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School and Community Expectations in a Small, Rural, Northern New Mexico School

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SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS IN A SMALL,
RURAL, NORTHERN, NEW MÉXICO SCHOOL

by

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DISSERTATION

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DEDICATION

It is with honor that I dedicate this work to my abuelito, Aron Martínez I. He taught us how to love the land, and love one another. It is the great love he had for his family, his land, and our history that I remember, and write this work.

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Mi amor, mil gracias.

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ABSTRACT

School leaders find themselves in constant reflection of their academic ranking in a time of national reform. With the No Child Left Behind Act, expectations around school and student performance are created to compare against national standards. Rural communities have undergone significant social and economic changes due to the decline of family farms, accompanied by people leaving and closing of businesses all which have dramatic effects on rural schools (Petrin, et. al. 2014). With increased attention on academic achievement at the state and federal level, it is imperative that we understand how rural schools address these changes both in the communities and within the school. My research was designed to explore expectations of school professionals, community members, and students as make decisions to stay or leave their communities. I deeply explore and describe school and community expectations as well as student expectations of themselves. My study is designed to inform the rural school district and communities in this northern New México town as well as to inform rural educators and leaders in a larger context.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

General Background of Educational Study

As I look back at my experiences growing up in rural New México, I remember the roads I took to get to where I am today. The journey of children who come from deep within the mountains of northern New México is different from that of someone who walks to school on concrete sidewalks and crosswalks that tell you where to go. Our childhood memories are a vivid collection of snapshots of those roads we've traveled. The experiences we've had playing in the schoolyard, the smell of tortillas and frijoles freshly made on the wood burning stove as we arrive home from school and the connections we make to the people and the community, shape who we are and who we want to be. Our human experiences guide us to identify those roads that shaped us into successful contributing members of society. Tales of who we are, passed from grandparent to grandchild, allow us to be part of something greater, a connection to our past. The ancianos, community elders, sharing stories of days long passed allowed us, as children, to hear about the struggles they endured yet were still able to feel success in seeing the land flourish. I didn't see it then, but I see it now, my parent's and sometimes grandparent's inner struggle whether to encourage children towards education knowing that this meant future generations would no longer occupy the homes they built or see the land flourish as our ancestors saw before us. Tension between "education, and "progress" vs flourishing land -& flourishing communities, is important to identify and understand contributing factors that allow students to either succeed or fail in education and or contributing to a community.

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS 2

In New México, social and cultural roles of rural schools are enhanced because of the needs of the community. Minimal research is available to identify the challenges and opportunities rural schools in New México face. Roberts (2001) looks closely at how culture, religion, and language affect the education of students attending a small northern New México rural school. Her study, brings to life through ethnography, non-academic factors such as, culture, language, belief systems, family, and communal responsibilities affect school defined student academic achievement during their educational process. She also identifies how students in rural northern New México struggle to adopt an assimilated model of bilingual education (Roberts, 2001). Students may learn and use Spanish language at home, but some realize that to be successful outside of the community, one must be fluent and successful in the English language. Schools across northern New México have this same struggle between commitment to family and community and meeting educational requirements defined at the state and federal level. Requirements at these levels may or may not meet the needs of those who wish to stay within the community. Many rural communities are shrinking and in some areas shrinking out of existence (Carr & Kefalas, 2009) Resources for rural schools are limited and their needs have been greatly overlooked (DeYoung, 1990). It is important also to consider strengths brought by rural students and families; identify and integrate those strengths to develop a more comprehensive educational experience for students (Tieken, 2014). A sense of home, family, nature, community, and relationships represent the best qualities of rural life (Herzog & Pittman, 1995). Chavez (2006) in her essay *Military Brat and Shepherders Granddaughter*, identifies strengths of rural upbringing as people with ingenuity, resourcefulness, persistence and not afraid of hard work. These aspects must

play a role when studying how students navigate formal educational processes. With this qualitative study, I deeply explored with some comparisons of expectations of school professionals with community, family, and student expectations about the education of its youth. With increasing achievement requirements at the state and national levels, schools, in particular, rural schools are left to meet the needs of their students with limited resources (Rural School and Community Trust, 2007). Because of the nature of rural schools, the education of students looks different from schooling in larger urban communities. Things like geographic location, budgetary constraints, declining enrollment, access to resources, obsolete facilities, transportation, staffing challenges and programs for special needs students in small numbers are some of the issues rural school administrators face as they try to adequately educate students they serve (Mathis, 2003). “Historically, the student population has determined funding allocations, and smaller numbers mean fewer dollars. Fewer dollars mean fewer teachers and fewer advanced or specialized courses, thus putting rural students at a disadvantage” (Herzog & Pittman, 1995, p. 10).

Currently playing out in *New Mexico Education*, a court ruling in *Yazzie/Martinez v. State of Mexico* found that the “state violated the constitutional rights to a sufficient education and ordered the state to provide educational programs, services, and funding to schools to prepare students so they are college and career ready (Evans & Grossman, 2019).”

With this study, it is my hope to offer a greater understanding of the role of school and community expectations in rural communities. “The academic expectations of teachers and parents, educational institutions and society at large can shape children’s

lives in school and beyond” (Weinstein, 2002). What we learn about expectations, from family and community, can help develop a deeper understanding of what students need to be successful members of rural communities. Family and community understanding of education shape how students succeed in school (Semke & Sheridan, 2011). A comprehensive understanding of the needs of the community can shape how schools educate the students they serve. Stakeholders have expectations of how schools in rural districts should prepare students for the future success of the community as well as the success of the people who reside in it and their perspectives command attention (Petrin, Schaft, & Meece, 2014). The degree to which school administrators and policy makers are listening can make the difference for rural schools. If school administrators listen to and more deeply understand the needs of rural community; decisions around how to educate students can be based on those needs.

I recently read an article in the local newspaper about a man stepping down as a member of the local college board of regents. There were various reasons he stated for stepping down but one stuck with me. The newspaper quoted him, “Seeing my children being raised in a rural setting with love and respect of land, which many of our children do not have today, is something I pledge to do (Napolitano, 2015).” There is something valuable in having a “love and respect of the land,” and there is a sense that he would not be able to do both “a love and respect” for the land and academic success. He feels that there has to be a choice between one and the other. What does this statement mean for the education of his children? This statement contradicts Corbett’s (2007) description of an education that does not point the way towards more academic standards being met or higher test scores achieved. Success should be looked at through the eyes of the

individual rather than numerical data like student academic achievement scores. Rural communities often identify success by behaviors that require physical activity, hard manual labor (Theobald, 1997). Rural places are the last places where the world of machines and computers have yet to eliminate a human connection to the land. Rural work includes agriculture, mining, logging, as well as fishing for those who live in rural coastal, lake, and larger river areas. One must not discount the needs for postal workers, accountants, medical staff, police officers, teachers, and administrators. Schools expose rural youth to a new way of life, a life not always seen by rural elders as better, and not exactly connecting to the local ways. In the process schools all too often encourage a loss of connection to land, family, community, spirituality; all things that represent rural life.

A more in-depth look and comparison of school and community expectations for rural schools is needed. One important focus of my study was comparing school expectations with community expectations about how to prepare students to become contributing members of family, community, and society whether students choose to remain in this rural community or live elsewhere. New México has the fifth-largest land mass in the U.S. yet ranks 45th in population density . With only 6.3 people per square mile, this state has its fair share of rural students (Teachers and teaching conditions in rural New México, 2004).

Research Problem

Rural schools have their own unique challenges. How schools provide educational services in rural schools are usually very different from schools in larger cities. With community expectations competing with changing state and federal requirements, school site leaders often find themselves trying to develop and sustain a school culture that

promotes academic success defined by external players (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Rural school leaders find themselves navigating the means of adapting to change, educational expectations created by state and national education goals as well as local family and community needs (VanAlfen & Schmidt, 1997). Standardized tests are used increasingly as a measurement of “effectiveness” to identify what students do and do not know. Yet, how does this meet local needs? What is the role of public education in rural communities and how are the knowledge of community and familial responsibility designed into educational curriculum, teaching, and learning processes? What strengths are engaged from both the school and the community to enhance education of rural youth? How might exploration of these questions get to the heart of expectations for rural schools and children, and enhance experience for students in school? Answers to these questions lie amongst the people rural schools serve. At the same time, rural schools are pressed to educate students in a time of high stakes tests and national requirements with limited or no resources. With this qualitative research study, I deeply explored school and community expectations in a rural school in a northern New México community. Tiekens (2014) reveals that many small rural schools are fraught with complex problems that require creative answers and significant understanding of issues that shape the discourse of politicians, economists, teachers, administrators, and citizens within rural communities. I seek to contribute to this discourse by helping the voices of the community members and school members be heard.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of my study is to deeply explore with some comparison and contrasting expectations of schooling in northern New México through the eyes of school

professionals, community members, family, and, students. It is my goal to provide insight into community and school expectations of rural education. Rural educational research is scarce and needed (Schafft K. A., 2016).

My hope is that this research will serve as an example of scholarship that will lead to greater interest and understanding in the field of rural education. My research focused on the role that rural schools play in relationships between parents and community expectations, and school administration and students as well as contribute to our understanding of the relationship between school and community. To accomplish this, teachers, students, community members, and administrators were given the opportunity to share their experiences of living and learning in a rural community. My hope is that school leaders in rural schools will use the findings from this study to guide them in developing rural school more suited to the communities they serve. From this study, I share critical rural expectations and experiences in education while honoring stakeholder voices, experiences, and perspectives. I believe a greater understanding of expectations by school and community members will assist in responding to complex challenges and opportunities in rural environments. This may also allow us to understand the merging of state and national expectations with those expectations held by students, parent and community members. And perhaps, developing diverging standards that are more flexible to the needs and possibilities within a greater diversity of communities.

What expectations do people hold? What is the focus of those expectations on academic achievement, job/career attainment, financial success, personal happiness, social contribution, being active members of a thriving rural community? Understanding these tensions between “education (and “progress”) vs flourishing land -& flourishing

communities can be better understood and addressed when we examine the beliefs people hold about success. Who has these expectations? Do parents, school staff, and students have the same expectations? This study provides insight for addressing these questions with an emphasis on exploring congruence among rural student aspirations and expectations of youth held by parents and school staff.

The Research Question(s)

The research question(s) explored through this study included:

1. Research Question:

- a. *What expectations does a rural school and community hold for a small rural school in northern New México?*

i. Research Sub-questions

Sub question 1: How do school and community members describe the purposes of education in a rural context?

Sub question 2: What educational outcomes are important for students and for the community including experiences, skills, knowledge, understandings, a love and respect for land related to contributing as adults to a rural community?

Sub question 3: How do school and community members describe their expectations for the roles of teachers, parents, family members, and community members in educating rural youth?

Sub question 4: What are the local, rural norms, values and traditions, as described by school and community members that are most important? How do these values etc. help us to determine students' education and define student's success in education?

Sub question 5: How do rural school and community members describe ways to work together toward student's educational success (as defined by the community) and their opportunities to learn and engage in education?

Significance of the Study

This study reveals some deeper understandings regarding expectations and meaning making of rural life, schools, and needs by school professionals, community members, family, and students. Explicit feelings of the people involved shed some light on the nature of a rural community, their schools, and the system in which they find themselves. The study offers a rich description among different constituencies across the community and school, and also helps inform political entities about the needs and interests for education in a rural context.

Information collected from this study is intended to add to this research, particularly to develop greater understandings of rural northern New México and bring to light real experiences and feelings of rural educators and community members. Looking at education and aspects that affect academic outcomes of rural schools is important

especially from a rural lens. This study will contribute to the body of literature that currently exists regarding rural school and community expectations of rural school districts.

Data collected about the expectations of rural schools through the perspective of stakeholders could be used by school leaders, higher education institutions that provide academic training, and policy makers at the state level as they legislate policies that affect students, parents, administrators, and staff in small rural schools. The data collected can also inform practitioners about what is expected of them when entering a rural school setting. This could ultimately affect how rural school stakeholders provide suggestions to improve the processes in which rural schools operate to recruit, retain, and equip effective instructional leaders, as well as educate students at a level where they successful in the community and the global world. Stakeholder's views of rural school experiences can be the starting point for change.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of a study may be identified as potential weaknesses that are out of the researcher's control (Vogt, 2007). One limitation of my research study, is that I, as the researcher of the study, attended the small rural school selected as the study site and knew some of the participants personally. While all interview data was developed and conducted in as neutral a manner as possible, my own experiences will inform interpretations of data collected and I worked to provide many examples and narrative data as well as maximize participants' own voice and interpretations.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, a definition of key terminology follows:

- *Academic achievement* – grades, scores on high stakes tests (NM Standards Based Assessment, PARCC)
- *Aspirations* – are a strong desire, longing or aim; ambition.
- *Brain Drain* - the out-migration of young, college-educated workers from the nation's rural areas, poses a serious threat to the social and economic validity of rural America.
- *Educational Attainment* – high school graduation, college enrollment, college graduation
- *Hispano* – Spanish-American
- *Mestiza(o)* – a blending of Spanish and Native values, norms, beliefs and traditions into a new culture (Chávez, 2010).
- *Reform* - deliberate and specific efforts to create planned changes in specific areas of the educational program with the hopes to improve academic achievement (Molnar, 2002).
- *Rural* - Open countryside or towns of fewer than 2,500 (US Census, 2017)
- *Rural school* – for the purposes of this study, I am defining rural school as a school in a community with less than 2,500 residents.
- *Social capital* – long-standing and supportive student-teachers relationships and close community-school relationships (Byun, et. al., 2015).

- *Stakeholder* - a person, persons who have a vested interest in the success of a school- parents, students, school leaders, community members, and school staff.

Summary

School leaders find themselves in constant reflection of their academic ranking in a time of national reform. Rural communities have undergone significant social and economic changes due to the decline of family farms and ranches, accompanied by people leaving and closing of businesses which have dramatic effects on rural schools (Petrin, et. al. 2014). With increased attention on academic achievement at the state and federal level, it is imperative that we understand how rural schools address these changes both in the communities and within the school. My research is an attempt to describe the experiences and expectations of schools, parents, community members, teachers, and leaders of students as they navigate their educational journey and beyond. I attempted to provide a deep sense of school and community experiences, perspectives, and expectations as well as those of student. My study is designed as well to inform rural school district and communities in this particular northern New México town.

With Chapter Two, I explore the literature to set a context for my study of school, parent and community expectations. Rural communities and rural schools have undergone changes that affect student outcomes and school and community expectations. Following an introduction of what it means to be rural, I explore literature on those factors that impact school and community expectations and how they are related to student aspirations in a rural school and rural communities.

To conduct this study, I applied an emergent constructivist narrative case study analysis. The case is the rural school high school and all that inhabit the school. The research was conducted using interview methods approach to data collection through conducting multiple interviews with three stakeholder groups and analyzing documents in order to triangulate the information received.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

With this review of the literature, I examined written work that identifies factors explaining what it is to be rural, living in rural communities, and educating children in rural schools. Also, I explain how rural schools in New México identify the purpose of education as well as how school leaders, teachers, students, parents, and community members perceive school success. In addition, I report on the interactions between school and community expectations, school and community relationships, rural school leadership practices, Hispano Peoples (Hispano is a term commonly used in northern New Mexico to refer to people born in New Mexico), and teacher, student and community expectations. Literature in these related fields provide additional insight into rural education, but also inform readers of the gaps in the research.

The term “rural” or coming from a rural community has varied meanings and identities. One reason for the differences in how we view rural America may be that there is diversity. There is not one clear rural culture, because different groups of people have contrasting values based on their disposition, character and attitudes (Ward, 2003). Rural life is also greatly influenced by the geographical qualities of the landscape where people live. Rural life in northern New Mexico is influenced by the realities of high altitudes, desert, mountain, and forest ecosystems.

Themes from my search of literature are the focus of this chapter. They are: rural education in general, leadership and managing rural schools, the role of the teacher and administrator, student aspirations, community involvement and expectations of education in rural schools, parental expectations of educating a child in rural school, parent and

community expectations, and assertions of rural schools. The topics will describe how rural communities understand schooling and the role of education for their future success.

Life in 21st Century Rural America

Place-based theories take into account demographic characteristics such as population density and size, settlement structure, and landscape when they define what it means to be rural (Brown & Schafft, 2011). For this research, I chose the National Center for Education Statistics understanding of rurality as people living in the countryside with fewer than 2,500 residents and more than 25 miles from an urbanized area (NCES, 2014). Gieryn (2000) identifies a rural place as consisting of three things: geographic location, material form (buildings, and monuments), and investment with meaning and value. Greater understanding is needed through literature, theory and research of how people living in a location are shaped by their surrounding environment and how environment helps shape the social construction of people, place, and region.

Carr and Kefalas (2011) express concern about the impact of modernization and its effect on rural areas. Earlier scholars like Wendell Berry (see *The Unsettling of America*, 1977), and Wes Jackson (see *New Roots for Agriculture*, 1980) who care for rural life have been writing about the end of rural life as we know it. The move towards agribusiness is not the only cause of the disappearing of rural America. Rural life is also influenced by adults who actively encourage talented young people to leave for “bigger and better things” (Carr & Kefalas, 2011 Corbet, 2007, Lipton, 1980). Many young people are also drawn away by the lure of urban activities, employment opportunities and post-secondary aspirations (Corbett, 2007). Mab Sherman & Sage (2011) reported that

'out-migration' of college educated young people from rural areas is also adding to the erosion of robust local community.

Defining Rurality

When people living in a community separated by a distance from other communities there are more social cohesion, shared cultural practices, similar political behavior, and shared values and objectives (Schafft, 2000). Part of the image of being rural is isolation, a sense that rural people live their entire lives in the towns in which they were born relatively self-sufficient, fishers, loggers, miners, farmers and ranchers (Butler-Flora & Flora, 2013). Choices students, parents have to make about the education of its youth are changing, even with a strong understanding of what living rural is. Staying is clearly a choice some people make to ensure the continued ideals about life itself. Some families are making the choice to leave with rural populations declining, this seems to be the trend. Flora and Flora (2013) indicate the choice to move away to pursue other endeavors that could not be achieved in the rural community.

The number of people living in rural counties stood at just over 46 million in 2014-nearly 15 percent of United States residents. However, the population of rural America has declined... over the last four years, with losses of about 30,000 people in each of the last 2 years. While these declines are small, 2010-2014 is the first period of overall population decline on record for rural America as a whole and stands in stark contrast with urban population, which continues to grow by more than 2 million per year (p. 8).

Not all rural areas have experienced population loss in recent years. Some rural counties have seen population growth. These counties are concentrated in scenic areas

such as the Rocky Mountains, southern Appalachia, and in energy boom regions such as the northern Great Plains. Counties losing population are widespread in regions dependent on farming, manufacturing, or resource extraction (USDA, 2015 p. 2).

In northern New México specifically in the northern counties, populations seem to be following the national trend, with both Rio Arriba and Taos County showing a population loss (see Table 1).

Table #1
Population and Population Changes 2010-2015

	Population	Population Change 2010-2015	Population Change 2014-2015
Taos County	32,907	-0.10	-0.41
Rio Arriba County	39,465	-1.94	-.56

When rural communities lose population many aspects of the community are affected. Loss of population causes the tax base to diminish creating diminished services and opportunities for younger generations. Population losses also lead to declining school enrollment, which then leads to reduced state aid for schools. Rural schools are frequently smaller than those located in urban and or suburban areas. According to the Rural School and Community Trust (2005), smaller schools may not be a negative effect of rurality since small schools also provide advantages. Education research by Cotton (2001) outlines many advantages to small schools. Some advantages include better achievement, higher education rates, fewer discipline problems, and higher rates of extracurricular activities (Cotton, 2001), all effects that are helpful in a rural community.

Rural education. According to, *A Report of the Rural School and Community Trust Policy Program* (RSCTP) 2013-2014 more that 20 percent of all students' enrolled

within public education in the United States attend a rural school or district. Rural schools provide communities with social capital needed to sustain community relevance.

Rural people tend to live in their communities by choice, and their decision to live in a rural place should not affect the quality of their children's education. While rural places frequently face substantial economic and social challenges, they also possess a number of assets that often are ignored or overlooked. The 'community capital' present in many rural communities make them attractive places to live and raise a family (Malhoit, 2005 p. 10).

Rural schools are integral to community survival. Ley, et. al. (1996) maintain that a community's greatest assets are its youth. Rural school strengths include, having a higher number of students involved in extra-curricular activities, a higher number of students taking academic courses, more attention by teachers due to lower class sizes, and students with a close connection to their communities (Bard, Gardner, & Wieland, 2006). The school is important to the community both socially and economically. Socially, schools are the main gathering place along with churches. Economically, the school often is the largest employer in a rural community (Howley & Eckman, 1997). The school also has the opportunity to bring the community together on both community and educational issues. Malhout (2005) indicates that schools are the most important public institution in a rural community. Schools give a space to families who need of a place where they can come together; they serves as the libraries and the community centers. Rural schools represent the economic and social lifeblood of the many rural communities. Rural schools and communities have a unique opportunity to work together to form strong partnerships

and examine all facets of collaborations for the purposes of making well-informed decisions to improve the educational outcomes of local youth and wellbeing of communities.

Even with all the benefits to the community, rural schools face some challenges. The RSCTP (2011) report indicates many aspects like teacher retention, shrinking enrollment, limited resources and increased costs of educating students, affect rural schools at a much larger scale than urban schools, because funding formulas are usually tied to enrollment numbers. With decreasing enrollment in some rural communities school districts are faced with consolidation and school closures which create hardships for rural families and communities. They are hit again when rural youth are left to make difficult decisions through the very act of staying or leaving after high school, a decision that urban or suburban youth rarely have to make to access jobs and post-secondary institutions (Corbett, 2007). With some obstacles to overcome, rural schools are in constant struggle to prepare youth to be successful in and outside the rural community.

Rural schools are not exempt from the school reform movement but are much less discussed in the literature. Rural schools are usually smaller in student population and do not have issues of overcrowding as in more suburban or urban areas (Miller, 1993). One author applying a sociological perspective suggests that rural communities, in their attempts to maintain individual cultural identities in an infringing, globalizing society, may be in part responsible for helping maintain local culture, norms and uniqueness, as well as for some of the challenges that face rural education (Theobald, 1995).

Rural people are strong supporters of local schools and public education. They see the quality education as essential to an effective rural economic development

strategy because good schools produce a quality local workforce that, in turn, builds upon the already present community capital (Malhoit, 2005, p.10).”

The quality and the effectiveness of education depend on qualitative variables such as characteristics of schools, teachers, and classrooms, as well as quantitative variables such as achievement scores (Mayer et al., 2000). Teacher qualifications, curriculum implementation, school climate, parental involvement, availability of educational technology and instructional materials are acknowledged as important indicators of school quality in all schools (Malhoit, 2005).

Bejama, Miller & Williams point out that rural schools commonly serve both town and farm students, providing both educational challenges and opportunities. Challenges include meeting the needs of the students and the community and at the same time introducing students to career paths not available locally. Often both educational and occupational aspirations of rural students must be achieved beyond the local community (Bajema, Miller, & Williams, 2002). The rural school carries much responsibility for the community to be able to thrive.

Rural schools in New México and purpose of education. One fifth of students enrolled in New México public schools are enrolled in rural schools or rural districts (Strange et.al. 2012). According to the report, “Teachers and Teaching Conditions,” published by the Rural School and Community Trust (2004), about 33% of all schools in New México are located in rural areas compared to national averages of 20%. Rural schools in New México serve student populations with twice as much poverty, and over seven times as many students with Limited English Proficiency (Teachers and Teaching Conditions in Rural New México, 2004).

The journey to educate children in this area dates back to Indigenous Peoples before New México became part of the United States. Before we can begin to understand the system of public education, a system in which parents send their children to attain an education, we must first understand the history. A majority of the people who live within the site of this study are of Spanish decent due to movement of the Spanish into the territory in the 1500s (Beck, 1962). Needless to say, the territory was not unoccupied. There were various Apache, Pueblo and Navajo tribes inhabiting the area. Spanish conquistadores and religious Franciscan fathers established teaching practices that were designed to “Christianize,” assimilate, and minimally educate the native population (Mondragon & Stapleton, 2005), within a westernized or colonialized concept of education. The first inhabitants of New México are the Native people who resisted Spanish encroachment. Formal church and government forms of educational history of the state can be dated back to over 400 years and are predated by formal Indigenous systems of education within the 23 tribes of the state (Mondragon & Stapleton, 2005). Formalized schooling did not enter New Mexico until after New Mexico was admitted into the union. New México did not become part of the United States until 1912, deemed to be too exotic because the majority of its people did not speak English. In the years preceding statehood New Mexico Indigenous communities thrived with own ways of learning resisting colonization as they resisted Spain and Mexico before.

Because of the diverse population occupying the land there were many different languages spoken. This brings the idea of support for students to learn the English language in order to learn the ideas that were taught in the early schools. The issue of students in New México identified as Limited English Proficient can be attributed to the

history of the state. Even though children were taught English in school they still had to communicate with Elders in their native language which was either Spanish or another native language. The state of New México is home to Indigenous people, Spanish, Mexican, early French who mostly came as trappers, and more recently Anglo inhabitants (Mondragon & Stapleton, 2005). Along with language differences, cultural differences are apparent. With such diversity, New México holds a rich history that influences expectations within and between rural schools and communities.

The Dilemma and Opportunity of Rural Education

Educational institutions have a different culture when they are located in a rural place. In rural communities there is often more social cohesion, shared cultural practices, similar political behavior, and shared values and objectives (Schafft, 2000). Though this was not evident in the literature, a common assumption of being rural is isolation, a sense that rural people live their entire lives in the towns in which they were born. An important question for rural educators is, how these identities within the rural community manifest themselves within the school, and how rural schools can best serve young people and their communities. How can rural communities retain their educated youth in the community so they have the ability to contribute? Rural schools provide communities with the social capital needed to continue to sustain a viable community, but yet youth leave when they are faced with wanting to continue their education.

The 'community capital' present in many rural communities make them attractive places to live and raise a family. There is a strong bond that exists among rural community members which foster a firm commitment to protect and support children. With their sparse populations, lower, crime rates, beautiful open spaces,

and sense of community, many rural places offer a welcome break from the problems associated with urban and suburban living (Malhoit, 2005 p.10).

Although living in a rural community has its benefits, there are tensions about what it means to transition to adulthood in a rural community. Most educational institutions operate on the assumption that rural youth will move out of the community in search of educational and job opportunities because there is a belief that these aspirations can only be attained outside the rural area (McLaughlin, Shoff, & Demi, 2014). Sherman and Sage (2011) contend that education can be a source of tension and confusion as explained,

While local schools frequently play a vital role in socializing and caring for children, they can also be the source of either inclusion or exclusion from the community's limited resources and social support. They are also an undeniable part of the process by which a community's best and brightest adults are siphoned off and shipped away to places with more opportunities. Depending on individuals' or families' positions in the social hierarchy, their level of education and training, and comfort with sending their children away, the educational system can be a source of pride and a sense of belonging, or a source of frustration, marginalization, and anger (p.11).

A study by Ley et. al. (1996) of rural youth in 21 states found that:

1. Expectations held by parents of rural youth tend to conform to aspirations that youth hold for themselves.

2. Expectations held by school staff for rural youth tend to conform to aspirations that youth hold for themselves.
3. Expectations held by parents of rural youth tend to conform to expectations held by youth's school staff (p.135).

If rural youth are satisfied with activities, services, and conveniences in their current community, they are more likely to want to stay in that community (Corbett, 2007). If students believe they can attain their educational career aspirations locally they are more likely to stay in that community (McLaughlin, Shoff, & Demi, 2014). But if jobs in rural communities are scarce or unstable youth will migrate to more populated areas for better employment (Carr & Kefalas 2009, Corbett 2007, and Sherman & Sage 2011). Carr and Kefalas (2009) point out that students who can achieve academically, are often encouraged by teachers and school staff to seek further educational opportunities outside the rural community.

School reform and rural education. National education reform like Goals 2000 (1994), No Child Left Behind (2002), Race to the Top (2011) and Common Core State Standards (2014), Every Student Succeeds Act (2016) have largely been suited for urban rather than rural settings. There is some research suggesting that these types of reform have negatively affected rural education (Bryant, 2010; Schaft & Jackson, 2010). The educational needs of students are rapidly changing, and there is significant pressure for school reform so schools meet the national push to improve academic achievement. New México's education systems is continually been in a state of reform (Mondragon & Stapleton, 2005). With the Indigenous people of New México having to learn a new way

of life, Spanish and Indigenous children forced to learn the English Language, forced boarding schools for Indigenous children in quite recent history, the integration of bilingual and dual language programs, and parents learning how to be part of their child's education, the educational system is always changing (Nieto-Phillips, 2004). The national curriculum now demands that students be "college and career ready", but there is an uneven focus on college-readiness rather than career-readiness which has distinctly influential meaning within a rural context (Byun, Irvin, & Meece, 2011). For rural schools this causes a dilemma--if the goal of education is to export youth and drain the community of its greatest resource, then are rural schools truly serving their communities? If the national curriculum of U.S. public education is focused almost solely on college preparation, then how are rural schools to help rural youth who wish to stay in and serve their communities? Can rural schools do both?

Rurality

What do we know? Much of the research about living rural is conducted in the Midwest and Appalachian Regions of the United States. School leaders and teachers in New México's rural areas need more information about how exactly they can best serve their communities. Although rural research from other regions is important to inform rurality, populations of inhabitants, history's, and cultures are different and therefore research should reflect all people. Some things we do know include New México is one of the poorest and most rural states in the country (Jimerson, 2004). There are two counties that cover most of northern New México, over 8,000 square miles, and the communities that reside in those counties are identified as Rural: Remote, defined by the Census as rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also

more than 10 miles from an urban cluster (IES NCES National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). There are 22 public schools located in the two counties that are identified as Rural: Remote.

Nearly one-third of New México's population live in places classified as rural by the Bureau of the Census and 58% of the students who attend public schools are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Sixty percent of children live in poverty in the state. New México is identified as a diverse state meaning that White students are the minority. Students of color comprise 66% of the total student population. This includes Native American students who make up 11% of the population and 52% identified as Hispanic.

New México ranks at the bottom in providing students in grades K-12 grades a quality education according to the Quality Counts 2016 Report. New Mexico finished 49th among the 50 states with an overall score of 66.3 out of a possible 100 points a grade of D on an A-F scale. An A representing meeting all requirements. The overall national grade is a C learning 74.2 points out of a possible 100 (Quality Counts 2016: Reports and Ranking, 2016). There are three indices tracked by the report, chance for success, school finance, and K-12 achievement. In the K-12 achievement category there are 18 distinct achievement measures related to math and reading performance, high school graduation rates, and the results of Advanced Placement exams are among them. Indicators in the index can be broken into three sub-categories: status change, and equity. For measures in the status category, New México receives an F, 50th in the nation. In the category change (improvement over time) New México ranks 31st earning a D. In the equity sub-category where states are graded on achievement-gap between low-income students and more affluent peers New México stands at a B plus. Nationally, it ranks 11th in that specific

area. The nation stands at a B. Schools in rural New México are not fairing any better than the state average. The New México Public Education School Grading reports that northern New México rural districts are struggling to show that students are performing at grade level.

Rural schools in northern New México are not faring well either on their school report cards. Of the 21 public schools located in rural northern New México 50% are scoring at B or C level. The other 50% are scoring at D or F. There are six indicators that schools are rated on for elementary and middle schools. High schools earn points on the school report card on the following indicators: Current Standing, School Growth, Growth of Highest Performing Students, Student Growth of Lowest Performing Students, Opportunity to Learn, Graduation, College and Career Readiness, and Bonus Points (NMPED, 2016).

Many other questions remain about how rural schools in northern New México are doing. For example, there is no existing data set publicly available that compares rural and non-rural schools' teacher vacancies, teacher turnover, highly qualified teachers, administrator turnover and others correlated with instructional quality. The Rural Schools Division was eliminated by the New México Public Education Department in 2010 and as a result rural schools are not tracked or reported differently in state measures.

According to the New México Educator Vacancy Report (2016) there were 595 opening in New México. The number includes openings for certified teachers, counselors, administrators, and ancillary service providers such as speech pathologists, social workers and other therapists (Trujillo, Jamison, & Salcedo, 2016). The most difficult to staff position are Special Education Math and Science teachers. The report

indicates overwhelmingly that smaller, more rural districts reported that it was hard to recruit teachers due to their location, regardless of the subject area.

School leaders. Rural school leaders encounter obstacles those in urban or suburban areas rarely deal with such as what superintendents manage on a daily basis including, isolation, difficulty attracting, rewarding, and retaining skilled administrators, limited resources, and community resistance to change (Lamkin, 2006). Lamkin (2006) also identifies increasing difficulty in rural leadership “increased demands and decreased assistance to meet those demands (p. 22)”. With a recent move towards Common Core Standards and standardized assessments, school leaders find themselves in a more accountable position. Rural school leaders cope with more media coverage, greater accountability for test results, and increased responsibility for finance. Rural school leaders experience less support due to decreased money and a shortage of qualified applicants in educational administration. With these increased responsibilities, school leaders must still attend to community traditions, culture, needs of the community, and personalities that exist within the school setting.

Teachers Many authors identify difficulties in attracting and retaining, training and rewarding rural school teachers, eluding to the idea that teachers who choose to teach in rural areas have different occupational interests, perceive characteristics of their teaching situations somewhat differently, and may need different types of incentives to keep them on the job than do teachers in urban or suburban schools (Massey & Crosby, 1983; Mathes & Carlson, 1996). Azano and Stewart (2015) found that teachers who came from rural backgrounds may be prepared to teach in a rural setting. Teachers with rural backgrounds found it easier to relate to students’ way of life and cultural contexts (Azano

& Stewart, 2015). This does not mean that teachers from urban or suburban backgrounds could not be successful in rural settings. It is important that teachers are prepared to enter into dialogue with their students and community and learn to value individual cultural contexts. This idea of rural service to prepare teachers for the needs of students and rural schools may be best addressed by the pre-service institution. Fecho (2011) states, “By preparing pre-service teachers to enact a pedagogy of place, we can help them learn to create classroom communities that welcome each student’s passions, interests, and specific experiences into the learning environment” (p.9). “Pedagogy of place” is the direct teaching that relates to students’ experience of the world, and that improves the quality of life for people and communities (Gruenewald, 2003).

Along with meeting the needs of students, teachers must contend with being prepared to teach two or more content areas. Needs of rural schools may be taken into consideration when preparing teachers to enter the rural school. Higher education institutions may want to think about developing programs that serve rural populations (Barley, 2009). Preparing pre-service teachers with theory and meaningful experiences in rural field placements are important steps in creating a pool of teachers from which rural schools can successfully recruit and retain (Azano & Stewart, 2015). Attracting and retaining qualified teachers brings forth other issues as well. Rural communities face the long-standing challenge of retaining teachers due to low salaries and geographic isolation (Walker, 2012).

Administration and Principals. Superintendents in rural areas face unique experiences in their practice that require specific training through content, instructional techniques, and connections to the field (Lamkin, 2006). School site leaders find

themselves navigating challenges of recruiting and retaining qualified teachers, transportation costs, and lack of central office expertise. The rural school superintendency is increasingly difficult, perhaps resulting from increased demands and decreased assistance. The role requires the superintendent to do more with less. The most obvious solution to the increased demands is the consolidation of rural districts into larger districts with greater resources and additional staff and support. However simple logistics of geographic distance precludes this solution to the problem.

The superintendent may be the sole administrator and often the target of public criticism. Administrators in rural communities suffer a lack of privacy both in school and in other settings (Glass, 1991). An improved and perhaps specifically targeted rural preparation program can mitigate some of the difficulties administrators experience and could attract more qualified candidates (Greenfield, 1995). Existing literature advocates also for establishing networks among rural district leaders to help handle the increased demands (Jacobson, 1988).

Parents. The role of the parent evolved in a widespread way from sideline observers to active participants in the education of their children (Lujan, 2013). The time when parents trusted the education system wholeheartedly and sent their children off to learn has changed to a belief that parents and community are partners in the education of the community's children including rural families (Edmondson & Butler, 2010). Recent initiatives promote parent involvement in schools because State Public Education Departments in most states, as this is a national initiative, of the Every Child Succeeds Act, have made parent and community involvement a part of the school grading system even on rural communities where transportation to the school may not be easy, because

of distance. Parent and community involvement initiatives have been enacted in hopes of getting parents involved in their child's education, in turn, raising achievement (Resources for Building School, Family, and Community Partnership, 2012).

Parent and community involvement bring other facets to schools, including rural schools, where district leaders find themselves caught between the demands of community members, parents, principals, students, and staff members. The nature of school communities has changed with the rapid change of student population, the availability of higher education, and multicultural multilingual issues (Howley, Jarrell, & Woodrum, 2005). Collaboration between families and schools has evolved into positive interactions for the sake of student success as defined by the people involved in working with students (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Butera and Costello (2010) report schools and families provide essential support for the success of students, it is also important to note that research about collaboration amongst parents and the school is occurring mostly in urban settings (Semke & Sheridan, 2011). Rural settings present distinctive conditions, by definition, rural schools are geographically isolated, presenting a particular problem among rural educators and challenges for certain school-based partnerships (Howley, Bickel, & McDonough, 1997).

Semke & Sheridan's (2011) empirical study reports that rural families experience often finding solutions to problems within the family unit, innovating together as needed. Their research identifies that rural families feel there is frequent stigma associated with identifying their child or family needs, and rural culture often suggests dealing with problems internally rather than pursuing professional help. Rural culture still holds fear of being judged, distrust professionals, and a lack of privacy hinders parent engagement

services. Other challenges reported by rural parents and teachers include having to travel with little or no public transportation, scheduling and time. Lack of research in rural settings greatly hinders our ability to understand the full impact of family-school partnerships.

Community. How does a community support a system which promotes the outmigration of its youth to pursue higher education? Rural communities' have been coping with their youth leaving the communities in search of higher education or work not accessible in the community. Educational and career aspirations of rural youth affect the sustainability of rural living. So, if rural youth leave to increase their knowledge and skills outside the community; how can the community continue to sustain itself? It is clear that rural youth develop a strong sense of community; community and families take pride in the strong values they impart to their youth (Miller, 1993).

Relationships between school leaders and community members, parents, teachers and central office administrators are unique in a small district. In rural communities, the school is often the lifeblood of the community. Rural schools are deeply connected to their communities and are the center of functions outside the church. Community resources support students in their educational aspirations by reinforcing the work of school personnel (Alleman & Holly, 2013). Communities provide social capital through mentoring and positive influential relationships as well as formal and informal job shadowing, apprenticeships, and internship opportunities for students (Lerner, 1995). These opportunities for students reinforce the importance of academic success among individual students and within the community at large. Educational and career aspirations

of rural youth affect the sustainability of rural living. Sherman and Sage (2007), conclusions indicate,

Rural youth with the support of their families and teachers are making clear choices about their livelihood. Plans have been made about continuing their post-secondary education, yet they have substantial fears about their own academic and financial limitations in pursuing those dreams” (p. 140). Community residents struggle to keep their children nearby to build a viable community, because it is perceived that higher education and higher paying jobs lie outside the rural community and for most rural communities this is detrimental to the survival of the community.

Students. Rural adolescents are much less likely than urban youth to have financial resources to enter college. Students who are from farms tend to be drawn to a farm labor force often to such an extent that scholastic programs in school and chances for a college education are severely undermined. New México ranches and farms may be large distances from students’ area schools. Tight family units, often in the form of large extended families as well as tribal clans may not encourage students to leave home because of these vast distances.

Rural youth aspire to lead a successful and fulfilling adulthood (Ley, et. al., 1996), but students often have doubts of how to achieve their goals. Most students living in rural communities are likely to have a strong sense of family and community and the decision to leave to attend college or pursue a career is not an easy one. Ley et. al. (1996), clearly states that students have difficulty leaving their community.

While students value their local community, they expect to live somewhere else. These findings echo the uncertainty of growing up rural, will I be smart enough; will I have the skills to succeed; will I know the right people when I leave this place for distant, unknown opportunity? The results will suggest that in subtle and not so subtle ways, we are inviting our children to leave to become nomads (p.140).

Many students may feel this way, but it is important to acknowledge that not all students have difficulty leaving their community to further their education or to take up an opportunity for a new job.

Some students as well as some parents seem to realize that they will find their fortunes outside of familiarity of their community. Carr and Kefalas (2009) suggest that rural students may be sorted according to their potential or expected achievement in high school and beyond. The most academically successful students, *achievers*, are the most likely to leave and not return, a process directly encouraged by the expectations of educators and other adults in the community. By contrast, *stayers*, who represent the lowest-achieving students, are the most likely to stay. Carr and Kefalas argue that this sorting process, over time and in combination with the selectivity of migration streams out of rural communities, has a cumulative negative effect on the well-being and viability of these communities such that “small towns play an unwitting part in their own decline” (p. 24).”

Research conducted by Wiborg (2001) indicates that the attachment students have to the local community is an under-researched aspect of youth’s decision to stay or leave their community. Attachment and a sense of belonging are some reasons why rural youth

decide to stay or return to their community. When rural youth decide to stay or return to their community rural education becomes more than redistributed efforts or consolidation. It becomes about determining how being rural remains a vibrant conceptual category by demonstrating how rural schools matter to the people who teach and learn there (Beeson & Strange, 2003).

College readiness. Preparing students for college is a responsibility of all schools, yet for small rural schools, it is especially challenging. The benefits of a college degree are many, with college graduates living longer, enjoying healthier lives, and being more productive (Mortenson, 2000). How do rural schools with mostly limited resources assure that students are ready for college?

Corbett (2007) strongly suggests that rurality must be considered in educational policy as well as questions of pedagogy and curriculum. What happens when New México Public Education Department (NMPED) makes it a requirement for high school students to take a college course before they graduate high school and even college (NMPED 2013). Rural schools have very little access to courses close to home. According to NMPED, the success of a student depends on how ready they are to enter college. If high school graduation rates are any indicator of how successful we are going to be, schools have much work to do.

Currently, far too many students drop out or graduate from high school without the knowledge and skills required for success in the 21st-century workplace and/or post-secondary education, closing doors and limiting post-secondary options. In New México, close to 50% of recent high school graduates enroll in remediation their freshman year of college; nationwide, 41% of employers are

dissatisfied with high school graduates' ability to read and understand written material (NMPED, 2013).

Aspirations. Aspirations provide insights into what students think and feel about themselves, their schools and the roles they have within the school and community (Ley, et. al., 1996). Aspirations are a strong desire, longing or aim; ambition (Dictionary.com, 2017) . Aspirations are developed from the student's ability to set goals for the future and developing steps to reach those goals (Bajema, Miller, & Williams, 2002). The aspiration level of youth in rural areas are more vulnerable to the social influences of a community due to factors of isolation, population size, and community culture. Quaglia and Cobb (1996) state that:

...expectations and standards of the group significantly impact the aspirations of its members regardless of their level of achievement motivation. In other words, the aspiration level of individual group members is buoyed by the prevailing group standard. Thus, even those with an inner drive to achieve limit their accomplishments to the level of the group; the fear of being ostracized or alienated from the group. This tendency is more pronounced the more isolated the culture (p.129).

Rural students, parents, community and school staff have their own ideas of what students should aspire to do beyond high school. In conjunction with national initiatives and schools aiming for high academic standards, students along with parents and community must understand the vision school staff and administration have for youth. As well, school staff and administrators have a responsibility to continuously learn about what expectations students, parents, and community members have of them. If it is the

students desire to attain a four-year degree and pursue a career they must make the decision to leave their community. This is a decision students attending urban and suburban schools are less likely to have to make. They are likely to have an abundance of schools and jobs to choose from within their own community.

Teachers/Administrators. Haller and Monk (1992) identify potentially conflicting implications of educational policies adopted by local school boards to prepare students' for their pathways to adulthood. If local boards believe the out-migration of rural youth to metropolitan areas is inevitable, they may feel more obligated to prepare students for metropolitan jobs. Other boards might interpret such actions as community suicide and attempt to counter out-migration by modifying curricula toward rural living and local job markets. Haller and Monk found that curricular offerings and school size contribute only a 'minor impact on the out-migration of rural youth (p. 20). The primary determinants of youths' tendencies to leave home stem from individual traits of students in conjunction with the resources schools have set up, and communities-factors of isolation, intellectual levels, and to a lesser degree, "ruralness".

Contribution to Existing Literature

Rural youth, their parents, and teachers speak of their future career and educational plans with relative certainty. Based on the literature I reviewed, what is missing from the literature is a clear and deep understanding of expectations schools, students, parents and community members have of the school. If rural communities are hinging their future on the leadership and activism of local youth, it is not reflected in the perceptions of rural students, parents, and teachers; because the messages students are getting from parents, teachers and other community members is that success lies outside

the community. This study will contribute to existing literature by providing an in depth look at how students view their choices of staying or leaving. This research will allow for school leaders, policy makers to better understand the needs of rural northern New Mexico students, schools and community members. This will allow administrators to be informed about the goals students and parents expect to achieve and how the school can support student goals.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

The primary purpose of my study was to deeply describe school and community expectations of rural education with some compare and contrast of stakeholder perceptions in a rural northern New México community. This study assisted with developing better understanding of expectations, challenges, and successes of U.S. rural schools in the post-No Child Left Behind educational context of standardized tests and college preparation.

The central topic I explored through this study centered on expectations within a rural community about rural education. An emergent constructivist theoretical perspective was used to analyze the different expectations stakeholders hold on rural education. Constructivism provides a foundational research philosophy through which themes emerge that are relevant to the stakeholder. Information collected informed participants in their understanding of the construction of their own beliefs of education.

To answer the research questions targeted by the qualitative narrative case study, I chose to include two modes of data collection. First, individual semi-structured interviews consisting of open-ended questions were used when asking participants about their expectations of rural school, including school professionals, community members, family, and student responses. I prepared follow-up questions or prompts in order to ensure optimal responses from participants. This practice helped with extracting information needed to inform the research questions (Turner, 2010). This narrative method of data collection provided deep understandings of expectations held by rural school and community members

Research Question and Sub-Questions

Rural school and community expectations of a small rural school in northern New Mexico?

Sub question 1: How do school and community members describe the purposes of education in a rural context?

Sub question 2: How do school and community members describe their expectations for the roles of teachers, parents, family members, and community members in educating rural youth?

Sub question 3: How do school and community members describe their expectations for the roles of teachers, parents, family members, and community members in educating rural youth?

Sub question 4: What are the local, rural norms, values and traditions, as described by school and community members that are most important? How do these values etc. help us to determine students' education and define student's success in education?

Sub question 5: How do rural school and community members describe ways to work together toward student's educational success (as defined by the community) and their opportunities to learn and engage in education?

Positionality of the Researcher

I am from the community I studied and grew up 30 miles north of the school that served as the site for this study, located in a small northern New México town nestled in the mountains of the San Juan National Forest. There were no other options for me, except to attend this public school, and the closest school was 45 miles away. As a result,

I am a graduate of La Escuela Norteña (pseudonym) and attended elementary and middle school years there as well. The land my family occupies, like much family land in the area dates back to the original land grants given to families moving to the new world from Spain. Some families worked at the local lumber yard, forest service, or school to assure they had income, and grew crops and raised cattle and sheep to supplement their livelihoods. The lumber yard was in operation in the 70s and 80s. It got some people through some tough economic times. It gave other work experience in order to find jobs elsewhere when it closed. Those who decided to stay after the lumber yard closed did not fair too well. Other families ranched on their large plots of land and used that money as their main source of income. We were a family who lived in the district, but it was still relatively far away from the physical school. My siblings and I woke up every morning at about 6:30 am to get the bus by 7am and make the 45 minute journey down the valley to the school location on the mesa.

I needed to negotiate some bias of my own and others (some of my family members still live there), but I also had an emic perspective of this community, a valuable asset to my research. I am an educator and have worked with many people in the community: teachers, superintendents, and school board members, through my current and past employment. My experiences in education gave me insight into the educational system and processes that govern the school. While I have not specifically been employed by the school, and therefore have no special interest in one teacher over another, I personally knew some of the people I interviewed, along with some of the students and families who were participants.

Research Philosophy / Paradigm

For my study, I applied an emergent constructivist research paradigm as a foundation to design and implementation. A constructivist research paradigm is built on the premise that knowledge is constructed by participants, and therefore the role of researcher is to elicit what participants communicate as their experience, and construct as their 'truth' (Hatch, 1985). This process involves the researcher as well, and it is through mutual engagement that the respondents and I constructed the subjective reality explored (Mishler, 1986). As the co-constructor of the reality studied, I spent an extended amount of time interviewing participants to fully develop a range of participant perspectives and later through analysis identifying patterns and differences among them (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Research by its nature dictates that the researcher must be able to present what specifically they will do, for how long they will do it, and what questions were answered, yet due to the nature of constructivist research, the design will also emerge to some extent once I as the researcher am in the setting (Hatch, 2002). This is not a detriment, but speaks to the power of the method—while I started by detailing as many specifics from the setting as possible, and set a process for looking for patterns of relationships among the specifics (Bogdan & Biklen, 1995), findings were grounded in the data collected and categories were formed from those data produced by the participants. Hatch (2002) describes this process in the following manner:

Constructivist paradigms assume a world in which universal, absolute realities are unknowable, and the objects of inquiry are individual perspectives or construction of reality. While elements are often shared across social groups, constructivist

science argues that multiple realities exist that are inherently unique because they are constructed by individuals who experience the world from their own vantage points. Realities are apprehendable in the form of abstract mental constructions that are experientially based, local, and specific (p. 15)

The use of a constructivist design emerged somewhat as the study progressed as did my use of semi-structured interview questions which allowed me to develop deeper understanding through more emergent exploration with flexibility. An emergent approach to the research enabled me to follow lines of inquiry and responses from participants as they arose even if they were unexpected. The analysis followed an emergent methodology that allowed for exploring concepts and information sources that emerged in the context of rural school and community expectations. This allowed people to identify what was important to them and gave me, the researcher an opportunity to study these items in a more exploratory manner.

Mode of Inquiry: Qualitative

Qualitative modes of study take place in the natural world and allow for multiple methods of data collection (Bogdan & Biklen, 1995). A key characteristic of qualitative research is that it calls for the researcher to enter the lives of the persons being investigated as fully and as naturally as possible (Creswell, 1994; Ibid 2007), to “learn the meanings, norms, and patterns of a way of life” (Hymes, 1982, p. 29). The eventual goal of qualitative research is to gain a holistic, in-depth perspective of the people, environment, programs, events, or any phenomenon studied by interacting closely with the people studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Though they may not provide a deep meaning of every aspect of the phenomenon being studied, qualitative modes give

researchers a starting place for understanding the complexity of the culture being studied. (Hatch, 2002). A qualitative narrative approach provided a forum for the voices of rural students, staff, administration, parents, and community to be heard; all of whom were directly involved in creating student aspirations and parent and community expectations, and as a smaller percentage of the population, are groups that are often marginalized by the greater U.S. educational research community.

It is imperative in qualitative research that participant voices are captured in the data collection (Bogdan & Biklen, 1995). To this end, I as researcher made sense of actions, intentions, and understanding of people studied. Qualitative research typically utilizes instruments such as questionnaires, checklists, scales, tests, as well as field notes, observations, and notes, direct quotes from recorded interviews, or other unobtrusive data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My main goal was to listen; study subjects in conversation, and collect data both in unstructured and structured ways. This included spontaneous field notes during interviews that detailed what was being observed and used later to analyze themes in what was heard (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative research thus provides the principles and structures to collect data in an “empiric”, trustworthy, and systematic manner. Procedures may differ between qualitative researchers, but each investigative approach requires much of the same effort, attention to procedures, resistance to bias, and attention to data integrity that characterize other methods (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Because my research focused on identifying and describing expectations people hold for rural education, interviews and a narrative focus were helpful to understanding expectations and meaning underlying them.

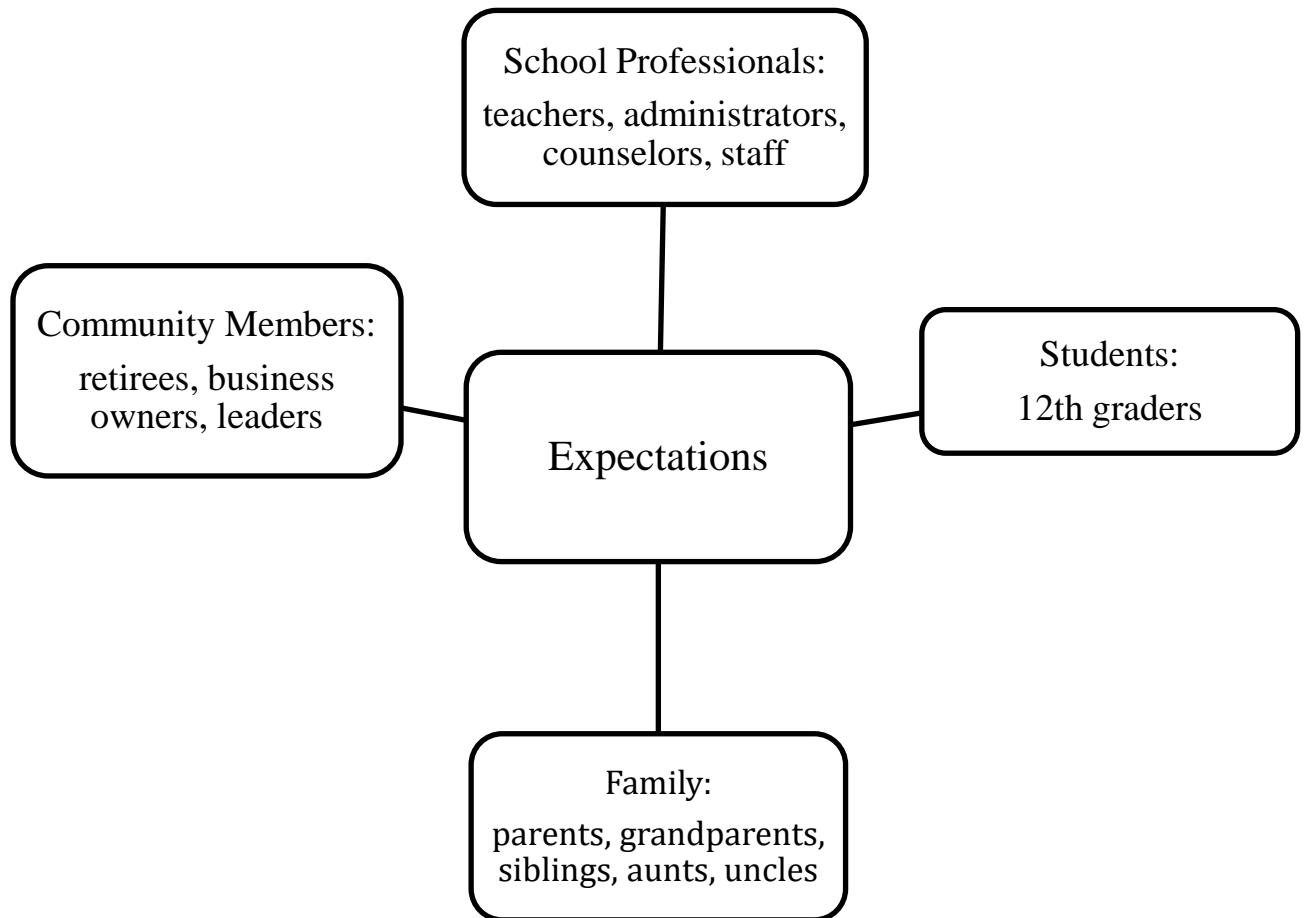
Beliefs and attitudes are best researched by qualitative methods to get to underlying beliefs. Relationships needed to be created and this method type allowed the time needed to create relationships.

Methodology: Narrative Case Study

The purpose of this study was to take an exploratory approach to determine similarities and differences in expectations between school professionals, community members, family, and students about rural education in their northern New México community. Because the study was about attitudes, beliefs, and actions people have about rural education, the research design and process was enhanced by qualitative study and a constructivist research paradigm to explore my research question I designed my research as a qualitative narrative case study. Narrative case study research can be useful to understanding, describing, or analyzing a single phenomenon in its natural context through participant voice and story (Creswell, *Research design: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*, 1994).

Case study methodology is characterized by a “bounded system” or the ‘case’ that defines what was studied and what will not (Yin, 1989; Stake, 1995). A narrative case study is appropriate for this research question because a rural school is likely to tightly encompass its community members and a narrative case study approach allows the researcher to delve deeply into the borderlands of a rural, interrelation, contextual system of expectations. A case study is an empirical inquiry designed for investigation of a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Hatch, 2002). A narrative study is one in which the focus is on participant stories, experiences, and

meaning making (Creswell, 2007). A narrative case study inquiry provided me with a way to cope with the technically distinctive situation in which there were many more variables of interest than data points, and as a result relied on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulated fashion through multiple methods or as in the case of my study, through study of participant expectations across multiple constituents of participants (Saldana, 2016). This study benefited from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. Because narratives convey meanings, and narrative inquiry is concerned with understanding intentions, beliefs, and emotions that reflect situated social reality the study will closely follow characteristics of narrative inquiry (Reissman, 2002). This research provided a better understanding and description of the expectations school professionals, community members, family, and students hold for rural education and in some instances or their school in particular.

Figure 1. Stakeholder Groups*Figure 1.* Indicates groups who contributed to an emergent sense of rural life and expectations for rural education.

With all case study research, boundaries must be set that determine what were included and excluded in the scope of the research project. The boundaries set indicated the breadth and depth of the study and not just the sample (Stake 1995; Yin, 1993). The boundaries of this research project were a rural community, the participants who live in the rural community, including some educators, and students the rural school serves. The communities are shaped by the experiences youth are having both in the environment of the place and the school; people living in these communities are directly affected by the rural school experience. The school was the single case I studied. I used a single-case

descriptive design (Yin, 1994). The case was the school bounded by the people and communities affected by the outcomes of the school. This single case allowed me through narrative study to reveal how education by the school is seen by students, parents, school professionals, grandparents, and community members. The single narrative case study had multiple sources of evidence as a way to construct validity (Levy, 1988; Yin, 1994). The people experiencing rural education and the expectations they place on students and the role of the school to help reach the goals are the means through which I established context and validity.

There is some critique of narrative case study research. Early researchers claimed that narrative case study research was unscientific in nature because replication was difficult, and there was no clear reporting format (Levy, 1988, Bassey, 1999). To counter these claims Yin (1994), Stake (1995) and Feagin (1991) suggest there must be a clear protocol for narrative case study methodology that includes rules and procedures for collecting data which enhance the quality and rigor of the research. Yin (1994) states the researcher should strive for clarity in three areas:

- **An overview of the narrative case study project** – this will include project objectives, narrative case study issues, and presentations about the topic under study
- **Field procedures** – reminders about procedures, credentials for access to data sources, location of those sources
- **Narrative case study questions** – the questions that the investigator must keep in mind during data collection which are the overarching research question and sub-questions

The protocol (*see* Appendix A) was important to keep my focus as the researcher on the main tasks and goals. The overview was useful way for me to organize and communicate while in the field. My research was single-case narrative study with the school as the unit of analysis. Through narrative case study I sought to explore how expectations of rural education operates, when I as researcher have little or no control over behavioral events and with the study of focus is on a contemporary issue (Yin, 2016). An advantage to using a narrative case study approach was to explore expectations of school professionals, community members, family, and student's hold of their rural school and served as a format for participants to tell their stories. In congruence with narrative research (Creswell, 2007), by answering open ended interview questions, participants were able to describe their views of reality and this enabled me to better understand the participants' actions and perspectives (Baxter & Jack, 2008). It would be difficult to develop a true picture of stakeholder's expectations without considering the context in which they occurred, in this case, a rural school and community in northern New México.

This narrative case study research design allows for rich descriptions in local contexts where I preserved chronological flow, assessed local causality, and derive meaningful explanations of rural life and education (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014)

Study Site

The rural school I selected to be part of this project is located 30 miles from the nearest small city in northern New México. Students from ages five to nineteen travel in some cases 40 miles from the surrounding area to get to school. The school serves grades kindergarten through twelfth grade and is separated into three parts: elementary, middle

school, and high school. The student population in grades kindergarten through twelfth is approximately 300 students. Demographics of the school are 90% Hispanic, 1% Native American, and 4% White. Eighty-five percent of the school population qualifies for free or reduced lunch.

The elementary school consists of kindergarten, combination grades four, five, and six in a brand new building. The Middle School (grades 7-8) is housed in a separate building but middle school students may have classes in the building designated for grade 9-12. The school has a very active athletic program in which students can participate in various sports such as boys and girls cross country, basketball, baseball, softball, spirit squad, and track as well as girls volleyball,. Parents are generally very active in supporting their students in sports. Extracurricular activities offered by the school include Future Farmers of America, Mariachi, Band, and National Honor Society.

Students who attend this school travel from any of the seven surrounding communities. There are no Native American Pueblos serviced specifically by this school, but it is possible that some Native American parents choose to drive their children from outside of their own community to attend school at La Escuela Norteña.

Table 3 indicates the current academic standing per New México State Department of Education 2015 School Report Card. Each school receives a letter grade based on the criteria. This school has the following: an elementary level grade of D, a middle school level a grade of D, and a high school level a grade of C. School grades are a combination of points in various areas:

Table #2

New México Public Education Department School Grade Report Card 2015-2016

**La Escuela Norteña NM State Department of Education
Academic Standing**

2015-2016 SY

School	Elementary School - A (PreK-6) <i>Elem 1</i>	Elementary School - B (PreK-6) <i>Elem 2</i>	Middle School (7-8)	High School (9-12)
Overall District Letter Grade	D			
School Grade	F	D	F	B
Current Status – How did students perform in the most recent year?	6.21/40	12.04/40	1.27/40	12.14/30
School Growth – Did the school as a whole improve student performance more or less than expected? (10 points)	.76/10	2.49/10	0.12/10	5.35/10
School Growth of Highest Performing Students – How well did the school help the highest 75% of individual students improve? (20 points)	4.38/20	6.45/20	0.57/20	5.41/10
Student Growth of Lowest Performing Students – Are the lowest performing students in math and reading improving more or less than expected? (20 points)	6.51/20	13.1/20	5.55/20	7.01/10
Graduation – How does the school contribute to on-time graduation and improve over time? (17 points)				15.55/17
Career and College Readiness – Are students prepared for college and career and what lies ahead after high school? (15 points)				12.26/15
Opportunity to Learn - Does the school foster an environment that facilitates learning? (10 points)	9.33/10	9.46/10	9.6/10	7.46/8
Student and Parent Engagement - Does the school show an exceptional aptitude for involving students and parents in education, reducing truancy, and promoting extracurricular activities? (5 points)	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5

The selected school is an important site of study for understanding expectations of rural communities about their school because the population in this investigation are people who represent students, parents and community members who live in a rural community. The diverse demographics are also indicative of schools in northern New México.

Participants/Data Sources

The primary purpose of this study was to explore how expectations of school professionals, community members, family, and students are similar and how they are different in a small rural community. Participating school professionals included, teachers, school staff, administrators, counselors and support staff; community members included community leaders, business owners, retirees, and members of the community who live in the community; family included parents, grandparents, siblings and extended family; and students included ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders. Participants are people who live in and contribute to the rural community and are being educated or have been educated in this rural school. It was important to identify grandparents as well as parents in the community group, because according to the Kids Count Data Center (2016) grandparents are raising grandchildren at a rate of 6% in northern New México. Through the lived experiences of the people who are intimate players in this rural school community, this study was designed to identify themes of expectations and provide school leaders and policy makers insight into what expectations stakeholders hold in regards to the education of rural youth

Methods

I applied two modes of collecting data to explore the research questions stated earlier. Document analysis to develop a base-line understanding of the context and

meaning for expectations about this rural school. I decided to use this document analysis data in chapter 1 and in this chapter to provide a contextual description of the school. My primary focus of narrative study and analysis was exploring expectations through twenty five semi-structured individual interviews with six school professionals, six community members, six family members and seven students to explore expectations with participants in the school.

In gathering data by interviews, Yin (1994) suggests that the researcher must possess skills in the ability to ask good questions, and to interpret the responses, be a good listener, be adaptive and flexible so to react to various situations, have a firm grasp of issues being studied, and remain as neutral as possible from pre conceived notions.

Semi-structured interviews. The goal of qualitative interviews is to have participants use their own words and terminology and engage in a topical discussion around the research questions. Interviews were an effective data gathering approach to gain insight into stakeholder expectations of the rural school as well as to develop a deeply articulated sense of rural life in the area of the study. A semi-structured interview is an exchange of information between an interviewer -- the person asking the questions, and another person; where the interviewer attempts to elicit information from the other person by asking questions. The interviewer has pre-determined questions that may unfold in a more conversational manner. The interviewer offers the participant opportunities to explore ideas or issues they feel are important to the topic of discussion (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

I obtained permission from study participants to record the interviewed sessions so the data can be reviewed for accuracy after the interview was over. I included a

statement in the Informed Consent document (see Appendix D) disclosed that interviews were recorded. I followed an interview protocol was followed to elicit responses from at least twenty five stakeholders to inform each of the research questions.

I strove to write interview questions in non-threatening and unambiguous manner, and included an interview guide created for the researcher. Individual interviews consisted of open ended questions (see Appendix C) I used to ask about rural life and participant expectations of the rural school. In my role as researcher in the interview process followed the pre-designated line of inquiry as reflected in the interview protocol while at the same time engaging in conversational questions that might emerge throughout the interview process and that may serve the needs of the study (Yin, 2014). Throughout the interview process there were opportunities to clarify misconceptions or vague responses with all interactions being conducted in a friendly and non-threatening manner (Merriam, 1998). Turner (2010) explained that I must be prepared with follow-up questions or prompts to ensure optimal responses from participants. This practice helped me extract the information needed to inform the research questions. Using interviews as a data collection instrument included the potential risk of data being skewed in the transition from the interviewee and his or her intended meaning and actual recording of the data through the researcher's understanding (Turner, 2010; Yin, 2014). To minimize the negative effect of researcher bias, I audio recorded of the interviews, and I took notes from the transcription to ensure data correctness and clarity (Capt, Oliver, & Engel, 2014).

Data Analysis

In analyzing the interviews I first analyzing each participant response and then compared with responses of other participant within stakeholder groups and later across stakeholder groups for similarities and noteworthy disparities. I implemented a coding process, for categorizing qualitative data and describing the implications and details of the categories (Lujan, 2013). I coded the data both during and after collection. I used categories to sort the data from the interviews. To code meant that I worked with data to divide, group, reorganize and link themes in order to consolidate meaning and develop explanation (Saldana, 2016). Patterns in responses were organized and coded and transcription were typed to allow for comparisons. I then drew from findings categories to write thick descriptions and make meaning of them for the results in Chapter four.

Sampling

The study's population consisted of school professionals, community members, family, and students. I included at least six school professionals that work at the rural school. They were involved in teaching, administration, counseling, or worked at the school in other capacities. The second population sample included six community members. The community members were identified as a business owner, retiree, community leader, parents of students who had graduated in prior years. The third population sample interviewed were six parents living in the rural communities. This group were parents and grandparents. This group also included extended family. The fourth group in the research sample population was seven high school students who attend this rural school. The students were identified as being in twelfth grade. The student sample representative of the student demographics of the school. The student

group included seventy five percent male students to twenty five percent female students. This was representative of the larger senior class. These criteria are important because to investigate rural school and the expectations held by the people that experience it, participants need so to have some stake in the rural school.

In purposeful sampling, the researcher determines the selection criteria, which is essential for both choosing the people to be studied and for the reflecting purpose of the study (Merriam, 1998). The sample population of the study included school professionals, community members, family, and students who meet at least one of the following criteria 1) students ages 17 or 18 who attend or have attended selected rural school 2) lived in the rural community that served the rural school 3) own a business in the rural community 4) were parents of a student(s) who may have attended the selected rural school 5) were grandparents of students who attended the selected rural school (6) worked in selected rural school. Exclusion criteria included person who had no affiliation with the selected rural school or rural community. These criteria were important to the investigation, because, to study the expectations of school professionals, community members, family, and students, participants would need to come from or be a part of the rural community that serves the rural school.

My goal was to get as much variation as possible in the participants to explore a range of expectations in the school. My hope was that including multiple participant groups, school professionals, community, family, and students, will assist in this exploration. I employed purposeful sampling was an appropriate approach method when the endeavor is to discover, understand, and gain insight unto a qualitative problem (Merriam, 1998). The goal of purposive sampling was to choose a particular study

sample that yielded relevant, information rich data (Yin, 2016). The study sample drawn from the school community, students and rural community, ensured perspectives that were pertinent to the investigation's focus of expectations of school professionals, community members, family, and students expectation they hold for the rural school.

In determining sample size, Yin (2016) states that there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry, but does suggest stating a range based on the complexity of the study topic and depth of data collection. The sample size for this study included twenty five interviews that yielded at 125 pages of transcribed data. Due to the nature of the research design, sample size in qualitative studies is relatively small since the goal is not generalizability of results, but acceptable representation of the case under investigation (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2016). For this investigation, the data I collection stemmed from participant interviews using semi-structured questions, along with some document analysis of archival data.

Methodological Rigor within a Qualitative Framework

Standards of rigor for qualitative research were applied to all aspects of this study. I collected data including individual interviews of twenty five participants as a means of comparing data rather than relying on a single participant interview. I strove for qualitative rigor to assure truth, credibility, and consistency (Slevin & Sines, 2000). The standards of truth and consistency for qualitative research can be described by three subgroups:

Goodness. In order to demonstrate goodness there are six characteristics that must be present in the research (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002). The six components that build the foundation for 'goodness' are foundation, representation of voice, meaning making, and

implications. Throughout the development of this project I assured that each component is present:

Foundation (epistemology and theory). There are distinct differences between what school professionals, community members, family, and students want and need from rural education. To improve educational outcomes, we must understand the needs of the community according to all stakeholders, students, parents, community members and school professionals.

Approach (methodology). Conducting a Narrative Case Study allowed me to interpret a common though divergent experience and understand meaning through and with participants, rather than explaining or predicting their behavior. My research focused on participant stories allowing me to deeply explore as well as distinguish similarities and differences of rural education expectations and experiences of school professionals, community members, family, and students.

Collection of data (method). I applied qualitative approach through constructivist lens by asking semi-structured questions. I created clear procedures for conducting interviews and collecting documents. I remained open in a constructivist manner to follow participant narrative, ideas, and experiences. I adhered to basic research procedures yet followed participant narratives emergently, which assisted me to capture local truths meaningful for people in this rural area and school (Dodge, Ospina, & Foldly, 2005).

Representation of voice (researcher and participant as multicultural subjects). My study was designed to capture voices of various participants about different aspects of the community. Capturing a diversity of voices from four stakeholder

groups provided me a clear picture of rural education and the expectations participants have of each other.

The art of meaning making (interpretation and presentation). I strove to provide accurate representation of participant responses, accomplished this through diligently adhering to an emergent application of the interview process, recording of interviews, careful transcription, careful interpretation of data, and including many direct quotes by participants.

Trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) description of trustworthiness is a combination of credibility, dependability and confirmability. The development of "thick" descriptions and backing descriptions in the research with raw data help establish that the researcher is familiar with the research site and participants (Geertz, 1973). I ensured trustworthiness, by carefully distinguishing data from analysis and participants' voices from my own as researcher. Another approach to assure trustworthiness was to collect data from multiple groups of stakeholders to reflect integrated, multifaceted stories of rural education and stakeholder expectations. It was also important to include some outlier voices, those who are perhaps in the minority yet shared important information, perspectives, and experiences. I strove for dependability and confirmability to develop fair, unbiased, and coherent research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by carefully documenting the processes of access to the site, how the participants were selected, methods, and how processes were applied to ensure a strong level of trustworthiness.

Generalization. I do not claim or assume that my research analysis can be applied to all rural schools. Although people living in rural communities some share some experiences, each persons' experience is exclusive to that person. Each stakeholder group

may experience some commonalities in their rural day to day lives, but each person is unique and not generalizable. Yet much can be learned from narrative case study to inform other rural education. Ethics,

Ethics Compliance (IRB)

As soon as I was approved to continue my research by my committee, I applied for approval from the Office of the Institutional Review Board in the Office of Research and Compliance. I was formally approved and followed all compliance protocols.

Summary

The purpose of my study was to explore school and community expectations in a rural school in a northern New México community. Although there is some information about small rural schools in general, there is little data available from the perspective of the stakeholders that inhabit this school community. Deep understandings generated from this study will contribute to the knowledge base concerning rural schools in northern New México.

Understanding the perceptions of educational stakeholders will help rural schools become more responsive to the development needs of their communities. My hope is that the results will provide valuable information for policymakers on the needs of rural schools to increase school quality and their congruence with the needs of rural life and communities. The findings may also highlight the awareness of teachers, students, and administrators of the importance school climate and quality of education provided, parent involvement, and reform of curriculum implementation.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Strengths, Learning, and Meaning in Rural Life

Though I moved out of my hometown, I knew that I would raise my children in a rural community within close proximity to my family. The importance of knowing their grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins weighed heavily on that choice. I knew what it meant to grow up alongside family, not just immediate, but also knowing 2nd and 3rd cousins in the community. I had a sense of belonging that I don't think I would have had had I been raised in a larger community. As a child, I felt confident walking the short distance down the road to visit my grandparents... I feel that growing up "rural" helped me, as well as my peers, become independent, resourceful, and confident in knowing that "home" is familiar and welcoming in the event that we may need to return there (Lena, Alum and Community Member).

In Lena's (pseudonym) narrative she shares qualities she built growing up rural, and how those learnings supported her decision to raise a family in a rural community. Learning how to be independent and resourceful are important to her and she wants her own children to exhibit those qualities as well. The qualities she gained from her experiences crossed into how she developed success in school. Reflecting on her description of being raised in a rural community reminds me of my own experiences in a rural school classroom having known each classmate from elementary school up until graduation.

The primary focus of this research is on how a rural school and local community develop education needed by youth communicate to cultivate rural living and academic success. I begin the first results section by communicating what school and community members describe as strengths of rural life as well as strengths students bring into education from rural life. The second results section examines how rural upbringing and experience affect how students succeed or fail in school. Participants offer narrative meaning of experiences, values, and learning in rural life and rural education. They share strong ideas and feelings about the skills they have developed and how they are fostered or not in school.

Rural Living

Participants in my study spoke deeply and often eloquently about the realities of daily rural life in this community. They continue to work the land either by raising livestock, growing small gardens, or maintaining acequias, the waterways to cultivate fields for hay that supplement income for their families. Understanding this daily life is important to how education is structured and operates in rural communities. To show the depth and richness of rural life shared by participants, this section includes subsections complex narratives by individual community members, students, and educators.

As I examined participant responses to interview questions, it became clear how community members, parents, students, and teachers viewed their experiences with either rural living or working with students who come from rural communities. The main purpose of my research was to understand experiences of people who live, attend, or work in a rural community through their own perspectives. Participant discussions indicate a strong sense that rural living taught those who experience ruralness

responsibility and to have a sense of self in connection to family and to the land itself. This learned responsibility is demonstrated in the classroom during opportunities where teachers provide students with a syllabus, and students are successful in meeting assigned deadlines. Parents, community members, and students' responses emphasize that they learn many skills, responsibility, respect, caring for others, dealing with hardships, which help them be successful at home. Teachers and school staff confirm that the responsibilities students have at home teach students to be responsible and respectful in their interactions with them. Ms. Law shares her observations of the students' sense of who they are.

Kids that are tied to the land that have an understanding of life cycles, and where livelihood comes from. The land is really what makes them stronger people I think that helps them understand their place in the world. So I see that as a very positive I also think just having a cultural of belonging to the land gives a sense of place that allows their grounding.

There is a strong sense that students have a unique identity, that by learning to work on the land at a young age they became tied to it, and therefore have great confidence in who they are. That if they were anyone, they were workers, caretakers of the land and their family. Things like going for wood, digging and fixing the acequias, tending to the animals, helping with daily chores, driving cattle into the mountains in the spring and driving them back into the fields in the fall, going to church, and helping the elderly are some of the responsibilities participants have that attribute to their identity and sense of self-efficacy. The school finds itself with a great responsibility to enhance the educational setting with lessons pertaining directly to the experiences students arrive

with, such as engaging in in-depth studies of the resources available in the forests, understanding water rights, or the long term effects of drought.

Lena firmly believes her rural upbringing contributed to her strong sense of self. Being a member of the community, a mother of two children attending a rural school, a graduate of La Escuela Norteña, and now active in the community, gives her authority over her experience of living rural. As I interview Lena, I sense a strong belief in connecting to family and take note of it my field notes. I wonder as I'm listening about how this value of connection could be enhanced and supported in the structures of rural schools and education. She speaks fondly of friends who are raising families in the same community. Most of the parents interviewed disclose feeling what Lena describes.

The experience that Lena recounts contribute to her ability to thrive in a rural setting. Her emphasis on family and maintaining a strong support system is essential to the quality of rural existence. Dana communicates similar experiences in her interview and next I provide an extended story, voice, and meaning making about Dana's childhood rural experiences, choices now as a parent, and perspectives about rural education.

Dana. Dana (pseudonym), a parent of boys who graduated from the La Escuela Norteña, grew up in a small rural community and attended La Escuela Norteña as a child and teen. I asked Dana to be part of this study because she not only lived in a small rural community that is part of the school, but also graduated from La Escuela Norteña. She has an interesting perspective because, although she and her family live outside the district of La Escuela Norteña, she chose to drive some 40 miles each way so her children could attend La Escuela Norteña. I have known Dana since we were kids. Our parents knew each other, and we both grew up in the same community. After she graduated high

school, she pursued college and found work opportunities elsewhere. “I moved away because of work, both my husband and I needed to be closer to work. We plan on moving back after we retire.” After working a couple years and then staying home to raise her children, Dana applied for a job at La Escuela Norteña, accepted a library assistant position, and worked in various positions at the school. Dana shares, “I was driving here to bring the boys anyway.” During our discussion I reflected on how transporting students in a rural community brings about other challenges. The amount of time students spend on a bus may be longer than the amount of time spent in a class period. How might the school use time spent on the bus in a more productive manner especially toward learning? Some schools in New Mexico have implemented universal internet. With creative planning and funding, la Escuela Norteña may have access to such resource. Dana continues to share,

I was a stay at home mom, and thought I could go back to work here since the boys were here. I could keep an eye on them to make sure they were doing well. My husband and I wanted them to have a good experience here. I wanted them to have the same sense of community I felt I had. I had hoped they would get individualized attention by the teachers and staff at the school. I wanted my boys to have the small school experience and give them the opportunity to know and grow up around cousins and other extended family. I kind of knew it might be hard since we knew everyone. Especially when one of my boys did something wrong. Everyone in the family knew about it.

Rural schools provide a strength recommended for student learning and retention – small school experiences provided for the family a sense of support for their children. Dana had

expectations of the school based on the experiences she had as a student there and made decisions to ensure her students were supported in the same ways.

Dana reports having many different chores as a child and young adult. She remembers tending to sheep, feeding chickens, collecting eggs, and bringing in wood. She also made sure cows and horses had water by either breaking ice in winter, or filling watering holes in summer. As Dana mentions these chores, I think about the discussion I had with students and teachers about the Future Farmers of America club available at the school. The students expressed how their involvement in the club was not only enjoyable, but also values the knowledge and experiences they have from tending to the land, agriculture, family, and other responsibilities.

Families counted on each other to do the work they needed to get done. As children and young adults we were taught to attend church, care for our grandparents, younger siblings, and others who may have needed our help, care for the animals, clean waterways, cook meals, haul wood and assure that we had dry wood stacked for the winter, and we did many other things that our parents asked us to do (Dana, Parent).

It was interesting listening to Dana speak. I could tell that she didn't much care for the harder tasks, but I could see she appreciates them now. She exhibits perseverance as she juggles both school and home life. Students growing up rural have been exposed to challenging situations; the amount of responsibilities students have, can be beneficial to them as they tackle things in life like school. Students have learned to persevere and reflect that sometimes life will have difficulties and there are ways to work through them. Learning to care for others can be engaged in school learning through collaborative

learning, as long as teachers know how to elicit student strengths. Students already learn how to work together to accomplish jobs, like cleaning waterways among other things. Because the responsibilities students have on the farm have life consequences, they learn empathy for one another. The jobs students do on the ranch are complex, and it's essential to ask for help when necessary. Students learn to work together and can use that skill to navigate their educational path.

I remember having to hang clothes out in the winter. The wet clothes would freeze as soon as it hit the clothesline. It was like a hard animal skin hanging on the line. We had to keep track of the clothespins to make sure they wouldn't snap open and break, my grandma would remind me and my sisters that they (the clothespins) cost money. She seemed to care more for the clothespins than my frozen fingertips. I reflect now being so hurt with her because she didn't seem to care about how I almost froze to death hanging clothes. I know now it was because she knew I was okay, and I wasn't going to freeze being but 15 feet from the house. I could see her through the window keeping an eye on me. These were chores that needed doing and there was no use in fussing over something that was going to turn out okay in the end (Dana, Parent.)

She shared that it was difficult balancing her chores and completing homework, yet her parents stressed the importance of school and how they expected her to do well. As a member of the community, teachers are seen as having authority. Students are expected to be respectful because the school is seen as having a familial connection. Because members of a school are seen as family, students have instinctively placed a level of respect on the school staff. This creates a cooperative relationship between the teacher

and student, which makes for a more comfortable experience for both the student and teacher. Dana continues to share her experiences learning responsibility.

We had to keep up with our homework and help with bringing firewood into the house in the winter. My sisters and I would help make dinner. We learned how to make tortillas as soon as we could reach the stove.

Dana remembers these experiences fondly as she described how her grandfather would walk into the forest to cut wood with an axe. She shares,

I remember hearing the axe hitting the hard tree trunk as it echoed through the canyon, and knowing that we would soon be looking for my grandpa to fetch the wood he had just cut. The winters were a lot harder because of keeping up with school, but the summers were fun. We had lots of fun in the summer. I remember packing tortillas and a jug of water to drink and going to the river a lot. We had a swimming hole where most of us learned to swim and hand fish. We would find holes between the rocks that were underwater and look for fish that might be hiding. We used rods, too, but mostly walked around in the water.

The experiences Dana shares in our conversation are easy to appreciate. She depicts relatable and familiar memories of having to cooperate with her siblings to make family meals and to contribute to the vitality of the family. To strengthen the students' skills in cooperation beyond the home experience, school curriculum should provide students with opportunities to work on projects that allow for group projects that have relevance to their lives.

The experiences she had as child and young adult are similar to those of Leo who emphasizes family as the focus of his success in the community.

Leo. Leo (pseudonym), a community member, describes his understanding of rural life. He shares his experience growing up and learning about rurality, especially in relation to family. Leo shares,

Well first of all, it's family structure. You're taught to stay tight-knit, take care of your brother, your sister, your mom and dad, you know. Just stay close, protect them the best you can, and just watch over them. Culturally, that's a main focus. If the family can stay together, then you'll see a better success rate.

Assuring a sense of family is important to rural living. Rural students learn at an early age that they can depend on family to get things done. These students not only see themselves as being cared for, by parents, grandparents, and/or other caretakers, but also see themselves as caring for others. They contribute to the needs of the family and can see themselves contributing to the needs of the school community (family). Teachers may harness this quality by offering the option for rural students to lead projects that are of interest to them or make stronger connections to the life of the rural student. Leo continues,

So when you start seeing something falter, basically, kids in rural communities are a little bit more mature than an urban kid at an early age because there's a lot more bonding. And then there's some responsibilities of maintaining the home, whether it's gathering food, or wood to heat, but it all compiles into making a family strong and an individual strong.

Leo, an active member of the community, small business owner, and parent of two young children, grew up in one of the rural communities that surrounds La Escuela Norteña and attended until his parents made the choice to transfer him to a private school

outside of the community. His family was one of the first families to make El Valle what it is today. El Valle is the pseudonym given to Leo's hometown. As Leo transitioned into high school in the nearby city school about 25 miles away, he felt he lost the support provided by teachers, staff, and friends of the rural elementary schools of La Escuela Norteña district. Like Lena and Dana, Leo has a strong sense of family and responsibility, a connection to his community. He speaks of his connection to the area as a lifelong endeavor. His family's mission, to work the land he inherited, is something he takes very seriously. I could discern that inheritance and culture are important to Leo. He emphasizes that he wanted to continue what his grandparents and those who lived before him started, working the land. Leo explains,

There are opportunities provided by the school for students to learn more deeply about agriculture, horticulture, forestry, and other related topics where students can extend their understanding of these foci through the Future Farmers of America (FFA) classes offered. There are also opportunities through the New Mexico State County Extension Office, that allow for students to attend classes on invasive plant species, land management, water usage and other similar interests. Coordination and publicity of these types of courses could benefit from having a school liaison whose responsibility would be to provide the teachers or school personnel with information about what is available. Teachers would also benefit from support in weaving projects like these into their curriculum to assure students are provided with relevant experiences within a variety of courses. In this way, students find themselves in the core curriculum –what Baxter Magolda urges as centering learning in the lives of our students.

Students who see teaching staff valuing their rural experience by making it part of the regular curriculum, reinforces the importance of the impact they have on the community. Not only do rural students learn what to do to work the land, they learn why these traditional events, such as moving cattle to forest land, diverting water on plots of land, butchering animals, and cultivating gardens, impact the long term sustainability of the community.

Leo also states that he views that this strong connection to the land is changing. He doesn't feel that "kids nowadays" have that same connection as he once felt when he was their age. He shares his effort to try to instill that sense of community and family responsibility to the land in his own children. But he realizes, like him, they have choices, and he speaks with a sense of unease about the decisions his children will make. He shares with me, "I will support them no matter what decision they make, to stay, or to leave. They can always come back." This leads me to think about how to inform students about the types of career they could pursue in their rural community. College preparation courses provided by the school need to include topics pertaining to careers available in the community and explore the degrees students need to pursue if they decide to return to the community. Having opportunities for students to hear community members' share their experiences with college, and returning, as well as those who stayed and they prepared for this, as well as what they recommend based on what they know now may provide rural students with guidance about the steps they need to take after high school.

Leo continues on to express some concerns about what he sees as the changing interests of "kids nowadays." With changes to curriculum and technology, "student's interests are changing." He has experienced that, "kids are not as interested in working

the land or even interested in protecting what is theirs by just being born in a community like El Valle.” Leo does share his optimism about how to help students in schools learn to be interested in the community.

Teachers can build lessons that are relevant to rural life in order to build the importance of who they are and where they come from. Curriculum that incorporates technology and business with their agricultural, technological, artistic interests can, for example, teach students skills to be able to work remotely if they decide to stay within the community. With teaching specific skills that support students working remotely - selling artwork online, providing technological services via the internet, telecommuting, writing a book, or blogging; students can utilize their skills living rurally and being successful at it.

I believe Leo is correct that students need to understand the political aspect of the things they do to sustain community traditions. Things like water rights, fishing, logging, and hunting have ties to political histories. Students know what they do, like using water from the waterways or grazing cattle on public lands, but students are less familiar with laws and rights that allow them to engage in and benefit from these important land based activities. Rural schools can meet learning needs of rural communities by making lessons relevant to real life experiences. Leo continues,

Well, you know, an example that I use a lot is water. Water is going to be a major, major issue. We’re seeing less and less water in the small rivers that feed into the acequias (waterways), and, with this struggle, urban people are going to finally realize how much they needed our water, and we will need to realize how much we need our water, and our young people need to stay engaged in that. They need

to know what's happening politically. How decisions about water are being made, like where it's going and why it's going. All that's going to come into play. You know, you can tie water to everything.

Javi. Students also form insights about their rural upbringing. A La Escuela Norteña senior, explains that he feels he has an advantage growing up where he did. Javi (pseudonym) shares his experience living in a small town of about 125. His grandparents raised him, so he finds himself helping out with the ranch a lot.

I grew up in a real small community. It's called La Plata, (pseudonym). Yeah it's like a secluded place out there in the mountains. Growing up I kind of had a bit of an advantage to having my own time, and studying.

Javi recognizes that time is somehow important to life. The 'time' that Javi speaks of is that opportunity that most of us do not have, a time for reflection. I observe throughout our conversation that he is a very reflective person. As I ask questions or pose ideas, I can clearly see that he ponders my words carefully before he shares his response. Teachers can both utilize and build a time for reflection in the tasks they assign to enrich students' understanding of content learned. Javi continues,

I grew up on a ranch where we raise cattle, and whenever the opportunity came up I would go out and help feed the cows, or go help brand, and tag them (cattle), and all that usual stuff. Those are like the simple responsibilities that I liked doing personally... As far as the Ranch goes, I always try to find the opportunity to go out and help with the cattle or even help irrigate the land. I also help clean out the acequias (waterways) in early spring.

The duties rural students have like raising cattle, which include ensuring cows are safe when birthing their calves, keeping predators away, making sure they have enough to eat and drink, allowing for breeding season, auctioning off what they can, and butchering what they need, are all aspects of living in rural Northern New Mexico. These responsibilities are part of everyday rural lives and have meaning to students, their families, and the community. All of these livestock related responsibilities have real life consequences when not done with care, precision, effectiveness and efficiency.

Everything students do as members of their families and community has relevance and meaning in their life. Students participate in cleaning of the acequias because they are taught at an early age that the cleanliness of the acequia affects how the water flows into the field or plot of land. If the acequia is not cleaned properly, or is polluted, the water will not flow efficiently and may affect the amount and quality of water flow. The idea of building mathematical, writing, and science curriculum around the acequia system makes school work relevant to student life. How students complete projects could include expectations for teamwork outcomes as well as having individual goals. These ideas can address what Leo had to say about the importance of water and who holds rights to the water that runs off the mountains in early spring.

Similar to the adult participants, Dana, Leo, and Lena; Javi describes some of the meaningful experiences of rural life and rural community. Even with the generational gap between the adults interviewed and the students, he describes similar obligations.

Andrés. Another example of how students experience rural living, Andrés, a La Escuela Norteña senior, recounts how he contributes to his family living rurally by comparing to his life in a large city.

Well, because I used to live with my mom in Albuquerque, I didn't really have a lot of responsibilities, just clean the house. But once I moved back with my dad, I had to help my grandpa with the acequias, like cleaning out all the acequias, letting the water flow, and if the water overflows, like on the road, we have to fix that. My grandpa has 6 acres of land, so we have to cut it for people that want to come buy the bales of hay... I think people that don't know how to work are missing out, because then life is going to come hard (responsibilities) and kids are not going to know what to do. Everyone living in a small community where you have responsibilities, like having to bale hay, and do all kinds of stuff like that, you know it's not going to be a big surprise to you when you have to work hard and you are not used to it.

As students experience rural life, they explain that they learn a lot by having responsibilities. As they described types of work they do, I wondered how this affects their school work as Dana mentioned earlier. None of the students interviewed expressed concern that responsibilities at home interfere with their school work. Students don't view the responsibilities as something extra, something on top of their schoolwork, but rather a necessity for the sustainability of the family and community. Teachers' flexibility with submissions of assignments, rethinking homework policies, and looking at current needs of the community, can be used to accommodate students in school, family, and community commitments.

Ms. Law. Teachers in this rural school support students by understanding that responsibilities at home teach self-reliance as well as important cultural and community

values, knowledge, and skills. English teacher Ms. Law (pseudonym), who lives in the community and is the owner of a small farm, explains why she loves rural schools,

Rural schools protect cultural standards and norms. For me as a Native American and having lived around northern New Mexico so much as well, you know, around a lot of these Hispanic communities, I feel like without preserving the cultural importance, these kids are lost in the world, and it's their handbook on how to be who they are. If we have these little rural schools that aren't standardizing everything and have a stronger awareness of the language and backgrounds and traditions, I think it serves the students really well, and it's hugely important. So I think that balancing, you know, preparing students in a realistic manner for any kind of future they choose, is important. But at the same time, really supporting the importance of culture and their own histories and backgrounds so that they are not homogenous Americans; which is why White people are always trying to find some way to be Hispanic or Indian or Black or something, because they've lost all their own cultural importance, and I don't want that for my students.

In speaking with Ms. Law, she asserts that students who live and work in their community learn responsibility. They gain a strong sense of who they are and how they are connected to the land they work. "Students living in a rural community learn that they matter. They learn service, having to take care of older people. I think it teaches them that they have to be of service in some way, and I think that's really important." She stresses the importance of having responsibility. The students learn by cleaning the acequias, splitting wood. "They're so lucky to have that." Her comment made me think of the

student Andrés' interview, how he expressed that learning to work hard would prepare him so that he is ready for whatever came next. Students learn who they are by knowing their roles as part of a family and a community.

Ms. Ava. Another teacher tells of her experience living rurally and teaching rural students in her class. Ms. Ava (pseudonym), a middle school math teacher shares her experience growing up in a rural community, communicating some of the hardships of living rural and yet also finding the strengths in this hardship.

I was able to gain a sense of community growing up in a rural community, but I remember some hardships as well. Well, maybe the hardships forced us to depend on one another. I remember having to travel if we wanted to go shopping. We were kind of isolated from the rest of the world.

Ms. Ava spoke about having to ask for rides to and from practice or games she attended as a young child and teen. "Students here have to travel and depend on one another if they want to join clubs like 4H, Girl Scouts, and things like that. Parents really have to be able to have the means to support their kids in extracurricular activities."

A Glimpse into the Life of a Rural School and Community

In speaking with people around the school, it was clear that community members know one another and each-other's kids. This supports Dana's reasoning for moving her children to La Escuela Norteña. Students addressed teachers and other adults as Ms., mam, or sir. On the days I visited the school, I spent a lot of time with the administrative assistant, Lynda (pseudonym), waiting for students to come by to be interviewed. Lynda is situated in the school library. The library houses the principal and counselor offices. There is some teacher work space located in a room off to the side of the main room.

Lynda explains to me that there is no librarian on staff, and therefore the school library has become the front office of both middle and high schools.

Rural schools are the hub of rural communities, it is clear that the interaction the students and staff had with Lynda that morning was something they established over many years of seeing one another. These interactions are important to both the student, in establishing that sense of family; and the adult, in order to build a relationship with the student. They find this time as a way to catch up on the goings on of the week, day, or morning.

As students and adults come into the library, Lynda tends to their needs addressing each person by name and situation. Lynda asks things like, “Are you feeling better? I know you went home early yesterday,” or “How did your grandma’s doctor’s appointment go?” or “Why aren’t you in class? You should be in class.” She seems to know each student and adult personally. “Most of these kids’ parents, I knew them since they were in elementary. I’ve been here a long time almost thirty years (Lynda, Support Staff).”

The idea of students and staff catching up in the school library speaks to infrastructure challenges many rural schools face. A rural school with small numbers in attendance may not be able to justify hiring a full time librarian or office assistant. How Lynda serves as an office assistant and library support is one of many ways rural schools counteract staff shortages. These shortages are not only apparent with staff, but with teachers and principals as well.

I was invited into a staff meeting and the classroom to talk about my project. Just like Ms. Ava when she moved into her new community of el Valle, I was invited in and

shown around the school. There were some people I knew, and I'd stop to talk to them as I moved from the middle to the high school and back. I ran into a teacher I knew as a student of la Escuela Norteña. She was surprised to see me as I hadn't been back since graduating over 20 years ago. She readily asked about family, work, classmates, and other topics that allowed us to quickly catch up. There were new staff members at the school I didn't know, but there were teachers still employed there that I recognized and were my teachers as a student there. There is clearly a sense of community as I move around the school and say hello to teachers, students, and staff I am familiar with and who recognize me.

Students share in their interviews as being active in the church, Javi shares "I do participate in my church a lot. I am Catholic so I have always been somewhat active with my parish (Javi, interview)." Students' participation in the church allows community members that do not have children in the schools access to the community youth. This gives members of the community the opportunity to continue to interact with the youth.

Ms. Ava recalls how she first experienced the community of El Valle. Upon arriving in the community, she searched for housing and found a rental with some longtime residents of El Valle. Ms. Ava was to be a new teacher in one of the elementary schools in the district. She had never been to this part of the state, although coming from a rural community in southern New Mexico, she wanted to try something different. She met with her new landlord and shares with me her experience. "They really took me in. The first morning, they invited me over to breakfast because they knew I was new, and you know they really took me in and introduced me around the community. I got to know

their family.” Ms. Ava’s experience allows her to feel connected to the community. This sentiment of helping others is echoed in the responses by parents and students.

As Ms. Ava describes her experience, I can’t help but think about how rural youth observe these interactions with parents, grandparents, or neighbors and later on exemplify these behaviors in their exchanges with one another and adults in the school setting. With increased opportunities to interact with one another, they become secure in how they share, lead, listen, and participate in the classroom. Some ideas have been developed from the qualities of small schools for larger ones, but there are also lessons from rural and extended family cultures and schools that would be helpful to larger schools.

Andrés, a high school senior who transferred from one of the largest school districts in New Mexico, explains his experience moving to El Valle where emphasis is placed on family. “In this school, losing a friend is like losing a family member.”

The lessons students learn from observing, making decisions, and working within their community contribute to how they exhibit respect, trust, and shared ideals that create familial bonds. Relationships between student and school personnel are reinforced by the experiences students have in the community. The lessons they learn at home transfer to positive interactions between student and school personnel. These lessons are likely as well to transfer to students’ individual professional and future lives as they did with Dana, Lena, and Leo.

Understanding Rural Schooling through Local Perspectives

The implementation of formalized education changed how people maintained their connection to their community. People living outside larger cities maintained their livelihood based on their community needs. People are searching to fulfill global needs,

therefore depleting the human resource rural communities need to survive (Schaft, 2016). Interactions I had with Mr. Avila directly speak to how education in rural schools shifted from a more community needs based to a more standards and test achievement based education.

Mr. Avila. Mr. Avila a former student, teacher, principal, and superintendent of La Escuela Norteña interprets the evolution of education in this rural, northern New Mexico community. Mr. Avila is an example of one who decided to stay and serve the community, attending community events, going to church, and supporting youth as they move through school. As he shares in my interview, he chose to pursue a college degree via the military. A decision to join the military as a way to pay for schooling is a decision many rural students are faced with (Karr & Kafelas, 2009). Mr. Avila comes from a large family that has lived in El Valle, like Leo's family, since El Valle was established. He chose to return to El Valle to raise his family along with all but one of his siblings. He chose a career where was able to continue to work on the ranch. He started out at a teacher, worked and educated his path to becoming a principal, and after a successful career, continued to work as a superintendent in various rural districts. Mr. Avila currently holds a position as a high school principal in a nearby community. He shares,

Well, the whole concept of rural education was never an issue because education was in the rural areas, you know, as far as back as I can remember. Matter of fact, education was brought to all the communities. Now you have to go to education this day and age. Every school, every community in northern New Mexico in the area where we live, or I live, in Rio Arriba County, all had an elementary school,

and there was an abundance of kids. I mean they were small, they were rural, but you didn't have any drop-outs.

Adults who support the education of the rural youth work to assure student success.

Students learned enough to fulfil the requirements of high school graduation. The community now has educated youth that could support the growth and prosperity of the community. The steps students take after high school affect the success of the community. Students can choose to stay and find work, attend the neighboring college, or leave to pursue work or an education outside the community. The success of a high school graduation has long term effects on a rural community. Mr. Avila continues,

Yes, they were poor, but they were rich in culture and traditions, and they upheld the old rules of education at the time, and that's where rural communities, rural communities then mind you, is that they excelled bringing up their kids with the type of education that they provided for their students, at the time, for the type of jobs that there were.

As a school administrator, Mr. Avila identifies culture and traditions as important in the education of rural youth. Culture and traditions could be celebrated in the schools to value those things that students bring with them from home. He continues,

Mind you, even though there were some very exclusive jobs, high-paying jobs, they still provided the basics for them to further their education and the opportunity. So rural education, even though it sounded rural, it brought the education to the communities and that's why communities thrived. If you look at the whole, anytime that a parent or a family is looking to move, they are wanting to know what their schools are like, and of course what job opportunities are

there, and what type of religion or church they have. Those three basic things. So, but the key is, what kind of schools do they have in place? Well, if you don't have a school, they're not going to move there anyway. So they have to move elsewhere to make it more affordable, to make it possible, because obviously most working parents are dual working household and so, consequently, they need to have a place where they can have access to a school nearby.

There are efforts to prepare students to pursue lives outside the rural community, but there is an underlying hope that they stay. Teachers spoke about students pursuing desires outside the community, and providing them with as many opportunities as possible, but having a sense of wanting them to stay as well. Supporting the youth to venture out of the community would allow students to acquire new skills and knowledge.

Mr. Avila continues in his description,

And so that changes the whole rural education. There isn't rural education anymore, not like we experienced it. It has changed to where many small schools are consolidated into larger schools grouping smaller communities together.

Experiences youth have now in rural consolidated schools explained, by Mr. Avila, are different from when there were schools in each small community. "Consolidation of the smaller schools located in small communities were consolidated in the early 70s." Schools were accountable to the community they served. With consolidation, schools are now being held accountable by multiple communities, which brings about some challenges. Different communities can hold different values and expectations of the school, but communities can also come together to work and create common goals and expectations.

When students decide to leave the community in search of a college education, rural communities no longer have the population to maintain the funding necessary to offer competitive courses, extracurricular activities, or electives deemed essential to the success of a well-rounded student. The decline in population impacts the community negatively as well. With dwindling budgets, school administrators are forced to think creatively about their focus and expectations; rethinking education that expands beyond the classroom to include organizations that have the capacity to support a more experiential learning. This can allow the community to reinvest and support the rural school.

One of my first student interviews was with Mia (pseudonym), a high school senior. Mia comes from a long line of educators in the community. Her great-grandmother was one of the first teachers to hold an official teaching position in the area. Mia's grandfather was a director of preschool programs until he retired. Her grandmother was an educational assistant in the district and her mother a graduate of La Escuela Norteña. Because of her parents' employment outside the rural community, Mia was given the option to attend a city school closer to her mom's work but chose to attend La Escuela Norteña. Mia openly shares her experiences with schooling, her beliefs about success, and her plans after high school. "When my Nana was here, I really wanted to stay in school because she was here. My mom graduated from here."

Mia's story is like so many living in this rural community. Students who attend the school have office staff, support staff, maintenance workers, as relatives. The focus of the school can now be determined by people who experienced rural schooling and experienced what life was like after high school. School board members can make

decisions based on how to best support students who are moving through in much of the same ways they did, with the same cultural beliefs and experiences. Mia continues, Mia's story is like so many living in this rural community. Students who attend the school have office staff, support staff, maintenance workers, as relatives. The focus of the school can now be determined by people who experienced rural schooling and experienced what life was like after high school. School board members can make decisions based on how to best support students who are moving through in much of the same ways they did, with the same cultural beliefs and experiences. Mia continues,

I was already close with a bunch of the kids, and I was used to this kind of environment. I didn't want that change from a small school to such a big school. Everyone expects if you come from a small school you can't really go out and do bigger things, like you would in a bigger school. But coming here, I think I was able to create the foundation that I needed to do something outside of here. So it's helped, I don't know how to explain it, it's helped me kind of show that even people from a small school can go out and do bigger things.

Mia doesn't see a difference in the quality of the education between her rural school and that of a city school. She is confident that the education she has received will allow her to be successful. Mr. Peña (pseudonym) identifies with her same belief, that students from rural schools can be successful as they enter college.

Mr. Pena. Mr. Peña, a president of a local college, recognizes determination like Mia's to prove that rural students can be as successful as students entering college from urban and/or suburban districts. He expresses this sentiment when discussing his experiences with students who enter the college he represents.

I've seen students from Mesa Vista and from Espanola Valley High School who have come through here and have gone on to get PhD's, and who are engineers at the Los Alamos Labs. All of us have some limited intellectual capacity. I get it. But I think that when society arbitrarily makes the judgment because of some background, or some history, then we're doing ourselves a disservice. So let's push the boundaries and allow students to decide for themselves what they want to do, what they can do, what they can't do, and let's challenge them to try to get to the limit, because often times they'll get past what they thought they could do. Their families are here. They are from here. Sometimes they want to go out and be adventurous, and want to go to Albuquerque for a couple of years, but generally speaking, they want to stay. If they had a good solid, quality, high-paying job, they would stay here... I have seen students here who are unbelievably talented, and who come from broken homes, and who suffer from poverty, and who have several family members who are victims of substance-abuse, and all of these unbelievable social and economic traumas that they have endured. And yet, they are, they are capable of unbelievable accomplishments. They just need to know that.

Most of the students who attend this college come from rural communities much like La Escuela Norteña. The students the college serves come with much of the same experiences of the students in this study. It is clear Mr. Peña wants to give students who attend college an excellent experience. From our conversation, it is evident that he wants what is best for the community. One way to improve the lives of the students is through education.

If rural students can successfully maneuver their way through high school and be successful at it, they can use those skills as well as skills they learn through extended family and rural life to get through college. This may also mean students who are successful do not make it back to their rural lives. By continuing their education students acquire skills and knowledge that they can use somewhere within or beyond their rural community. The way to draw students back to the rural community is to ensure there are high quality jobs for them to have when they return. This leads to the economic sustainability of the rural community and is enhanced by creating school community partnerships -- things like service learning, and building collaborations with local businesses through internships and apprenticeships. This ties academic learning and ties it to real life experiences.

Rural School and Achievement

Students from La Escuela Norteña think about their success in their rural school as positive yet worry about some areas of their ability and academic preparation. Students and teachers reflect on the experiences students have, like learning the content, building relationships, interacting with peers and adults, playing sports, and joining clubs as positive experiences necessary to contribute to the student's understanding of who they are and where they come from. Having a strong sense of self contributes to student success. With rural experiences and responsibilities, students have a role in family and community and an enhanced sense of social well-being. As students reflect on their academic self, their focus is on areas they believe they will struggle. Andrés explains,

I think I'm going to be struggling in math and science... I just know that I don't think that I am ready for, like, the college experience yet. I think I'm going to be struggling with college.

Andres and I later talk about his experience with lack of stability with consistent math teachers, and biology lessons have been taught by an environmental science teacher, not a biology teacher. Math and science are two subjects difficult to staff in rural settings. Minimal professional resources mean that teachers often find themselves teaching subjects they are not qualified to teach which can mean a learning deficiency among students. Because students are not returning, even fewer choosing education as a career, teachers who take positions in la Escuela Norteña often do not stay long. The difficulty rural schools have in filling teaching positions, there is a clear need to grow teachers from rural areas. There is a need to develop education clubs, education classes, and teaching paths with the neighboring college for students wanting to stay close to home. This contemplation made by Andrés was shared by other classmates as well.

Mari. Mari (pseudonym) expresses some insights about her math preparation. She shares some uncertainty about knowing enough mathematics to be successful in college.

Throughout high school, we had different teachers with different ways of teaching. Like in math class, we never really had the same math teacher for longer than two years really. All the different ways of teaching math confuses me. I'm not good at math. I kind of feel like it's because we never had a steady flow of one teacher with the same ideas, or teaching us the same way and stuff. It just seems like we're going everywhere, trying to learn different things, and it's confusing. I never really learned how to divide

like a lot of the kids in my class. We need calculators or it takes us an extremely long time. So, I guess math at the school hasn't always been great. Math really hasn't been a focus of the school.

Just looking at something such as the need for calculators, either because students need assistance in solving simple calculations or because there is a lack of materials, affect the success of how students work through mathematical tasks.

Mari's realization is echoed in a response by Mr. Romero, the high school science teacher. In his response, you could see his ideas about making the experiences for students more beneficial to their success as they transition into college. Mr. Romero reveals his feelings about the curriculum.

I think that, not just our school, you know specifically La Escuela Norsteña, but I don't think that there is a real direct alignment between a high school curriculum and a college curriculum that's making these guys successful when they get to college.

Teachers and college personnel both want students to succeed, as apparent in their interviews. Because both institutions are looking out for the success of the student, it makes sense that the two institutions come together to plan out and make decisions that would best benefit the student. Mr. Romero continues,

The requirements that they set out, you know, it's changed. It was the credits, okay. Now it's the credits, it's the assessments like the PARCC, and all that other stuff, and it's the dual credit. So a lot of what's being taught in the schools, and I know this probably sounds bad, is that teachers are now teaching more to that test because you got your evaluations and all that stuff,

and they're tied to that. Right now then, passing that test is not so much preparing them for when they get to school. So even though they've met the requirement, I don't know that they're academically strong enough to succeed in college.

With a change in educational policy, focus on test scores and achievement levels of acquired standards become the context of academics. Staff are less likely to teach topics or ideas outside of the standards. Teacher evaluations, which are based largely on student performance on PARCC assessments, result in more time spent on the standards and less on place based education. With a focus on accountability based on test scores, curriculum takes focus away from economic success, social well-being, and community sustainability. In rural schools with less teachers, curricular options, and resources, student learning and preparation is likely to be even more affected by dynamics of a focus on standardized assessments. Mr. Romero continues to share,

So a lot of them give up. They get there, you know, it can be a little frustrating if you get out of high school and you went to the college setting, and you find that you're not academically prepared, and you really have to buckle down and try to do the work. It takes an individual that is really strong-willed to be successful.

Both teachers and students seem to know something about the education of the student, because they reflect on how unprepared students feel as they make decisions to go to college or join the workforce. If these are the experiences teachers and students are reporting, a stronger connection between the rural school

and college need to be made. Collaboration between school staff and college entrance programs can be developed to better prepare students for the academic aspect of their future experiences. Colleges that serve the communities in northern New Mexico are primarily Hispanic serving institutions. With this knowledge and research about minority students, the college must adjust to meet the needs of the students they serve. Bridge programs that provide support to students in the areas of math and science before they enter as college freshman could benefit their readiness.

Participant sentiments are not far from New Mexico Public School Reporting results. Data collected about the school via School District Report Card from 2015-2016 to 2017-2018 show that many of the district schools are failing when it comes to achievement [see pp. 49].

There is similar thinking about the preparation of students reflected in the School District Report Card for 2015-2016 school year, the district received a D. The report indicates the grade, “is determined by the average of school grades in the district (2015-2016 NMPED School Report).” La Escuela Norteña received a B, whereas one elementary and the middle school both received F grades. The other elementary school in the same district received a D grade. The school grade is part of the state and federal law that mandates accountability for all public schools. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) enacted in 1965 requires schools to show annual improvement in mathematics and reading. New Mexico statute specifies additional requirements that schools demonstrate progress through an A-F letter grade for each school (NMPED School District Report Card 2015-2016).

Information about school grades are shared with parents and community through a link provided on the school website.

Table 3.
Academic Performance for La Escuela Norteña Math and Reading 2015-2018

<u>Academic Performance in Reading and Math Grades 9-12 2015-2018</u>			
	School Year 2015-2016	School Year 2016-2017	School Year 2017-2018
Reading Proficiency	24%	36%	29%
Math Proficiency	9%	11%	≤5%

The table indicates that, of the students testing in grades 9-12, less than half of the students are proficient in either math or reading. This reflects the concern students have about deficits in their ability to achieve in math. None of the students talked about reading or literacy, but Ms. Law, the English teacher, did share that the school had limited resources for students in the area of literature.

Students learn much from contributing to the family and community at large, how much does the learning they gain transfer to their academic success? How might the school build lessons and make school work relevant to the lives students lead? Leo, a community member, emphasizes the importance of involving youth in necessary requirements for a thriving community. He mentions involving youth in understanding how water is distributed, by allowing them to attend water association meetings for credit. Writing, math, and science standards can be woven into projects around water. Students can research water rights, work with the Army Corps of Engineers to measure how much water is flowing in the streams that contribute to the watering rights they use. Teachers can propose projects about

water conservation that include writing projects interwoven with science concepts or follow water legislation or other policies through public processes.

In various discussions with teachers, they recognize the importance of family and community, but not one teacher discussed how to include relevance of the work they were assigning, in class or as homework, to the lives of the students. A more real life connection to standards would benefit students understanding of standards.

Conclusion

In this section, I synthesize the findings reported through observations, interviews, school reports, and field notes and draw implications that inform the content of Chapter 5. The interviews, spontaneous observations, and notes taken in this study represent but a small portion of complex and evolving aspects of expectations stakeholders hold of their rural school. This is a start to begin to inform policy makers of the rich experiences students bring into the classroom and how these point to curricular, community based, and land based learning could be developed in rural schools.

My analysis of interviews reported in this chapter represents observations, interviews, and descriptions of ways participants describe their experiences living rurally and how the knowledge is utilized or could be developed to enrich the education of students. Students share rich experiences and responsibilities they have within the community. Community members identify ways in which schools can support the work that is needed to sustain the economic development and

sustainability of the community. Parents identify why they decided to raise their families in the rural community.

This chapter demonstrates a rich description and some comparisons of the observations and interviews across rural communities that support the school. Themes which emerged include the massive responsibilities rural students have in support of their families well-being; the disconnect between curriculum taught in school with rural life, and the knowledge students hold about real life situations that affect them in their communities; the sense of family and familial support as reason why people decide to return and raise a family in the rural community they know.

The research is important because there are long term effects of the decisions rural youth make as they decide to stay or leave a rural community to pursue college or work outside the rural community. Community members and parents seem to understand the importance of youth in their role as members of the community. As students consider whether to leave the rural community, they can be given options to stay as well. They can live successful, fulfilling lives within the community should they decide to stay. School community relationships can be enhanced to ensure the sustainability of the community. There are many implications for future success of this community as students make decisions to stay or leave; rural youth solidify the continued prospering ability of a rural community if they find ways to balance their ideas of success, what they learn, and opportunities they are given.

CHAPTER 5 - RESULTS

Themes Within and Across Rural Stakeholders

Values Learned and Reinforced in Rural Life and Schooling

Analysis of the data suggests that all four stakeholder groups value, teach, and find satisfaction in the hard work necessary to a flourishing rural life. When describing work that was required of them at home, students share, “Work taught me to be strong [not physically]. I learned to stay on the acequias for over eight hours in the sun cleaning them out and making sure the water flowed smoothly.” According to the teachers I spoke with, the work (labor) students performed outside of school was a necessity to live rurally. One teacher shared,

The work the students have on the ranch instills a strong work ethic because its hard work, but I still expect students to be in school. I understand they have responsibilities outside of school, but they are still expected to be committed to my class.

Students feel the work they contribute to the family is part of what needs to get done and not necessarily “work”, but rather a way they contribute to the family unit. Students reported helping grandparents with everyday tasks like tending to the livestock or gardening. “I helped my grandpa in the orchard get the apples, because he would sell them.” Students showed great pride in having the ability to help their family, their grandparents especially. Parents depended on the work their children contributed to their daily lives, “That’s how things get done. They [children] need to work so that the cows get fed or the acequias get dug. It’s an expectation, because they are part of this family.” Respondents were clear in the roles students took on in the family and community unit.

Responsibility for self, extended family, land, and animals.

Data analysis also suggests strongly that responsibility is one of the most permeating themes among and across participants, yet this also looks somewhat different across stakeholder groups and holds nuance even within stakeholder groups.

Students differentiate the satisfaction of some rural responsibilities for a family, animals, water, and land with more mundane and not as satisfying aspects of chores (cleaning my room). Teachers I interviewed share, “Students who tend to want to stay or come back to the community it’s because they have land. Students feel tied to the land and want to continue to work it.” Student’s share they have a connection to the land, “I want to live here. It means more because my grandparents lived here. Their parents lived here. My grandpa has property here, so that means that we are holding it down for them even though they’ve passed.” Parents interviewed felt that the children were a necessity to assure the security of livelihood. “Families count on each other and these values carry on to the children... We care for the elderly relatives and neighbors, care for younger siblings, and the animals.”

Educational surveys analyzed for this study suggest that parents and families are satisfied with school reinforcement of responsibilities and how this matters to success in life for their children. This sense of satisfaction among parents and families is strong even though academic performance of their children is not as high as it could be.

According to the New Mexico Public Education school grade website (2017, March, 16), 92% of parents who were surveyed agreed that the school is a “good place to attend and learn”, even though the “improvement of the higher performing students in reading is .52 and in math 0.47. School report cards also show that the “Improvement of the lowest

performing students is -0.15 in reading and 1.01 in math. For a school of this size only 81% of the students entering high school their freshman year are graduating in four years. This reflects the facts reported on NMPED student performance details, only 29% of high school student's grades 9-12 are reading at grade level and less than 5% are at level in math. This somewhat troubling finding suggests that parents may feel satisfied with schooling because of the reinforcement of responsibility, perhaps not understanding or relating too much of the academic learning, even with low student scores in key subject area rates. Educator data suggests someplace in between. Students recognize some areas of concern if they plan on going to college. "I know we lack a lot of things like AP (advanced placement) classes, but we have the basics. Those will help us get to where we need to be." Students shared their concern over their own learning, but did not mention school report card or overall school performance as a reflection of their own learning.

Teachers share some concern about the low scores, and offer up that school leaders need to step up and make decisions based on student needs. "There needs to be a focus. Administration is too busy on the politics of who's in and who's out. There is no real focus on kids and the test scores show it." During interviews with teachers, they were careful to share they had their own ideas as to why the school was not performing well, despite having a B grade on the school report card. Teachers discussed that they were careful not to share with parents for fear of school board members misunderstanding their concerns. They share some of the initiatives they are trying to improve achievement on their own, but felt they needed support beyond their capabilities. Funding is tight, resources are meek; asking for money for projects beyond the curriculum, they felt was a touchy situation with everyone on campus. There has been much local publicity about the

school board in the local newspaper. Stories of retaliation of board members speaking out against the actions of other board members were published in the local newspaper and this did not paint the district in a positive light. Only two students mentioned what was going on with the board. They felt the infighting didn't affect them, but felt it affected the teachers. They didn't elaborate and I didn't press them for details.

Stakeholders clearly have concern about academic success for the students of La Escuela Norteña, it did not seem that anyone had a plan or solution to improve overall math and reading achievement.

Culture – of Rural Life, ethnic cultures, extended family culture, school culture of care and connection

Students spoke about their lives and their interactions with parents and grandparents and the community, and from listening to them they see themselves as a huge part of the community culture. All but two students share a desire to move back to the community at some point after going to college. The two students who shared their plans of not moving back home had lived elsewhere before moving into the community. A strong connection to experiences as children growing up in their community permeated interviews with students as well as with parents. Parents and teachers share that in order for their communities to thrive, students need to see themselves as part of it, and these students do. Teachers shared their concern over having thriving communities. The English teacher, and other teachers at the school, try to tie personal experiences, personal history to learning standards.

I got a bunch of material from the state historian about the community land grant, and I had students go home and talk to their parents and grandparents about who they are and where they came from... I find that incredibly important.

Teachers felt that students needed to know who they were as part of referring to their Mestizo ancestors. Parents and teachers share the same sentiment of students, need to know that their backgrounds and experiences are unique and special. The school sits on Comanche grazing land and these lands were granted to their great-great grandparents. Discussions about ancestral lands and inheritance is working because students do see themselves coming back to live in the community. Students share their experiences; students had same of the same sentiments about family and extended family,

... we do lots of stuff with family. We get together for reunions. Everyone comes and we make lots of food and go fishing and horseback riding. We have family from all over come and camp on my grandpa's land.

Parents and community members share as well how families they haven't seen come together every summer. "Our family comes from Colorado and other parts of New Mexico to spend time here. We get to meet new primos (cousins) every year. I am glad we have the land to do that." Parents also shared ideas about how culture is being lost in the schools. Parents I interviewed shared, "I remember when culture was a huge thing here. Now I think a lot is being lost. We don't do as much with culture in the schools anymore."

Knowing where you come from is important to the people living in the community. As I spoke to teachers, students, parents and community members, it was clear there was a sense of pride in working the land, and they want to continue the work.

They also want to share with others in the community and their extended family. The school community takes part in understanding who the families are, and where they came from by creating curriculum to help students continue conversations with parents and grandparents. But there was no written curriculum that assured this was part of the students' educational experience. It was more a teacher project based on their own ideas of what they felt was important.

Learning Disconnections and Possibilities between Rural Life and Academics

There are various opportunities to recognize the life of a rural students. There are opportunities for school administrators and community stakeholders to connect life of the students to academic learning

Deep life learning disconnected from academic life

Student participants held a deep sense of responsibility to assure the success of family farms, but failed to see the relevance between that work and the work they were being expected to do in school. Students I spoke with, referenced hiking trips they took to the river for science class. They also mentioned gaining access to the river in neighboring communities for things they were studying in science class. They mentioned going to the mineral springs. The mineral springs are privately owned natural hot springs located near the school. Permission from the manager was needed to gather data for their science class. Students didn't elaborate on the objectives of the lesson being taught, but were happy to see that teachers were trying to get them to experience different things in the community.

For science class we would go down to the river. We could walk, because it wasn't that far. We also went to Cañon; we went to the White bridge to collect water there too. We also went to the springs.

Students seemed content to be off campus collecting water samples and it was still considered learning. A community member shared that what students are learning in school should be more connected to the communities in which they live.

Water is a huge issue in New Mexico, students should be learning about water and water rights. They need to know who owns the rights to the water. I think they would be surprised to know that we do not own the water that flows in these rivers.

Although students are getting opportunities to be out in the community it was clear that students are not experiencing academic knowledge connections to what they do in their everyday lives. All of the school professional, students and staff interviewed spoke about the Future Farmers of America (FFA) club and the opportunities it provides to students, but failed to see the relevance to academic learning. They spoke highly about the opportunities students get when they participate in FFA, but it's seen as something extra or something outside of academic learning, just like the experiences students have outside of school.

Community members realize rural life has been seen as a "hard life." I think growing up all grandparents and parents (say) "Try not to be like us,' you know, because they worked awfully hard. But they didn't realize that we've seen a good way of life, and if we took that role, deep down inside they were real happy." Students recognize the "hard work" in their interviews, but did not refer to the responsibilities they held in the

home as a being part of a hard life. Work described by both students and community members were tasks that allowed the family to thrive.

This small sampling of students were clearly involved in clubs, sports, and high achievement, as well as being a part of a thriving home life. Their participation in activities like FFA, sports, academic clubs, and other activities outside of the school curriculum, did not translate to high academic achievement on the standardized test. A connection between the activities students participate outside of what is seen as the regular curriculum, tasks or responsibilities they have at home and academic learning was not clearly defined. Stakeholders see the importance of hard work and how it contributes to a “good life” and would also benefit from encouragement to see connections between hard work and academics.

Possibilities of Rural Life and School Learning

Students find themselves managing both academic learning and rural living with much composition. Ideas that foster successful navigation of both lives would benefit these students. Struggling with academics, does not mean they see themselves as failing, rather they use their acquisition of perseverance and hard work to get them through.

Situating School Learning in the Lives of Rural Students

Interviews with community members and parents indicate an interest in connecting the needs of the community to academic learning. With students leaving their communities for college and not returning, community members recognize the dwindling families left to carry on traditions that were once three to four generations strong. A community member and former employee of the school shares in his interview, “The only people left carrying on the traditions are the ones that maybe tried to leave and came

back and found work at the springs or the school, or those who never tried to leave. There is nothing here.” With that sentiment in mind, I asked students and school professionals about responsibilities students have at home and in school life. Students and school staff both describe responsibility as something they learned at school and at home. When I asked the question, what are some things you learned at home that are supported here at school? Responsibility was one of the top responses. Especially from students,

Responsibility, definitely. At home I’m always taking care of my brother. My mom works a lot, so I have to care for myself, or get anything, any chores that she needs to get done, which she teaches me responsibility, because if I don't do it then I get in trouble. Same thing at school, if I don't do a homework assignment, I get a failing grade or something. So it's just teaches responsibility.

Teachers shared the same ideas,

It's difficult to live in a rural community. Like I was telling you, we don't have a whole lot of resources here. So if you don't become responsible, and you don't develop that work ethic, your chances for success in a rural community, I think, have become very limited.

Students shared of their struggle to grasp the content, especially in math, but much of the focus was on qualities a student should learn, like responsibility. Teachers did share their thinking about the school report card and how the achievement data displayed on the report card did not reflect the students’ capabilities. Although students shared their frustration in having gaps in content, none of them shared or were concerned with the school report card, where it shows <5% were proficient in math. This does raise questions about the role of the school. If the teachers’ concerns were more about the type

of student you need to be (responsible) where do addressing the academic needs of the students come in? Some teachers had after school tutoring for English language arts, but it was on a needs basis, nothing regular, and there was nothing mentioned about math. The inconsistency of not having a math teacher may have something to do with not having math tutoring or lack of support outside of class. This finding is based on the fact that there has not been a regular math teacher for the last five years. “When Ms. Jones passed away from complications of cancer, we haven’t had someone regular. It’s hard because they expect something different every time we get someone new.” It’s important to note that in this rural school one teacher (math) can be a whole department. So when a math teacher leaves, the whole district suffers. Parents did not raise issues with lack of teachers. They realized their children might be missing some important facts, but felt that they could “catch up” as they took remedial math classes in college. “I know my boy, when he went to UNM, he had to be in beginning math. He worked extra hard at it and is now going to be an engineer.”

How does the school prepare student’s to be ready for college if they decide that is what they want to do? Students work so hard both in school and on the family ranch to assure its success with no real recognition that this too can be tied to standards and is academic learning. Situating learning in the environment students are expected to maneuver would benefit the academic success of the student. Comprehensive curriculum to support the connections between science and math students do at home to science and math students are expected to learn in school would allow students to see the importance of their lives in school.

Shared dedication to education

From listening to rural stakeholders, it is apparent that students in this study want and hope to succeed in school and out of school. During much of their upbringing they learn to care for animals, dig ditches, and help their grandparents with everyday responsibilities, with much success. They have felt success in their home lives, and from the way they describe their involvement and relationships in school they felt successful in school as well. Students join clubs and sports,

To be independent and self-motivated, and I guess just those kind of character traits are what kind of messages we want to kind of get across. Because whether you're going to be studying to get your PhD, or whether you're working with your hands somewhere, you know, you still need to be responsible. You still need to have a work ethic.

Ideas about working hard and succeeding at what you do is more than getting a grade on an assignment, they have much deeper implications for the success of the family and community. Students share ideas of pursuing a college degree, and they also speak of returning to contribute to their family.

Conclusion

Stakeholders of La Escuela Norteña have ideas about the education of their children and the success of their community. They describe ways in which students understand their goals and work towards reaching them. Students join clubs and excel at sports in the hopes of building a good work ethic and a continued sense of responsibility. Stakeholders share ideas of how to best assure readiness for students to enter the workforce or college, and they want to assure that by recognizing that students are learning to be responsible and helping them build a good work ethic.

CHAPTER 6**RECOMMENDATIONS**

In this final chapter, I provide a synopsis and discussion of rural schooling in northern New Mexico. I summarize and make meaning of research findings from my study, including understandings helpful to developing rural education toward more effectively serving the needs of rural communities, schools, and students. My goal in interviewing rural students, parents, community members, teachers, and administrators was to understand the expectations they hold of their rural school. I examined how people who participate in the preparation of rural students to succeed beyond high school talk about how they see themselves in the process. The study and analysis of community expectations remains a difficult and elusive endeavor and may be a bit more complex than the approach in this study can offer, yet it's a start to understanding the needs of rural people and what that might mean for developing rural education.

My personal and professional interest in conducting this research was to gain an understanding of the underlying forces rural communities encounter as they try to sustain viable, rich, cultural, opportunity rich options for students and people who choose to remain in the community, and for those who choose to return. Through understanding phenomenon of rural schooling, rural communities, and rural living, it is my hope to share my findings with educational communities and use the information in my leadership to support the communities I serve.

Addressing the Research Questions

In this section, I address each of the research questions and sub questions I posed in chapter 1, summarizing findings related to each. The data gathered in this study clearly identify areas of strength and areas for improvement when supporting rural youth and their success as they transition to life out of high school. The research questions and sub questions include the following,

Research Question: How are school and community expectations described in a small rural school in northern New Mexico?

In gathering the data needed to answer this main question I came to understand what participants hold dear to them in their rural life, livelihood, schooling, and hopes for their future. Students shared understandings of their role in the family and larger community. They shared things they struggle with as far as more formal education in school. They also shared their understanding of what they know and don't know. They know much about maintaining a farm, caring for the land, the use of water, and are somewhat successful in some academic subjects. It is clear students struggle with math and are unsure about their success in understanding science content. They are not clear about whether they wish to stay, leave or leave and eventually return, yet they deserve the option to return to a viable, economically sound community full of opportunities for them. Parents and community members also have an idea of what skills students should have and how the school should acknowledge and address those ideas. Community members and parents value rural living and want their youth to value it as well. For the sake of students, family, and community the school should include curriculum that values

rural life, supports, and sustains living. Curriculum should reflect real life situations that affect the lives of the student and members of this rural community. It is clear from this study that there are differences between what rural community members expect of their school and what formal education is providing for rural youth. My research was also guided by five sub questions that framed this study:

Members of the community and parents were clear they needed the rural school to support rural values, culture, and norms. These ideologies were described as what make students strong, independent thinkers. Participants describe the need to provide students' knowledge and skills they need to be successful whether students decide to stay in the community or leave. Principals' and teachers' focus was on academic achievement and school grades, although they did recognize strengths students brought with them.

Students are clear about their responsibilities related to their familial and community needs. They perform tasks for the good of the community. Alternatively, when performing academic tasks, students in this study often falter or experience lower confidence in the areas of math and science because of a common lack of teacher retention in these subjects. From skills students acquire at young ages by working to contribute to family and support community; teachers share that students learn respect and responsibility. These attributes contribute to student success in the classroom.

Education of rural youth is separated into two parts, experiential learning or education and academic learning. Experiential learning is learning that students gain from being part of the rural community. They learn to care and love the land,

observe natural phenomenon like water flow, usage, and conservation; and animal behaviors, mainly cattle care. Parents and community members are expected to teach youth these real life experiences, and academic learning, like standards and testing, is left to the teachers. Not to say that parents don't support this, they do. Parents assure students respect expectations of teachers and assure their children do work they are assigned.

It is clear from many of the interviews that respect is a characteristic all stakeholders can agree is valued both in the school setting and in the community. It is also clear that respect is an attribute students have learned. Contributing to the needs of the family and the community by tending to cattle, caring for elders, preparing for winter by bringing wood from the forest, or many other responsibilities rural youth have, are norms they are accustomed to learning at a young age. The responsibilities students learn to manage support their success at home and within the community. It is also clear that connections between what they learn at home and what they are expected to learn in school still need to be made especially within curriculum and pedagogies.

Discussions around success for rural youth were largely about merging what students learn at home and within the community with what is expected of them to perform in school. Students have learned so much by the time they attend school, yet it is not the academic learning they are expected to have learned in school. One way to bring the two together would be to create curriculum around phenomenon students experience in their lives that could be tied to more standards based math, science, writing, and history standards they are expected to learn and know.

It is important to note that many results related to the sub-questions occur in different themes across the results. I used a constructivist research paradigm and implementation to capture the knowledge of rural living, education, failure, and success as described by participants. My field experiences span from initial entry in August 2017 to my final interview in November 2018 and are reported as narrative in the body of the research. Participants for this study included individuals from the school community and rural area communities. The school community included a former superintendent, high school principal, teachers, support staff, and students. The rural community consisted of community members, students, parents, business owners, president of a college, and grandparents.

What this Study Contributes to Existing Literature

In speaking to all stakeholders about rural communities and the importance of the education of its youth, this study positively contributes to the body of knowledge surrounding rural education in northern New Mexico. There is some research written about rural schooling, but this study adds to the body of knowledge about rural northern New Mexico. Roberts (2001) in her study takes a look at language and cultural aspects of students in a rural northern New Mexico school. This study offers an alternative view by focusing both academic and situational learning. Corbet (2007) focuses on how student's options are limited in rural communities and ultimately leave their community in search of jobs and schooling. This study talks to students wanting to stay or return, but are unsure of what is possible for them when they return. This study fits into Corbet's (2007) research that communities are losing their most valuable resources. Students see themselves

living in the communities in which they grew up, it is not clear if changes are being made soon enough.

With rapid growth, constant change, and interest in supporting rural communities, this research sheds light on how people view rural schooling. The ideas about the education of youth rural northern New Mexico brought about in this research add to empirical research conducted by Roberts (2000), Corbet (2007), and Butler-Flora & Flora (2013).

Recommendations for Practice and Policy

In my initial discussions with the former superintendent, we discussed how students are able to stay in the community. It was apparent that he hoped that students would return to the community to be positive contributing members. There was little discussion as to how the district had in the past determine how students could do this, stay and thrive within the community they grew up in. Students shared aspirations to return to the community, and teachers spoke about the importance of the community in the education of the student. It will be my attempt to make recommendations based on the discussions with stakeholders, current changes in legislation, and empirical research on how to best meet the needs of those wanting to return or stay in their community.

Rural needs assessment. Leaders of the community and of the school would benefit from coming together to determine what local issues need studying and to decide what trades and academic areas are needed for a sustainable rural community to thrive in their area. There is also a need to identify resources and expertise available for schools and students to collaborate; and how to best develop curriculum, teaching, and other school activities to meet those needs.

Stakeholders invested in the education of rural youth will find it helpful and productive to keep in mind what strengths and realities students bring with them into the educational setting from their rural families, lives, and circumstances. Students, teachers and community members all have ideas on how to assure the success of students and have differing ideas about how to achieve at high levels. Students feel uneasy about their understanding of content knowledge especially in the area of math, and teachers feel that through responsibility and work ethic students will achieve success. Conducting a needs assessment may give stakeholders an understanding of what they deem important to their success. This will help maintain what Ley et. al. (year), identifies as a rural community's 'greatest assets', its youth. Many students interviewed for my study spoke about leaving to pursue secondary education degrees and those same students shared that they wanted to return, or live somewhat close, to where they grew up. This points to a need to develop and sustain rural schools so they in turn support evolving rural communities. Coming together to understand the needs of the school and community would benefit not only the rural youth, but those who choose to stay in the community if the goal is to keep the community's 'greatest assets'.

Reframing Education for Rural Communities

In formal learning situations, stakeholders need to recognize the knowledge students bring with them as important and necessary for their success. Rural students are intelligent in many complex combinations of ways. Creating curriculum around the realities of rural life and integrating state standards would benefit students who wish to succeed in both formal academic learning and rural

realities. Fecho (2011) identifies a way of addressing needs of students and community is by developing curriculum that reflects pedagogy of place. Curriculum specialists can work with teachers, parents, community members, and others to tie academic learning to learning happening at home. Topics like, the grazing patterns of elk or deer, developing tracking abilities, geese and butterfly migration, humane capturing of coyotes, water depletions and conservation, and many other ideas of interest to students can be addressed in science, English language arts, and math. Common Core State Standards are knowledge and skills students must master through PARCC assessments to show readiness to graduate. Time, funding, and effort ought to be devoted to merging standards, curriculum, and pedagogy that relate to the lives of rural students.

Another strategy to support students in their choice to stay or leave is to provide access to postsecondary attainment that makes sense for rural students. This can include access to community colleges or branch colleges often located in rural areas of the state. Attending smaller more accessible colleges and increasing the number of online course and programs that often make college an option for those remote areas might make more sense for students wishing to increase skills and knowledge specific to their areas of interest. Community colleges provide affordable postsecondary education as a way to increase job skills or as a pathway to a four-year degree.

The learning environment. The consolidated lawsuit, *Yazzie/Martinez v. State of New Mexico* court ruling and subsequent legislative bills could be used to provide incentive and funding for creating learning environments through

partnerships in rural communities. This would provide students with opportunities and leverage community connections, lead to programs that include field-based learning projects with farmers and ranchers, forest rangers, or other community based work opportunities where students engage in hands on learning outside of the school building. Internships or project-based learning can take advantage of community expertise and resources and could also be applied to addressing community challenges. At La Escuela Norteña, stakeholders confirmed students had high levels of understanding of their environment, their surroundings, and yet, there was no programmatic way to connect to the academic learning being done in class. Such programs should be built to keep track of academic progress, learning styles, and career aspirations that can better equip teachers to identify specific needs, target instruction to maximize preparedness for post-secondary opportunities, and help students determine which post-secondary learning opportunities could be the most relevant and beneficial to each student. Teachers could place students in interest groups, continually grouping and regrouping students based on their academic gaps and individual pace of progress, giving students a more personalized experience. There are ways to increase student engagement and learning that may not require funding. Those who create curriculum can develop innovative ways to design lessons, assignments, projects, and activities that facilitate students applying what they are learning to their own lives, community issues, problems and opportunities

Teacher preparation. With rural teachers often having to teach multiple subjects and grades, there's a lower likelihood they are highly qualified across all of their subjects. A well thought out training program for teachers is necessary to meet

the needs of students. Funding for teacher professional development and opportunities to enhance teacher ability to guide students will support student growth and success. Developing creative staffing strategies and lesson development is an important area as well. At La Escuela Norteña, teachers are teaching outside their expertise and there is a shortage of teachers altogether. To counter this shortfall, encouraging teachers to innovate together about teaching with rural needs, opportunities, and realities in mind is important. Teachers improve when they work in a community to continuously improve their pedagogy and curriculum. This work is especially effective when teacher communities evaluate the quality of their teaching by looking closely at student work and at the teaching practices in their community and in their own classrooms. Engaging local professionals, families, and elders in teaching and mentoring is also helpful especially in rural areas where relationships interconnect.

School administrators need to leverage the time and expertise of adults who aren't formally certified teachers and transition away from traditional bell schedules. The staff capacity required to design a new way of learning requires new understanding. Small central offices and educators at the school level are the ones most likely to shoulder these responsibilities, so a redesign of the physical classroom layout, and new expectations for the teacher role would also be helpful. With flexible learning pathways, students may have more opportunities to engage in learning outside of school walls—potentially leading to shifts in the on campus community and culture working together for student success.

Recommendations for Policy

Education in the past couple of decades has faced multiple policy mandates that are increasingly narrowing and redefining the scope of education and adversely affecting the roles of schools within a community. Rural schools serve as the central institution for rural communities and therefore should be funded in that manner. Implementation of new programs and processes must have the needed resources to assure success of new strategies in the education of rural students.

Student success. It is clear the current design of rural education is to graduate students with the hopes of pursuing a college degree and the measure of that is standardization of curriculum. In core areas of study according to standardized assessments, students are failing. Student strengths lie also in the learning they acquire living and experiencing rural life. Curriculum that merges standards with community based learning can enhance student success by enhancing what students already know about natural phenomenon they encounter in their rural upbringing with both standards and competency based progressions that are necessary to show growth and achievement towards specific learning. Measures of achievement can also be recorded through student portfolios. A wider definition of success and educational preparation needs to be developed to better describe learning for the student.

Access to institutions of higher education. Students in this study were clear about wanting to pursue college after high school. Every student interviewed shared this goal and there is much research about the economic impact of formal training and college degrees for all communities. Not every student has the same

academic needs, interests, and goals, yet needs to be prepared for the world which they will enter after their K-12 education. Instead of relying only on sit-and-get direct instruction and leaving students feeling disengaged from real-world contextual challenges they will eventually face, schools must provide opportunities for entering college or professional experiences they will need to be successful.

Building systems of support. Rural schools have access to regional partnership centers that provide rural districts access to resources and to leveraging resources. The current ruling playing out in New Mexico courts, *Yazzie Martinez v. State of New Mexico* decision, can provide some guidance and legislative support for Native American and English Language Learners (ELL) students, including Bilingual and Multicultural Education, and Hispanic Education.

Implications for Future Research

Based on findings from my study, future research is needed in rural school districts in several areas including the following:

Longitudinal studies of how communities and schools can more effectively support students in their decision to return and contribute to their community after college are a necessity to better understand the needs and create plans to meet those needs.

The solutions stakeholders use to resolve issues of rural school expectations have important meaning for how schools manage the learning and education of students. Knowledge gained from working with community members, students, and school staff may offer different perspectives on how education and services may be delivered to students in the future. Students bring with them ideas about natural

phenomenon they experience living deep within the mountains of Northern New Mexico.

Strengths. Rural students bring from their upbringing strengths important to their self-identify. Students and teachers recognize rural experiences as having a great impact on the decision about the path they will take after high school. An in depth look at student self-efficacy and their successes in high school are areas for further research. If those skills and characteristics can be cultivated and understood; teachers, principals, and college personnel can continue to support students as they move from one learning environment to another.

Larger rural education needs. With constant and growing changes in technology, utilizing technology can also help students engage with the broader community and gain exposure to new ideas. For rural students who are geographically isolated and frequently come from low-income backgrounds, the costs of traveling outside of their community can be difficult, and the potential for direct exposure to a diverse spectrum of occupations and post-secondary opportunities may be diminished. Stakeholders would benefit from looking at how technology can contribute to students' ability to solve problems in their community. Focusing a study on how students can connect with other rural peoples around the world who may be facing similar challenges, can allow for richer more creative solutions to similar issues. The study can list the many benefits of engaging in discussions with people with similar experiences; this engagement of knowledge and collaborative innovation can go beyond their own community.

Final Thoughts

In closing, I recognize success of the student lies within the rural communities in which they come from. Parents want what is best for their children, and often recognize that support students get from school can have greater positive impact to the community. It is not an easy decision for families to send their children off to college, but with opportunities to return to live within the community they care about it may be a little easier for both the student and the family. With dwindling populations in rural communities that populate rural schools, communities would benefit from reflecting and planning curriculum and other aspects of school for rural realities as well as working cooperatively with the school for the future health and even the very existence of the community and sustainability of rural schools.

Javi, a high school senior at this school shares his feeling about living rurally, the heart of what students contemplate as they make next step decisions. He showed thoughtfulness in his response and I could tell he has contemplated this question. When asked “What are topics or subjects the school could or should focus on?” Javi shares,

A topic that the school could focus on is culture. The way things look, I don't think many students are understanding of what our community's culture is, or what it used to be... it's important to know about your cultural traditions. If you're not one to actually go out and explore the world, and you'd rather stay within the comforts of your own land, I feel that it could be

beneficial for you to know what your ancestors have accomplished, and how you can use that to build on and maybe even establish a career.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Research Question/Methods/Interview

Research Question / Interview Matrix

Interview		
Question	Individual Interview Question	Group
Research Question: How do rural school and community describe expectations of a small rural school in northern New México?		
Introduction: Demographics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How long have you lived in this community? 2. What does living/working in this rural community mean to you? 3. What experiences do you have with the local school? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. When moving/opting to work here, did you think about schooling opportunities for your children before community? 	<u>Community Members</u> parents grandparents business owners retired workers
SQ 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Did you attend a rural school for your education? (for those not current students at this school) 2. How was/has been your experience like in a rural school? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What did it help you accomplish? How could it have been different? 3. What are the most important qualities of a rural educational experience? 4. What role does your rural (or this rural) community play in the education of the students of the local school? 5. What is your role in the education of the student? 	<u>School Staff</u> teachers staff counselor administrators board members
SQ 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do school and community members describe the purposes of rural education? 2. How do school and community members describe the experiences and skills students gain in school? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How is this helpful and/or problematic in meeting the needs of a rural community? 	<u>Students</u> Grade 12
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What educational outcomes are important for students and for the community? 2. How do you see success? Or.... How would you describe success within a rural community context? 3. What do you see as the current focus of this rural school? 4. What are the topics of study the school focuses on? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Do these topics meet the needs of the students as contributing members of the community (life outside the school)? 5. How is this focus helpful to this rural community? How is it not? 6. What other things should the school focus on? 	

		<p>7. How could students most benefit from the education they have access to be successful after high school?</p> <p>8. When you imagine the students after high school, where do imagine them living?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What do you imagine them doing? b. How will they receive the skills they need to do the things they want to do? 	
SQ 3	<p>How do school and community members describe their expectations for the role of the teacher?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Parents and family members? Other community members? b. How do teachers see their role in the education of rural youth? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What influence do you see the adults having on the student when it comes to making choices to go away to college or staying close to home or even what to study? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers • Parent • Community members • Peers 2. What is the message students should be getting about life after high school in a rural community? 3. What the focus be on in rural education when the students are in school? 4. What should the school provide access to in rural education? 5. What is the role in the education of the student? 6. How do instructional programs meet the needs of the students in a rural community? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Are the programs tied to life in a rural community? 7. What kind of assignments do teachers give students that help them outside of the classroom in this rural community? 8. What kind of assignments are given to students that allow them to imagine going away to pursue education or career and then coming back to the community? 9. What kind of assignments assist students to imagine remaining in their home communities as a contributing professional? 	
SQ 4	<p>What are the local norms, values, and traditions described as most important in relation to</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are some of the norms, values and traditions that students learn at home, especially related to life in this rural community? 2. Are the norms, values and traditions important in this community supported at school? Why/why not? 	

	education by school and rural community members?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What are some things that students learn at home that are supported at school? b. What are some things that students learn at home that are not supported at school? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. What do you feel are the most important life lessons in or out of school, specifically in a rural community? 4. What extra-curricular activities can students get involved in? 5. How do these activities build on what students learn at home? 6. How do these activities develop students as contributing members of this community? 7. What do you think about living in this community after high school? 	
SQ 5	What key strengths do school and community members describe as brought by rural students and communities into education?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What/who do students attribute their success to? 2. What do students tend excel in? Why do you think they tend to excel in this area? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How is this related to their rural life? 3. What do they tend to struggle with? Why do you think they tend to struggle? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How is this related to rural life? 	
SQ 6	What are school and community member's perspectives on how this school is ACTUALLY serving the needs of rural communities and students?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are there some educational or community issues in which the school and community can work together to come up with solutions to enhance student learning? 2. What might be some supports the school is providing for the community? 3. What are some possible supports that the community can provide for the school? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What is still needed? 	

Appendix B – Interview Protocol

**School and Community Expectations
Rural Research
Interview Protocol**

Dissertation Research: How do school and community expectations compare and contrast about a rural school and rural education in a northern New México community?

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Date and Time of Interview:

Location of Interview:

Prior to Interview

A) Introduce self, “Hello. I am Monica Martinez-Archuleta.

This interview is being conducted to get your thoughts and ideas about the expectations you have of the rural school in your community.”

If it is okay with you, I will tape recording our conversation. The purpose is so that I can get all the details but at the same time be able to carry out an attentive conversation with you. I assure you that all your comments will remain confidential. I will compile a report which will contain comments without any direct reference to you.”

B) Ask for permission to record the interview: “May I have your consent to record this interview session? ___ YES ___ No

Signature: _____

C.) Frame the Interview: The protocol is followed to guide to encourage discussion from the participant about their expectations of the rural school in their community. When a question is asked, the participant will have an opportunity to respond until the response is complete. The researcher may then ask further clarifying questions or follow-up questions to allow for the interview participants to expand upon and clarify a previous response so that an in-depth understand may be developed. Participants may decline to answer any question or stop the interview at any time.

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Category: ___ School Professional ___ Community Member ___ Student

Detail (e.g. teacher subject(s) taught):

“I’d like to start by having you briefly describe your experience with the local rural school.” *(Note to the interviewer: You may need to probe to gather the information you need.)*

D) Collecting background information: Asking the following questions will get participants with the interview process.

1. How long have you lived in this community?
2. What does living/working in this rural community mean to you?
3. What experiences do you have with the local school?
 - a. When moving/opting to work here, did you think about schooling opportunities for your children before community?

E) Getting into the research questions: Next “I’m going to ask you some questions that I would like you to answer to the best of your ability. If you do not understand the question or are not sure of the answer, please let me know and will re-phrase or clarify the question.”

Questions related to purpose of schooling

SQ1: How do school and community members describe the purposes of rural education?

Questions and Follow-up Questions:

1. Did you attend a rural school for your education? (for those not current students at this school)
2. How was/has been your experience like in a rural school?
 - a. What did it help you accomplish? How could it have been different?
3. What are the most important qualities of a rural educational experience?
4. What role does your rural (or this rural) community play in the education of the students of the local school?
5. What is your role in the education of the student?

Questions Related to Outcomes

SQ2: How do school and community members describe the experiences and skills students gain in school?

- a. How is this helpful and/or problematic in meeting the needs of a rural community?

Questions and Follow-up Questions:

1. What educational outcomes are important for students and for the community?
2. How do you see success? Or.... How would you describe success within a rural community context?
3. What do you see as the current focus of this rural school?
 - a. How is this helpful or problematic?
4. What are the topics of study the school focuses on?

- a. Do these topics meet the needs of the students as contributing members of the community (life outside the school)?
5. How is this focus helpful to this rural community? How is it not?
6. What other things should the school focus on?
7. How could students most benefit from the education they have access to be successful after high school?
8. When you imagine the students after high school, where do imagine them living?
 - a. What do you imagine them doing?
 - b. How will they receive the skills they need to do the things they want to do?

Questions related to expectations all stakeholders

SQ3: How do school and community members describe their expectations for the role of the teacher?

- c. Parents and family members? Other community members?
- d. How do teachers see their role in the education of rural youth?

Questions and Follow-up Questions:

1. What influence do you see the adults having on the student when it comes to making choices to go away to college or staying close to home or even what to study?
 - Teachers
 - Parent
 - Community members
 - Peers
2. What is the message students should be getting about life after high school in a rural community?
3. What should the focus be on in rural education when the students are in school?

4. What should the school provide access to in rural education?
5. How do instructional programs meet the needs of the students in a rural community?
 - b. Are the programs tied to life in a rural community?
6. What kind of assignments do teachers give students that help them outside of the classroom in this rural community?
7. What kind of assignments are given to students that allow them to imagine going away to pursue education or career and then coming back to the community?
8. What kind of assignments assist students to imagine remaining in their home communities as a contributing professional?
9. How does the school prepare the students if they decide to stay in the rural community?

Questions related to local norms, values, traditions

SQ4: What are the local norms, values, and traditions described as most important in relation to education by school and rural community members?

Questions and Follow-up Questions:

1. What are some of the norms, values and traditions that students learn at home, especially related to life in this rural community?
2. Are the norms, values and traditions important in this community supported at school? Why/why not?
 - a. What are some things that students learn at home that are supported at school?

- b. What are some things that students learn at home that are not supported at school?
3. What do you feel are the most important life lessons in or out of school, specifically in a rural community?
4. What extra-curricular activities can students get involved in?
5. How do these activities build on what students learn at home?
6. How do these activities develop students as contributing members of this community?
7. What do you think about living in this community after high school?

Questions related to strengths of the rural students

SQ5: What key strengths do school and community members describe as brought by rural students and communities into education?

Questions and Follow-up Questions:

4. What/who do students attribute their success to?
5. What do students tend to excel in? Why do you think they tend to excel in this area?
 - a. How is this related to their rural life?
6. What do they tend to struggle with? Why do you think they tend to struggle?
 - a. How is this related to rural life?

Questions related to how the school is doing

SQ6: What are school and community member's perspectives on how this school is ACTUALLY serving the needs of rural communities and students?

Questions and Follow-up Questions:

4. Are there some educational or community issues in which the school and community can work together to come up with solutions to enhance student learning?
5. What might be some supports the school is providing for the community?
6. What are some possible supports that the community can provide for the school?
 - a. What is still needed?

F) Close the interview: "Is there any other information about expectations of rural schools that you think would be useful for me to know?"

Appendix C Document Analysis**Document Analysis for Baseline Understanding of this Rural School as Context for Expectations**

Types of documents collected for analysis	Analysis
Achievement data	Identify how students are performing on state mandated tests. Are students' college or career ready? Does proficiency equate readiness?
School Report Card	Gives a historical view of how the schools are performing according to state identified areas of focus.
Quality of Education Survey	Results of this survey will give an idea of how students and parents rate their school in relation to given criteria. Historical perspective can be described by using multiple year results.
School Board Meeting Agendas	Topics on school board agendas will identify what the school board deem important to their work
School Website	Public access to school goals and message. Identify how the school Communicates with the public.
Teacher Evaluation Results	Do students have access to highly qualified teachers?
Letters to parents/community	Identify the message school is sending to parents about school/district goals.
Course offerings	Identify the courses schools offer and what they see as important skills should have when after graduation.
Participant suggested documents	Identify what participants use to gather information about the school.

Appendix D – Consent



A Comparison of School and Community Expectations Consent to Participate in Research September 6, 2016

Purpose of the study: You are being asked to participate in a research study that is being done by Monica Martinez-Archuleta a Researcher and Doctoral Candidate, under the guidance of Dr. Alicia F. Chávez – Associate Professor, from the College of Education - Department of Teacher Education, Educational Leadership and Policy at the University of New México. The purpose of this study is to understand the school professionals, community members, family and the students' expectations of the rural school. You are being asked to take part in this study because you either live in the rural community that supports the selected rural school, attend the selected rural school, or work in the selected rural school,

This form will explain what to expect when joining the research, as well as the possible risks and benefits of participation. If you have any questions, please ask one of the study researchers.

What you will do in the study: If you agree to participate you will sign a consent form. You will also be asked to meet with me to take part in an interview at a time that is convenient for you. The interview will audio recorded. I will ask a series of questions and may answer to best of your ability. If you are confused by any question you may ask for clarification. In the process of questioning, if you wish to skip any questions that make you uncomfortable you may skip at any time. You can also decide to stop the interview at any time.

Participation in this study will take a total of 2-3 hours.

Risks: There may be some risk if you decide to participate. You may experience stress or feelings of discomfort. You can choose to skip any questions you don't want to answer. Because this interview will be recorded some things you say might not be private. Names will not be used during the recording. Each participant will be identified using a unique pseudonym or number.

Benefits: There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, it is hoped that information gained from this study will help inform rural education.

Confidentiality of your information: You can provide me with your name which may which may be helpful for me to gather follow up information. All audio recordings and digital files will secured with password protection. Your audio files will be erased three months after transcription is complete. Study documents will be kept for five years after the study is complete. At which time they be shredded and destroyed. We will take measures to protect the security of all your personal information, but we cannot

guarantee confidentiality of all study data. The University Of New México Institutional Review Board (IRB) that oversees human subject research may be permitted to access your records. Your name will not be used in any published reports about this study.

Payment: You will not be paid for participating in this study.

Right to withdraw from the study: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to choose not to participate or to withdraw your participation at any point in this study without penalty.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research study, please contact:

Dr. Alicia F. Chávez – Associate Professor, from the College of Education - Department of Teacher Education, Educational Leadership and Policy, 1 University of New México, Albuquerque, NM 87131. afchavez@unm.edu

If you would like to speak with someone other than the research team to obtain information or offer input or if you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the IRB. The IRB is a group of people from UNM and the community who provide independent oversight of safety and ethical issues related to research involving people:

UNM Office of the IRB, (505) 277-2644, irbmaincampus@unm.edu. Website: <http://irb.unm.edu/>

CONSENT

You are making a decision whether to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read this form (or the form was read to you) and that all questions have been answered to your satisfaction. By signing this consent form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights as a research participant. A copy of this consent form will provided to you.

I agree to participate in this study.

Name of Adult Participant
Date

Signature of Adult Participant

Researcher Signature (to be completed at time of informed consent)

I have explained the research to the participant and answered all of his/her questions. I believe that he/she understands the information described in this consent form and freely consents to participate.

Name of Research Team Member
Date

Signature of Research Team Member

Appendix E Assent to Participate Form

A Comparison of School and Community Expectations Assent to Participate in Research

September 8, 2017

You are being asked to join a research study by Monica Martinez-Archuleta a Researcher and Doctoral Candidate, under the guidance of Dr. Alicia F. Chávez – Associate Professor, from the College of Education - Department of Teacher Education, Educational Leadership and Policy at the University of New México This project is to understand the school professionals, community, family, and the students' expectations of the rural school.

If you join the project, you will be asked to meet with me to take part in an interview at a time that is convenient for you. The interview will be audio recorded. I will ask a series of questions and may answer to best of your ability. If you are confused by any question you may ask for clarification. In the process of questioning, if you wish to skip any questions that make you uncomfortable you may skip at any time. You can also decide to stop the interview at any time.

If you join, there may be some risks, bad things that happen, you may experience stress or feelings of discomfort, because you will be sharing your own personal experiences.

If you do not want to join the project, you can decline.

Any information about you will be kept secure by the researchers securing all audio recordings and digital files with secure password. Your audio files will be erased three months after transcription is complete. Study documents will be kept for five years after the study is complete. At which time they be shredded and destroyed. We will take measures to protect the security of all your personal information, but we cannot guarantee confidentiality of all study data.

We would like you to talk with your parents about this before you decide to join or not join this study. We will also ask your parents if they want you to be in this study.

If you have any questions at any time, please call or email Dr. Alicia F. Chávez – Associate Professor, from the College of Education or any of his/her assistants at afc@unm.edu. If you would like to talk to someone else, you can call the Office of the IRB at (505) 277-2644 or email at IRBMainCampus@unm.edu.

You do not have to be in this study. If you do choose to be in the study, you can change your mind at any time. The researcher won't care if you change your mind or if you don't want to join this study.

Signing this form means you have read this form and all of your questions have been answered. You and your parents will be given a copy of this form.

I agree to join this study.

Name of Child Participant
Date

Signature of Child Participant

Researcher Signature (to be completed at time of informed consent)

I have explained the research to the participant and answered all of his/her questions. I believe that he/she understands the information described in this consent form and freely consents to participate.

Name of Research Team Member
Date

Signature of Research Team Member

Appendix F Participants and Participant Role within the School and Community**PARTICIPANT GROUPS**

Group	Pseudonym	Description
Student	Andres	high school senior, at least one parent graduated from la Escuela Norteña,
	Andrew	high school senior, at least one parent graduated from la Escuela Norteña
	Javi	high school senior, at least one parent graduated from la Escuela Norteña
	Mia	high school senior, at least one parent graduated from la Escuela Norteña, grandfather grew up in the community Mia lives now.
	Mari	high school senior, parents not originally from New Mexico, brother graduated from La Escuela Norteña
	Ronnie	high school senior, at least one parent graduated from la Escuela Norteña,
	Mae	recent graduate, at least one parent graduated from la Escuela Norteña
Parent	Dana	graduate/parent, lived in small community does not live there any longer, wished to return after retirement
	Paul	graduate of the school, parents still live in the community parent of three boys who attended the school, husband of Dana
	Maria	Parent/community member, two children graduated from la Escuela Norteña, husband was a math teacher at the school.
	Reyna	parent, community member, grew up in the community, attended the school
Community Member	Leo	small business owner, attended la Escuela Norteña, but did not graduate from the school, family lives in a small community
	Lena	graduate of La Escuela Norteña, taught in the district, lives in neighboring rural community
	Mr. Avila	attended and graduated from the school, taught 15 years various elective course, served as principal at the high school level, current principal in neighboring high school.
	Mr. Peña	president of local college, not from the community, wife is from a small community in northern New Mexico

	Pedro	attended La Escuela Norteña, has family is living in the community, former employee of the school district,
School Professional	Ms. Law	high School English teacher, not originally from the area, but lived in various rural communities in New Mexico
	Mr. Romero	high school science teacher, attended la Escuela, but did not graduate, returned to teach after first profession
	Ms. Ava	mid school English teacher, originally from southern New Mexico, grew up in a rural community, has been teaching in the district over 10 years
	Mr. Sanchez	former teacher, superintendent, grew up in northern New Mexico, attended the school, returned to teach and become superintendent. Served as superintendent in various northern New Mexico schools.
	Ms. Linda Alvarez	office staff, has worked in various positions, nurse, classroom assistant, office assistant, has been in the school 30 years.
	Mr. Smith	middle and high school principal, not from the community, first time living in a rural community, second year as school employee, started as elementary principal