. They felt that their peers believed a man to be tough, having negative views about school and education, selling drugs, and sleeping with a vast amount of women, which conflicted with the meanings that they have been taught by their parents.

Concluding Thoughts

The overarching research question concerned meanings community African American mother and fathers place on education in Hopkinsville, Kentucky and how it shaped perceptions of education for adolescent men in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. In order to answer this research question, I asked participants and their fathers an additional question such as "what their meanings of education were" and "how much education would ensure success for Hopkinsville's adolescent men?" The commonalities found in participants' responses were that college track students and their parents associated what

an education meant with the provider role, opportunity, responsibility along with race and gender and while several low performing students expressed an education as a responsibility, relative to their home environment, and an act of survival while their parents associated an education with responsibility and opportunity. The low performing students did not associate an education as a means to provide currently or in the future as the college track students or parents. It was obvious that low performing parents did not clearly convey their meanings of education or meanings of a man to their sons as did the high performing parents.

In addition, the high performing parents and students had comparable views on education and meanings of a man. It was evident that the high performing parents had consistent conversations with their sons regarding the importance of education and the meanings of a man. The high performing parents did not give up on the sons in school. Many of the high performing adolescent men did not begin high school as a high performing student, but perseverance by the parents and relating an education to their ethnicities and future proved to be beneficial to their educational perceptions. Furthermore, studying high performing students acknowledges school structures, teaching relationships, student and parent attitudes that are effective in producing achievement results. Moreover, African American adolescent men have caused major problems and challenges in Hopkinsville's schools. These challenges and problems are cultural and gender based and the difficulty for schools in part, rest in their inability to deal with where these Black adolescent men are coming from and their authentic experiences of being young, Black, and male in rural America (Davis, 2003).

Recommendations for Educators

Researchers suggest that possible solutions in dealing with masculinity can be addressed with increased presence of committed and successful African American male adults (Davis, 2003; Hopson, 1997). Having successful African American adult men in the community and in educational environments is essential for enhancing African American men academic and social identity development. Furthermore, researchers contend that the increased presence of committed and successful Black male adults in educational environments is essential for enhancing African American male adolescents' academic and social development (Davis, 2003; Jeff, 1994, Span, 2000). Programs are needed that are school affiliated with local African American churches, fraternities and civic groups to offer support services and mentoring for African American men. In addition, mentoring programs that assign Black men as role models for young boys typically in elementary and middle schools have been established in many school districts. Also, professional Black men serve as teachers, aids, tutors, and reading partners for African American male adolescents needing academic support and guidance.

In addition, organizing all male schools or classrooms can be an option. Also, Alternative Afrocentric models of masculinity are also being proposed (Davis, 2003; Akbar, 1991; Jeff, 1994; Kunjufu, 2001) and used in manhood development programs and curricular for younger males. These models call for an overthrow of Western models of male socialization and a regrounding of African American male adolescents and men in a new cultural awareness. African American immersion schools and curricula that stress African and African American history and culture are viewed as positive strategies in building self-esteem and self confidence and promoting dispositions for

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learning (Davis, 2003; Brown, 1995;, Murrell, 1994, 2002; Pollard & Ajirotutu, 2000).

These schools embrace a new conception of masculinity that shifts from dominate ideas

of male socialization to a cultural awareness grounded in the positive experiences and

history of African people, particularly Black men.

Significance of Study

Even though this qualitative approach provided useful information on

Hopkinsville's African American men's educational perceptions, one of the arguments

against research in a particular site and area is that it will be difficult to generalize

because of inherent subjectivity and generalizability only to a particular context

(Merriam, 1985). However, there is evidence for the need of scholarly research in this

area due to Hopkinsville's educational challenges, the changing dynamics of the rural

economy, and Christian County school district's current attempt to research the

educational perceptions of students, parents, and faculty known as cultural audits,

(Hoffman, 2010). In addition, this study pointed to a need to do a similar study in

Appalachia where the racial dynamics would be a reverse of my study in Hopkinsville,

which were exclusively African American males.

The Superintendent of Christian County Public Schools, Brady Link, stated in the

Kentucky New Era that while public sentiment rested on policy and curriculum, his plan

is to turn around low-performing schools beginning with culture. Link intends to find out

how teachers and students feel about education in Christian County through cultural

audits, which consists of sending an evaluation panel to each public school to conduct

interviews and record consistencies among selected students, parents, and faculty

(Hoffman, 2010). As of March 6, 2010, Christian County has conducted 7 of 15 cultural

audits. While the cultural audits focus on the unwritten rules of the school, this particular study can help bridge the gap between the cultural audits and other quantitative studies by allowing the researchers to compare their first hand observations and interviews with the research used in this study by exploring generational influences of educational perceptions. Aware of the importance of perceptions toward education, Christian County's Assistant Superintendent Janie Tomek gave their full support in this research project while also agreeing to provide the researcher with possible subjects for the study.

Furthermore, this study was significant in providing policymakers with additional knowledge on the issue of rural African American men educational perceptions. Second, this study was important to the field of scholarship by providing researchers with additional research methods and factors to consider when investigating this topic. Third, the study was noteworthy to educators, who can use it to become user-driven researchers who will serve as agents of change when working with students from racially and culturally diverse backgrounds. Fourth, the study is valuable to advocates, who will be equipped with knowledge that can be used to act in the best interest of families who are unfamiliar with the higher educational process. Fifth, and perhaps most importantly, this study is essential in arming parents with essential information to empower them in making sound educational decisions for their child's academic careers. Finally, the study provides all stakeholders with an in-depth understanding of this issue as they renew their efforts to find workable solutions to improve rural African American perceptions about education.

Reflections from Researcher

During the year in which I conducted this research, I was provided an insight about my home community of Hopkinsville that I did not know existed. I was allowed to see the community that I had grown to love through the lens of my research participants. I was given the opportunity to revisit my old high school, take countless rides throughout the neighborhoods I once hung out as an adolescent, and speak to community leaders that I once admired. In addition, I was granted the opportunity to learn the extravagant history of Hopkinsville while also learning about the dissenting conditions that are currently plaguing the families, particularly the African American youth, in this community.

It was very interesting to engage in a conversation with youth in a school environment and then be able to speak with them and their parents in their homes. I believe as an African American male from Hopkinsville, I was able to gain access to my participants and gain trust in the community that may have not been possible if my population and location was different. Furthermore, these conversations have allowed me to experience the lives of my participants and to view the world as they viewed it. I've also had the opportunity to speak to youth that did not have hope, direction, or parents in their lives. I found myself on countless occasions recalling back to my high school years and trying to match these students with students that I went to school with and predicting their future trajectories. In addition, I found myself shedding tears after hearing the stories of some of the low performing students as they spoke about their lack of parental involvement or their deficiency in knowing where their lives were headed.

Most importantly, the words of those interviewed enabled me to realize that these issues that are affecting these youth are serious. I was told on countless occasions that I was making an impact on the lives of those in Hopkinsville with my research. Also, it was stated that it was imperative for these young men to view a positive African American man and to be able to internalize questions about their educational future and what it really means to be a man.

Furthermore, a year has passed since I have conducted the interviews with these African American adolescent men. I have crossed paths with several of the high performing adolescent men at the local university as they conclude their freshman year and as I finish writing my thoughts on this study. I recently witnessed some of the participants in this study perform at the highest level of high school athletics as Christian County won the 2011 state men's basketball championship. The city of Hopkinsville rejoiced as they had won the state tournament in basketball for the first time in school history. Christian County was glorified by all media outlets and recognized statewide for this magnificent achievement, an accomplishment that was well-deserved of praise. However, in the backdrop of the many athletic accolades, loom the low test scores and the negative perceptions of education among the African American males in this rural community. The pep rallies and attention in Hopkinsville for these victorious men supported a statement made by Dan, a high performer student at CCHS," athletics always gets more headlines then grades here and will continue to." As I reflect on Dan's statement, I remembered a time I was in high school and asked similar questions. I wondered if I would ever receive the attention I rightfully deserved as a scholar and

steward for education. After careful thinking, I can honestly say that I patiently waited and my time is now.

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