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**Case studies of three academically-able students choosing not to  
pursue postsecondary education immediately after high school**

**Roach, Kay Louise, Ph.D.**

**The Ohio State University, 1992**

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Case Studies of Three Academically-Able Students  
Choosing Not To Pursue  
Post-Secondary Education Immediately After High School

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the  
Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Kay L. Roach RN, BGS, MA

The Ohio State University

1992

Dissertation Committee:

Brad L. Mitchell, Ph.D. Chair

Robert Donmoyer, Ph.D.

Philip T. K. Daniel, J.D., Ed.D.

Approved by



---

Advisor

College of Education

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**Kay L. Roach**

**1992**

**To the intelligent women and sensitive men  
who have made a difference in my life**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In acknowledging contributions others have made to this work, I begin with the students, parents, teachers and school officials who represent the focus of this study. The students welcomed me into their homes and shared their lives with me. I was touched and enlightened by their stories. Much appreciation goes to the parents for supporting their young persons' participation in this study and for their candidness during their own participation. The teachers willingly gave their own time to assist in this project. The Consultant Group was enthusiastic as well as candid. Best wishes to them wherever they may be.

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the prize.



## VITA

- 1962..... Diploma, Aultman Hospital  
School of Nursing,  
Canton, Ohio
- 1981..... B.G.S. Ohio University  
Athens, Ohio  
Summa Cum Laude
- 1983..... M.A. College of Education  
The Ohio State University
- 1984-1987..... Director of Nursing for  
Staff Development  
Bethesda Hospital  
Zanesville, Ohio
- 1987-Present..... Dean and Associate Professor, Health,  
Public Service, and General Studies  
Muskingum Area Technical College  
Zanesville, Ohio

## PUBLICATIONS

Roach, K. L. (1984). Production builds on mutual respect. Nursing Management, 15(2), 54-56.

## FIELDS OF STUDY

### Major Field: Education

#### Studies in Educational Policy and Leadership, Educational Administration in Higher Education:

Dr. Brad L. Mitchell  
Dr. Virgil Blanke  
Dr. William Moore, Jr.  
Dr. Robert Donmoyer  
Dr. Maryann Sagaria

#### Studies in Strategic Planning and Resource Management in Higher Education:

Dr. Robert Silverman  
Dr. William Moore, Jr.  
Dr. Betty Fitzgerald  
Dr. Philip Young  
Dr. Walter Hack

#### Studies in Qualitative Research:

Dr. James Pearsol  
Dr. Patti Lather

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Looking toward the year 2000, there are both economic and social implications for educational requirements of the twenty-first century labor force. At the national level, some researchers have demonstrated a shift toward higher job requirements (Hudson Institute, 1987). While others have reported entry level jobs will not differ greatly, there is agreement that technical change will be continuous (National Academy Press, 1984). Still others (National Research Council, 1983) report no agreement on job skill requirements for the future. Rumberger and Levin (1989) have concluded that the average educational requirements of the future labor market will not differ much from the present. The need for both high and low skills will exist in the future. Focus for the national economic future appears to be on building workplace literacy and a labor force who can read, write, compute, and problem solve (U.S. Department of Labor, 1988; National Academy Press, 1984).

Social implications for the labor force of the next century differ. The future for non-college bound youth appears bleak. Job opportunities with a future are shrinking, real income is in decline and twenty to twenty-four year olds have a high rate of unemployment. The young people who, on leaving high school, drive buses, build homes, fix appliances and man production lines "aspire to work productively but never quite 'make it' (Grant Foundation, 1988)." These individuals upon whom this nation depends for goods and services have little chance at full participation in society (Grant Foundation, 1988; Parnell, 1985; Roueche and Hurlhurt, 1968).

At a state level, implications for Ohio's economic and social future as related to educational requirements for the twenty-first century labor force appear to be more closely aligned than those on the national scene. According to a policy study by the Ohio Board of Regents (1988):

Ohio's population is projected to decline by the year 2000, just at the time when the baby-boom generation begins to prepare for retirement, and the pool of young people entering the labor force will diminish below the level needed for new job formation. Women, minorities and immigrants will comprise the majority of new entrants to that labor force, contrasting with historical dominance of white males among new entrants.

Simultaneously, the character of the economy is changing; the jobs of the future overwhelmingly will require education beyond high school. People who with their families have had no previous experience with college will need to be drawn into

post-secondary education in order to be adequately prepared for the jobs of the future.

Now, more than ever before, Ohio's young people, and importantly Ohio's minority young people, need to be educated for jobs with 'staying power' -- the technical and professional jobs that require strong basic education in mathematics, science, and writing as foundations. Our labor force will require them. Ohio simply must have a higher education policy that encourages strikingly more participation in post-secondary education than we have today -- and greatly more of those who enter must succeed and achieve their educational goals (OBOR, 1988, p. i).

#### Nature of the Problem

Ohio's rate of participation in higher education among its entire population has been low historically. Ohio is concerned about the state's economy, its transition from heavy industry to light manufacturing and the related importance of advanced job skills. Those skills are projected to require some degree of post-secondary education. Stafford (et al., 1984) reported Ohio to be ranked thirty-fifth among all states in college participation in 1971 and thirty-third in 1980. Generally, participation in higher education in Ohio is lower than the regional and national average even though secondary graduation rates are higher than the average (OBOR, 1988).

Considered a midwestern state, Ohio has many mid-size and small towns with rolling hills and farmlands. Large metropolitan areas are found at

the northwestern tip of the state, Toledo; at the southern end, Dayton and Cincinnati; in the northeastern top, Cleveland; midnorthern section, Canton and Akron and in the southcentral portion, Columbus. Highly developed with steel and automotive industries, these major areas have had recognized economic setbacks over recent years. What is often unrecognized about Ohio is that approximately thirty-one percent of its eighty-eight counties are in the southeastern part of the state forming what some Ohioans call "the gateway to Appalachia." Bordered by Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Kentucky this part of Ohio has twenty-eight counties which comprise a federally-designated Appalachian region. Appalachian communities are described as having high rates of unemployment, low per capita income, family poverty, and low levels of adult educational attainment (Ergood and Kuhre, 1983). Bullock (et al., 1985) has suggested education has been recognized as a means to an end for Appalachia's social and economic problems. In Ohio's federally designated Appalachian counties, participation rate in higher education is lower than the state average (except the county in which Ohio University is located). In 1986 (July 23), The Chronicle of Higher Education reported that representation of all racial/ethnic groups in higher education in Ohio was less than the national average.

### Clarification of the Problem and Foreshadowing Research Questions

In general terms, the research question for this study was: Why have three academically-able students from one Appalachian Ohio high school chosen not to pursue post-secondary education immediately after high school?

The specific research questions are as follows:

1. How do these students describe their high school experiences in relationship to their choices not to pursue post-secondary education immediately after high school?
  - a. How do they see themselves as high school students?
  - b. What events shaped their academic careers?
  - c. What events shaped their post-high school plans?
2. How do parents of these students describe the students' high school experiences in relationship to their choices not to pursue post-secondary education immediately after high school?
  - a. How do the parents see their children as high school students?
  - b. What events shaped their children's academic careers?
  - c. What events shaped their children's post high school plans?
3. How do some teachers of these students describe the students' high school experiences in relationship to their choices not to pursue post-secondary education immediately after high school?
  - a. How do the teachers see these students as high school students?
  - b. What events shaped the students academic careers?
  - c. What events shaped the students' post high school plans?

4. How do some school administrators of these students describe the students' high school experiences in relationship to their choices not to pursue post-secondary education immediately after high school?
  - a. How do the school administrators see these students as high school students?
  - b. What events shaped the students' academic careers?
  - c. What events shaped the students' post high school plans?

#### Rationale for Inquiry and Methodology

Given the trends for Ohio's economic future and projected need for a more educated labor force, the low participation rate in higher education poses concerns. Ohio educators need to learn more about why academically-able students choose not to pursue post-secondary education in order to discover ways for schools to help raise participation rates in Ohio. For the purpose of this study, my attention was directed toward one Appalachian Ohio high school and three students ranked in the top quartile of their graduating class choosing not to pursue post-secondary education immediately after high school. In order to better understand or give meaning to this phenomenon from the students' perspectives, case studies of three students, their parents and selected teachers were conducted. (A fourth student agreed to participate in the research yet failed to follow through.) Application of the case study method provided an opportunity to analyze the situations of the three participating students. The

research design for this study may be compared to Bogdan and Biklen's (1982) definition of microethnography; the study represented one small unit of a larger microcosm. According to Fine (1986), ethnographic studies can make significant contributions to understanding processes within homes and schools.

### Delimitations of the Study

By employing an interpretivist approach to this study, I systematically attempted to understand three students and how they saw themselves as students. Data from students, parents, teachers, school officials, and school records were triangulated to construct a picture of the participants' worlds. According to Donmoyer (in Eisner and Peshkin, Eds., 1990), case studies "take us to places where most of us would not have an opportunity to go". Readers have the opportunity to see through the researcher's eyes things they may not have seen otherwise (p. 193-194).

The reader must keep in mind the students' realities have been constructed through words; and words are illusive. All cannot be known about what is said or unsaid (Ihde, 1971). This study represented a purposefully selected sample of participants in pursuit of an "information rich" experience in which the researcher learned a great deal about a small number of people (Patton, 1990). I have strived to gain credibility for data through well defined

procedures for collection. The concept of generalizability has been expanded to include Donmoyer's suggestion that it be considered within the framework of schema theory, particularly Piaget's notion of assimilation, accommodation, integration and differentiation. Donmoyer stated:

. . . when generalization is thought of in this way, the diversity between school settings becomes an asset rather than a liability: When diversity is dramatic, the knower is confronted by all sorts of novelty, which stimulates accommodation; consequently, the knower's cognitive structures become more integrated and differentiated; after novelty is confronted and accommodated, he or she can perceive more richly and, one hopes, act more intelligently (Donmoyer in Eisner and Peshkin, Eds., 1990, p. 191).

### Summary and Overview of Chapters Two and Three

Chapter One has provided background for the study, addressed the nature of the problem, concisely clarified the problem for the purpose of this study, and has identified specific research questions. In addition, a rationale for the inquiry has been stated; the methodology discussed; and the delimitations acknowledged.

Chapter Two provides a review of literature on ways in which the problem has been studied. Chapter Three addresses in detail the general methodology, confidentiality, site selection, entry, formation, and purpose of



the Consultant Group, population, participant selection, the researcher as instrument, and data collection.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Chapter Two presents the empirical framework for the study. The pattern of thinking is focused on the Ohio Board of Regents' suggestion that education begins with kindergarten and ends with graduate school. Transition points along the way where departures occur are considered interruptions in the "educational pipeline." Interruption in traversing the educational pipeline has been addressed in two broad bodies of literature. Early departure from the educational pipeline at the point of high school graduation and failure to participate in post-secondary education has been well studied as an access issue. Early departures have also been studied as attrition issues, both at high school and college levels. This body of research is well recognized under the rubric of school or college "dropout" data.

It is not my intention to produce a comprehensive review of relevant literature but to produce a synthesis of concepts related to early departures that will serve to facilitate my understanding of the information generated through

this study. First, this chapter addresses the evolution of access as educational equity; how conditions for learning are distributed to different groups; and how distribution determines access or denial of access. Secondly, it presents syntheses of both high school and college "dropout" data.

### Failure to Participate in Post-Secondary Education as an Access Issue

#### Access in Historical Perspective

The issue of access is complex. The multidimensional aspects of access involve history and tradition, social injustice and America's attempts to rectify those injustices through legislation, and the Effective Schools Movement. Each of these themes is relevant to access as opportunity to learn in the higher education setting.

The tradition of schooling in America is elitism. Any number of historical accountings reveal formal education beginning with the university and accessible to only white aristocratic males (Brubacher et al., 1976; Vesey, 1970; Rudolph, 1962). It was not until the rise of industrialization and the Common School Era that the structure of schooling as we know it today took form. Mechanization called for a skilled labor force. Hence, it became necessary to educate the masses. Free education and state supported

elementary systems were established and publicly controlled. Poor European immigrants of the North were usually restricted to the lower socio-economic class; but there was some small potential for social mobility through schooling. In the South, aristocracy and sharp delineation in social class were perpetuated by cheap labor imported from Africa, labor for whom schooling was viewed as unnecessary. Generally, schooling served the purpose of commerce and controlled growing numbers of non-aristocratic and diverse groups of people (Karrier, 1986; Rudolph, 1962). As the nineteenth century approached and brought debate over the transformation of secondary and higher education, the bedrock issues seemed to be "Who shall be educated?" and "How shall they be educated?"

One hundred years later, mid nineteenth century, the issues of "Who shall be educated?" and "How shall they be educated?" were imbedded in the emergence of social unrest over racial segregation in public schools. While Blacks had by now been granted the right to vote and equal but separate education, they wanted the same education. *Brown vs. Board of Education* 347 U.S. 483 (1954) (Kaplan, 1985; Karrier, 1986; Time, 1987) was the landmark case and resultant Supreme Court decision that ruled segregation in American schools to be unconstitutional. Along with actions of some Whites (mostly southern) to block integration efforts, and Blacks' refusals to go to the

back of the bus, violence was on the upswing. In spite of racial clashes, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was enacted. For the first time modern middle class America got a first hand look at the long suffered poverty and devastation faced by black families. America eased its conscience by the "War on Poverty," the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Karrier, 1986). Unfortunately, these benevolent efforts were offered in the name of "doing good" for individuals who had gotten themselves into such predicaments rather than viewing unemployment, racism, and apartheid as causes of the problems. The solution to the dilemma was viewed to be in provision of education and training (Karrier, 1986).

In 1966, in an effort to help improve the learning and achievement of poor and minority children, Coleman et al., (1966 in Cohen, 1982) produced the Equality of Educational Opportunity Report. In demonstrating an association between family background and achievement, there was again misinterpretation of problems. Unfortunately early research was not sensitive to important things that happened to individual students in the classroom (Cohen, 1982).

### Access and Reform Movements

The 1970's brought the effective schools movement (ESM) with research results that identified five factors that significantly affected student achievement:

1. Strong administrative leadership by the principal.
2. School climate conducive to learning.
3. Emphasis on basic skills instruction.
4. High teacher expectations for student achievement.
5. Assessment of student performance tied to instructional objectives.  
(Eisner, 1988; Stedman, 1988; Andrews in Brandt, 1987; Cohen, 1982).

Proponents of the effective school studies focused on developing students' reading and math skills. Improved programs stressed basics, objectives, and testing. As the formula for effective schools was embraced by the mainstream, basics and testing became more central (Stedman, 1988). Standardized testing was in and test results categorized students as high achievers or low achievers. Those in disagreement with the "back to basics" approach argued that drill and practice methods hampered development of analytical skills. Declining test scores were used to reinforce the argument (Borkow in Stedman, 1988).

In addition to the ESM, the seventies saw the enactment of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. Billions of dollars were spent and new layers of specialists created but these changes had little impact on existing organizational structures (Cuban, 1988).

The eighties brought louder calls for reform. The advent of A Nation At-Risk stirred such a concern about mediocrity in public education, that by 1989 forty-five state legislatures had mandated additional high school graduation requirements (GAO-PEMD-89-28). At the end of the decade, two major studies resulted: What Americans Study (1989), a policy information report produced by the Educational Testing Service and Education Reform: Initial Effects in Four School Districts (1989), a report to congressional requestors produced by the General Accounting Office. These two studies reflected the crux of educational reform of the eighties.

According to the Educational Testing Service, there has been a relatively high level of agreement "about the inadequate performance of the schools, the social and theoretical forces in the prior decade that fed these inadequacies, and the types of changes that should be undertaken . . ." (ETS, 1989). This consensus of agreement was operationalized in the legislative mandates mentioned previously.

The Educational Testing Service has cited Howe as summarizing numerous education studies and concluding that the strength of arguments for improved quality of schooling is in the connection between education and the capacity for America to be competitive in a global economy. The nature of education reform in the eighties was shaped by this economic connection, i.e., the emphasis on curriculum, especially mathematics, science and technology (ETS, 1989). Concerns about dilution of the school curriculum and declining SAT scores began in the seventies. A Nation At-Risk (1983) was the final indictment. This report, issued by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, revealed a nationwide secondary school system that had been diluted to a point of no longer having a central purpose. Among other data, the Commission discovered that:

Twenty-five percent of the credits earned by general track high school students are in physical and health education, work experience outside the school, remedial English and mathematics, and personal service and development courses, such as training for adulthood and marriage. (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

In 1985, the Educational Development Center discovered that of thirty-three reform reports, the majority called for establishment of a core curriculum for high school students. A Fifty State Survey by Goertz in 1986 (ETS, 1989)



found that forty-one states had raised standards for high school graduation with the affects beginning to appear in 1985. The Educational Testing Service updated this survey for the 1986-87 school year and reported that reform activity had already begun to decline even though student and teacher testing activity had continued to increase.

#### Access and the Results of Reform

What Americans Study (1989) was a survey of course taking patterns for high school graduates from 1982 to 1987 based on actual school transcripts of randomly selected students. The Educational Testing Service study did not address quality of courses; it did address quantity and what courses were taken according to race, gender and socio-economic status.

In essence, the Educational Testing Service reported some progress in strengthening the core high school curriculum, however there was still evidence that disparities continued to persist by race, gender and socio-economic level. Factors associated with subjects studied were partially explained by gender, education level of parents, study help in the home and educational expectations. While two-thirds to three-fourths of the variation was unaccounted for, higher educational expectations for the students were associated with higher rates of academic course-taking within the subgroups

(ETS, 1989). Under-represented groups overall made only slight progress in what Goodlad (1988) calls the "high status" courses, i.e., math, science.

Education Reform: Initial Efforts in Four School Districts (1989) was the first multistate study to explore the effects of educational reform on performance, drop-out rates and enrollment patterns. Essentially, legislators wanted to know if educational reform as additional/elevated requirements for high school graduation had an effect on the achievement of educationally disadvantaged students, drop-out rates for these students and/or their enrollment in vocational education.

The General Accounting Office examined data from four large school districts in four states which had undergone comprehensive state level reforms. The new requirements had been in effect long enough for a class of students to have participated in at least three years of high school under the new requirements. Academic records of 61,000 students were examined. Using reading scores and math scores for each of the four districts, eight cases for analysis were generated.

Results in regard to the performance of educationally disadvantaged demonstrated that educational reform, i.e., more stringent high school requirements was not particularly remarkable in either direction (GAO, 1989). Disadvantaged students' performance improved modestly in three of eight

cases. There was no evidence of improvement in the other five cases. Black students demonstrated a pattern similar to disadvantaged students. Hispanic students showed no improvement associated with reform in six of eight cases. There were no Hispanic students in the remaining two cases. Interestingly, higher achieving students did about the same as disadvantaged students. Overall, there were neither marked gains nor marked losses and reforms did not benefit the advantaged students more than the disadvantaged.

Effects of reform on dropouts were mixed. Only two schools maintained adequate records on dropouts. In one school, the number of dropouts increased and in the other, numbers decreased.

The increased enrollment in academic courses as a result of reform did have a negative impact on the number of disadvantaged students enrolling in vocational courses. In one school the decline was seven percent, in another, eleven percent. The other schools reflected smaller declines.

From these studies, it appears as though not much has changed in the way schooling happens. The issue remains "Who shall be educated?" How?

Over the years, there have been a multitude of first-order changes, those that make some modification in practices and rules according to Larry Cuban (1988); but there have been few second-order changes, those that change existing organizational structure (Eisner, 1988). Both Cuban (1988) and Eisner

(1988) would agree that little has been done with curriculum except to make it relatively benign. Cuban (1988) has stated that the historic design of public schooling initiated . . . in the middle of the nineteenth century remains essentially intact. Goodlad (1983) said it best perhaps when he stated:

Committed to the factory model without feeling the need to validate it, our reflex response to school problems as citizens and educators is to increase pressure through mandates, testing requirements, new standards for college entrance and the like (Goodlad, 1983, p. 465)

Students have continued to be tested and tracked often with students of ethnicity and lower socio-economic levels being tracked in a way that excludes them from "high status" subjects (Goodlad and Oakes, 1988) and essentially leads them to failure (Tobias, 1989). Oakes (in Tobias, 1989) has gone so far as to suggest that the underlying thrust behind ever increasing testing and tracking is to resegregate schools. The February 1990 Phi Delta Kappan reported that approximately two-thirds of the nation's middle schools continue to use some ability grouping. Earlier data have indicated that schools with more than a twenty percent African-American enrollment have used tracking/grouping with all subjects. Even in desegregated schools, ability

grouping has ethnic concentrations (Braddock II, 1990). This kind of data forces the question of access as rhetoric or reality.

### Access Legislated

The mid-sixties yielded federal legislation for the purpose of assuring access for all minorities, i.e., African-Americans, Hispanics, women, handicapped and disadvantaged. The Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibits discrimination in admission to colleges based on race, sex, handicap, age, or ethnicity (Kaplan, 1985). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 with subsequent Titles VI, VII, and IX affords a measure of protection to individuals seeking access to higher education (U.S. Constitution in Kaplan, 1985).

While federal legislation has opened doors it has not proven itself to be the solution to continuing questions surrounding educational equity as access to an opportunity to learn in the higher education setting (Herring, 1988). One only needs to review the declining enrollment and retention figures for African-Americans and Hispanics during the eighties to see that legislated open doors are not enough (Carnegie Foundation, 1987; Blake, 1989). University and college standards embodied in admissions policies continue to reflect elitist conceptions of who is a fit person to be a student (Fulton, 1988). Efforts of

colleges to raise admission criteria even further have been anticipated to have a significant negative impact on the educational future of under-represented groups (Boratz-Snowden, 1987).

Establishment of two-year community colleges promised "universal education for all." The junior college student body changed from a select group preparing for a four-year degree to a group more reflective of the community. Along with this change came indications that the new full-time students in community colleges were low or marginal achievers (Roueche and Hurlhurt, 1968; Moore, 1971; Astin, 1975). Given circumstances of alarming attrition rates and references to the open-door as a revolving door, Roueche (et al., 1968) implied that "the open-door concept (access?) is only valid if low-achieving students are provided programs of accommodation." In essence, the door would truly be open only if attention was directed to student achievement.

Moore (1971) discussed black students in the community college and the inattention paid to their culture and the coercion exerted to force upon them a white education. Little was done to make curricula relevant for blacks and/or socially and educationally disadvantaged students (Moore, 1971). Moore contended that blacks were also denied entrance because of inability to meet white standards of measure; for those who did gain entry, completion of a degree was unlikely (Astin, 1975).

According to Astin (1975), American higher education has been regarded as the most accessible post-secondary educational system in the world. Since the inception of the Morrill Act of 1862, every state in the union has established open access institutions. The key issue here is one of defining and/or clarifying what is meant by the term 'access'. Does one have access if one is underprepared for college level work? Does one have access if one has had little exposure to 'high status' courses and/or little exposure to information about post-secondary opportunities; if one is expected to achieve less or if one is discouraged from pursuing opportunity in a higher education setting? The literacy rates of high school graduates began declining in the 1960's. As a result, students entering two year colleges have had inadequate basic skills (Colby and Opp, 1987). Consequently, these colleges have created large scale developmental education programs with access and success as major objectives (OBOR, 1988). Yet, the same issues prevail, "Who shall be educated?" and "How shall they be educated?" Testing continues in the form of assessment for placement with debate about validity and questions about appropriateness of curricula.

### Access: Rhetoric or Reality

Today, the meaning of access is nested in the concept of educational equity - student access to learning. Educational equity is viewed as evolving through three stages: access to school, access to resources, and access to learning (Murphy, 1988). It is certain that we know what conditions are necessary for effective teaching. (Roueche, 1983; Roueche and Baker, 1986; Goodlad, 1988). How these conditions for learning are distributed to different groups of students is an important access issue. Murphy (1988) has contended that distribution of learning conditions varies along curricular tracks. Goodlad and Oakes (1988) would concur that certain distribution practices do exist and they do have an impact on learning. "Nowhere in schooling do . . . misconceptions (about individual differences) have a more powerful effect than in grouping and tracking practices found in schools (Goodlad and Oakes, 1988)." Grant and Sleeter (1984) have cited several studies that revealed race and social class as factors in assignment of students to curricular tracks. In addition, lower track students are offered less imaginative and dull instruction, while upper track students are offered better instruction, more resources and greater encouragement.

While the concept (what) of access has evolved through the sixties, seventies, and eighties, the how of accomplishment is still open for debate. It



is clear that while legislation has mandated equal access to schooling, level of responsiveness to the mandate varies among levels and types of schools. Access to resources also varies accordingly and most importantly access to learning is conditional. By conditional, it is meant that one has access to learning under certain conditions. If one is unfortunate enough to be lacking in those conditions then access is limited or denied. Those conditions are still imposed by race, gender, social class, and accompanying misconceptions of individual differences. It seems that schooling in America may still be on the track of determining "who is fit for college" and it also seems as though this may be done before certain students even become aware of "universal education for all."

#### Failure to Participate in Post-Secondary Education as an Attrition Issue

##### Dropping Out

While access issues address how it is that certain groups of individuals are denied opportunity to learn in a variety of educational settings, attrition addresses early or premature departure from various educational settings. Attrition has been well studied as "dropping out" of high school and as "dropping out" of college (Rumberger, 1987; Tinto, 1987; Wehlage and Rutter, 1986; Rumberger, 1983; Pascarella and Chapman, 1983).

### High School Attrition

According to Rumberger (1987), interest in studying attrition from high school has stemmed from steady and increasing numbers of early departures among white males; among racial and ethnic minorities; and among students whose commitment to school is weakened by legislated raises in academic course requirements. In addition, interest has peaked from a widespread belief that job skills of the future will call for higher educational requirements (Hudson Institute, 1987; Parnell, 1985). Research has shown that students have a broad range of reasons for leaving school prematurely. Among reasons are educational level of parents; socio-economic status; poor academic achievement; marriage and/or pregnancy; and behavioral problems such as absenteeism, truancy and discipline. There is little doubt that "dropping out" is influenced by race, sex, and family background and that it has both social and economic implications.

Much to Rumberger's (1987) disliking, the individual to whom the term "dropout" has been assigned is often viewed as deficient and/or as a failure. Yet according to Rumberger (1987), in many instances students who have experienced little control over their lives in school find goal attainment, enhanced self-esteem and control over their own lives after early departure.

Even though most of the research on early departure from high school has focused on characteristics of the individual, some researchers (Wehlage and

Rutter, 1986; Rumberger, 1987) have suggested the focus needs to shift from the individual, family and social perspective to focus on implications for shaping school policy and practice. Wehlage and Rutter's (1987) findings have not dispelled the importance of individual characteristics; however, they have suggested that student and school interactions can produce "dropouts." The idea is that "dropping out" is symptomatic of a mis-match between the individual and the school environment (Wehlage and Rutter, 1986; Fine, 1986; Toles, Schulz, and Rice, 1986). Certain student characteristics plus certain school characteristics add up to early departure. Wehlage and Rutter's (1986) research has generated three characteristics of schools based on students' perceptions, that have impact on student "stay in" or "dropout": teacher interest in student; ineffective/unfair discipline; and truancy. Not only do these characteristics have impact on early departures but it has also been demonstrated that these characteristics affect the levels of engagement by students who stay to graduate (Wehlage and Rutter, 1986). According to Wehlage and Rutter (1986) schools are unnecessarily harsh and discouraging to adolescents in performing sorting functions. "Sorting and selection does not require schools to be negative and alienating." Wehlage and Rutter (1986) have further suggested that the dropout problem grows out of conflict and estrangement resulting in various discipline problems. Ultimately students reject the system which has rejected them. While Wehlage and Rutter's (1986)

research does not show marked differences between dropouts' and stay ins' views of school fairness and effectiveness, their data have indicated dropouts do have greater discipline problems across the white, hispanic and black races. Of interest is the finding that almost all youth who eventually dropout, view themselves in the early years of high school as graduating.

### College Attrition

In the early 1980's, approximately ninety-two percent of all first time college students came from the preceding high school class. Six percent delayed college for one or more years and the remainder of students were adults re-entering school after several years of academic inactivity (Tinto, 1987). In 1986, in Ohio, forty percent of college entrants were twenty-five years of age or older. This shift in the age of college entrants has occurred in both four-year and two-year institutions (OBOR, 1988). Yet characteristics of college entrants continue to represent more able and more affluent members of the college age group, i.e., higher ability and higher social status than high school seniors in general (Tinto, 1987). Today the average student in a four-year university is as likely to be female as male, eighteen to twenty-four years of age, white and dependent upon family for financial assistance (OBOR, 1988). Of all college freshman, Noel (1985) has stated that one-third dropout. Tinto (1987) has stated that more students leave college prior to completion

than stay. It has also been suggested that a comprehensive picture of departure from higher education is difficult to create. Frequently dropout data has been built only on students entering college for the first time in a degree program in one year. Unrecognized are students in non-degree programs and delayed entrants. It is estimated that college participation rate is underestimated by at least ten percent by not counting delayed entrants (Tinto, 1987). Overall, the total four-year college departure rate is estimated to be approximately half of the original entrant group (Tinto, 1987; Astin, 1975). Departure rate in the two-year college sector is significantly higher. Approximately seventy percent of students will depart before degree completion. Of those who depart, rates are highest among Hispanics, African Americans, and persons with lesser ability and lower socio-economic status.

Literature on early departure from college bears some strong resemblances to the high school dropout literature. The individual described as a "dropout" is viewed negatively and as failing in the academic setting (although this may not be the case) (Tinto, 1987). Attention has been focused again on characteristics of the individual: socio-economic status of the student/family, level of parents education, the individual's educational preparation and ability, parental values, influence of peers, and individual motivation. In addition, the individual withdrawing prematurely from college may perceive an ill fit between self and campus. The student may also

perceive discrimination; be ineligible for financial aid; be unable to negotiate the system or be unable to make new friends or find new activities (Tinto, 1987; Pascarella et al., 1983).

### Theories of Departure

Tinto (1987), in a review of theories of departure, has suggested that at least two types of theories exist: psychological and societal. Psychological theories have emphasized intellectual ability and personality characteristics of the individual such as motivation and willingness to comply, i.e., meet the demands of the college situation. Societal theories have focused on the broader effect of social and economic factors on the individual. According to Tinto (1987), societal theories have differed based on underlying views of social success. Karabel (1972) has suggested success in higher education is determined by sorting and selecting the elite and that departure is a process of social stratification. Others (Featherman and Duncan, 1972) have viewed withdrawal as a meritocratic process which is reflective of individual skills and abilities rather than social status.

Tinto (1987) has implied that both psychological and societal models of departure ignore the role the institution plays in student departure from college. His individual theory of departure is highly differentiative. It is explained as interaction between two primary characteristics of the individual: intention and

commitment and individual experiences within the institution categorized as: adjustment, difficulty, incongruence and isolation. Each of these kinds of experiences is suggestive of an interactional relationship between the individual and the academic setting. Tinto (1987) has implied that this theory of departure relies upon both psychological and societal theories of departure. In essence, his model of departure is summarized as:

. . . arising out of a longitudinal process of interactions between an individual with given attributes, skills, and dispositions (intentions and commitments) and other members of the academic and social systems of the institution. The individual's experience in those contexts, as indicated by his/her intellectual and social (personal) integration, continually modify those intentions and commitments. Positive experiences--that is, integrative ones--reinforce persistence through their impact upon heightened intentions and commitments both to the goal of college completion and to the institution in which the person finds him/herself. (Tinto, 1987, p. 113)

The research discussed in previous paragraphs is representative of traditional positivist methodologies. Feminist researcher, Frances Stage (1987) has suggested that much of the past data on early departures from college are primarily monocultural. That is to say that previous research has focused on the white upper and middle class students in large residential research universities. Her work with Tinto's model has revealed differences between

majority and minority students and between males and females (1987).

Working with high school students and influences on plans to pursue post-secondary education, Stage (1988) again found differences between males and females.

Literature on early departures from high school and/or college produced from interpretivist inquiry appeared scant in preparation of this dissertation. In 1985, Giles examined early departure from high school among Native Americans in a large urban school setting. Intense interviewing revealed:

. . . students assimilated into American middle-class values regarding man and nature, time orientation, and relations with others were found to be more likely to finish high school than those encultured into Native American values (Giles, 1985).

Other interpretivist inquiries, using the case study method have focused on alienation from schooling (Fensham, ed., 1986). Exhibited in truancy, discipline and dropout behavior, alienation has generally been viewed from one of two perspectives: from a societal perspective in which the student is alienated from the world as a whole; or from an educational perspective in which the school is viewed as the primary cause of the alienation (Tripp in Fenshaw, 1986).



### Staying In

There was little literature discovered and reviewed identifying the "stay in" or non-college bound high school graduate as a "dropout" from the "educational pipeline." Comparisons have been made between "stay ins" and "dropouts" by Wehlage and Rutter (1986) in terms of students' views regarding experiences in school. In substance, non-college bound "stay ins" across whites, African Americans, and Hispanics were found to be as likely to view school experiences negatively related to teacher interest in student, effectiveness of discipline and fairness of discipline as "dropouts." However, "stay ins" generally were found to be more satisfied overall with school than "dropouts." The Wehlage and Rutter (1986) research has also demonstrated marked differences between "stay ins" and "dropouts" related to personal histories of disciplinary actions such as suspension, probation and truancy.

Addressing "stay ins" who are non-college bound as the "neglected majority", Parnell (1985) has suggested these individuals could be viewed as victims of a "bifurcated educational system", one that separates the "academically talented" from the "not-so-talented." In essence, students can be viewed as college material or non-college material (four-year college). Parnell (1985) has been strong in his criticisms of education's inability to see secondary schools as a place of resource development. He has cited studies by Coleman, Adelman and Feters as evidence that tracking students in high

school remains a reality. Goodlad and Oakes (1988) have implied tracking is exclusionary along race, gender and socio-economic lines. Parnell (1985) has suggested that "stay ins" will need technical skills and knowledge beyond high school preparation into the year 2000. Unfortunately, he has seen them ("stay ins") on a track which fails to promote their potential for post-secondary education.

### Appalachian Perspective

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) has viewed early departure from high school as an obstacle to improvement of the economy and quality of life in the Appalachian Region. The early departure rate is as high as fifty percent in some counties. (Campbell Communications, Inc., 1987). In addition, high school graduates enroll in post-secondary education at a much lower rate than do high school graduates nationally (American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, 1986; 1988). Russell (1985) has indicated that tradition places Appalachian high school graduates in the same occupational settings as families, in the military or on the farm. Unless there is family precedence for post-secondary education, Appalachians see little relationship between education and employment (Baghban, 1984). While ARC has been awarded federal funds to create public awareness of early departure

and has initiated prevention efforts in the recent past, it appears little attention has been paid to the non-college bound high school graduate.

### Summary

Chapter Two has attempted to synthesize some of the literature addressing two concepts relevant to the research questions presented in this study. Chapter Two has addressed failure to participate in post-secondary education as an access or educational equity issue. Access has been discussed from a historical perspective in terms of reform movements and results of reforms and legislation, and in present day realities.

Chapter Two has also presented failure to participate in post-secondary education as an issue of attrition. Both high school attrition and college attrition have been discussed. In addition, theories of early departure from the academic setting have been overviewed with attention given to Tinto's (1987) model of individual departure. Short segments on "stay ins" and attrition in the Appalachian Region conclude Chapter Two.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

How can I know what you experience? If what you experience is a vital aspect of your being, how can I discover, understand, give meaning to that experience? These questions reflect the interpretivist nature of this study. The methodologies emphasize construction of a life or world. In Husserlian terms, the methods have sought to understand "Lebenswelt" or the world of lived experiences (Husserl, Elliston and McCormick, eds., 1977). The symbols by which I have attempted to understand the lived experiences of three individuals in this study are words, that is to say, language. The reader must keep in mind that language is illusive. All cannot be known about the said or unsaid. Yet, there is potential to add to traditional meaning that makes claim to truth (Ihde, 1971).

### Background and Context for the Study

According to the Ohio Board of Regents policy study on Access and Success (1988), Ohio's rate of participation in higher education has been historically low. Ohio is concerned about a productive economy, a transition from heavy industry to light manufacturing and the related importance of advanced job skills. Those skills are projected to require some degree of post-secondary education. In 1984, Stafford (et al.) reported Ohio to be ranked thirty-fifth among all states in college participation in 1971 and thirty-third in 1980. Participation in higher education among the entire population in Ohio is lower than the regional and national average even though secondary graduation rates are higher than the average (OBOR, 1988).

In Ohio, twenty-nine of eighty-eight counties are part of a federally designated Appalachian region. Figure 1 (Appendix A) identifies the Appalachian counties of Ohio. The college participation rate in these counties is lower than the state average (except the county in which Ohio University is located). Ergood and Kuhre (1983) have characterized Appalachian communities as having high rates of unemployment, low per capita income, family poverty, and low levels of adult educational attainment. Education has been recognized as a means to an end for Appalachia's social and economic problems (Bullock, et al., 1985).

The community in which this study was conducted is situated in southeastern Ohio's Appalachian region. The unemployment rate has reached levels of 9.1%, considerably higher than the state average of 5.4% (Ohio Department of Development, 1990). Only thirty-seven percent of the population over twenty-five years of age has graduated from high school (U.S. Census, 1980). The community is eighty-five percent white, fourteen percent African-American and one percent other races/ethnicity. Preliminary figures from the 1990 U.S. Census indicate little or no change in the racial composition of the community.

The community provides public and private elementary and secondary schools as well as opportunities for higher education such as a branch campus of a state university, a technical college, and a private liberal arts college situated within the county. As an Ohioan, as a life time recipient/consumer of Ohio's public education system, as a higher education administrator, and as a researcher I have been inquisitive about a phenomenon implicit in the demographic data revealing lower than average levels of college participation in Ohio Appalachian counties.

### The Focal Event

This study provided descriptive case studies of three academically-able seniors in one Appalachian Ohio high school and their choices not to pursue post-secondary education. The approach was interactional and was designed to contribute to an understanding of the focal event. Meaning was given to events as students spoke in their own voices about their own experiences in making their choices. The inquiry process was interpretivist in nature. Erickson's (1973) rationale for application of such an inquiry process is in making the "familiar strange." That is to say, questioning the commonplace, that which may go unnoticed, creates understanding and new knowledge.

Within this chapter, the general methodology is discussed; the site of the study described and rationale for its selection stated; the population is defined; the procedures for participant/student selection identified; instrumentation addressed; and research practices and techniques presented.

### General Methodology

The research design for this study may be compared to Bogdan and Biklen's (1982) definition of microethnography and application of the case study form termed situational analysis. The site was one small unit of a larger microcosm of schooling and the focal event, i.e., students' choices, was

studied from the points of view of three students, their parents, selected teachers, and school administrators. The in-depth interviews were conducted in mid-September through October 1991 following the students' Spring 1991 graduation from high school. All interviews with student and parent participants were conducted in their respective homes over a period of four to six weeks. The parents were not present during student interviews except during the first when explanations of the project and the procedures were provided and when consents to participate were signed by parents and students. The students were not present during the parent interviews. In each of the instances, the parents were interviewed after the third meeting with the students. The rapport and trustworthiness established with the students was used facilitatively to gain the students' cooperation in urging their parents to follow through with the interview sessions. Student participant selection procedures are discussed later in this chapter under participant selection.

Selected teachers were solicited by telephone for interviews. Each solicited teacher agreed to be interviewed. Two teacher interviews occurred in their respective classrooms and one occurred in the researcher's office. Each teacher signed a consent to participate in the project after explanations of the project and related procedures were discussed. Teachers were interviewed prior to the researcher's last interview with their respective students. This



allowed opportunity to clarify issues with students should inconsistencies in stories create questions. However, students were not informed that their teachers were involved in interview procedures of the project.

Interviews with the principal of the primary site high school and the senior high school guidance counselor were conducted after completion of the student, parent and teacher interviews. These interviews took place in the school office of each individual. Appropriate consent forms were signed. Data gathered from school records, interviews with parents, selected teachers, and administrators/counselors were triangulated with student interview data.

Observations of students, parents, teachers, administrators and the school environment were conducted under varied circumstances in order a) to gather and record data; b) to participate in the lives of participants; and c) to maintain a professional distance (Fetterman, 1989). Prior to selecting participants, I visited the school no less than eight (8) times. Four different classroom settings were observed. This descriptive data was used to characterize the school's environment and culture.

Prior to meeting each participant for the first time, I sought out the neighborhood and familiarized myself with the location. On three occasions, I walked within the neighborhoods and talked to individuals in the neighborhood. Before each interview session, I drove to the neighborhood at least fifteen

minutes prior to the meeting time and parked my car a distance from the participant's home. This time was used to reflect upon what I saw in the neighborhood and to get focused on the ensuing interview session. Prior to each meeting, I reviewed the interview guide and the previous interview tape. I identified areas for clarification. During each interview session, participants, their families, and the home situations were observed. Following each interview, approximately one hour was spent in reflection and recording observer comments.

In-depth interview and observation are the substance of interpretivist inquiry (Denzin, 1989; Fetterman, 1989; Lincoln and Guba, 1989; Erickson, 1986; Bogdan and Biklen, 1982). They are research techniques that allowed me to become part of, or to immerse myself in the participant's world. Entering their worlds has facilitated a better understanding of the individual's experiences. Using the non-scheduled standardized interview approach as a framework and guide (Denzin, 1989), I was able to maintain focus yet facilitate individual comfort for each participant in addressing the topic of the research project. Interviews with parents, selected teachers, and school administrators of the participants told stories about the participants that have enhanced the construction of an empirical reality. While Fetterman (1989)

has suggested that ethnographic study ideally takes place over months of observation, the descriptions of the worlds of the participants in this dissertation research provide a candid snapshot of three academically-able students and their choices not to pursue post-secondary education.

#### Respect for Individual Privacy and Confidentiality

Protection of information about the students, parents, teachers and school administrators was negotiated with each of them during the initial agreements to participate in the study. Agreements were reviewed at the conclusion of the subject/researcher relationship. Review of information and a chance to revise agreements pertaining to confidentiality afforded flexibility while still protecting the participants (Erickson, 1986). Within the research report, the names of the students, parents, teachers, and administrators are pseudonyms. The names of the schools and the community have been changed or deleted. While no one from consultant group members to school administrators seemed concerned about their identity becoming known, I was extremely sensitive to the fact that the three student participants and their parents were uninformed about the actual focus of the study. Throughout this dissertation every effort has been made to protect the identity of these students and their families.

### Site Selection

Two sites were selected for the course of this study. The primary site was the high school which provided data leading to the selection of the three participants upon whom this study focused. The second site was a parochial high school which provided a pilot group or 'consultant' group of students.

The primary site is a city high school in rural Appalachia Ohio. Enrollment for the 1990-91 academic year was 1,229 students in grades nine through twelve. There were 257 graduating members of the class of 1991. Minority student population in the school has been stable at approximately fifteen percent. It is the only public high school in the district. Rationale for selection of this high school as the primary site include the documentation of low numbers of high school graduates in Appalachia Ohio pursuing post-secondary education immediately out of high school (OBOR 1988), and the suggestion by Bogdan and Biklen (1982) that a novice researcher (such as myself) might be wise to confine her first research project to a single site (p. 65).

The second site, or site from which a consultant group was chosen, is a small parochial high school in the same rural Appalachian community. This school is also located within the city limits. Enrollment for the 1990-91 academic year at the second site was 250 students in grades nine through

twelve. There were sixty members of the senior class of 1991. The minority population is less than ten percent. The role and purpose of the consultant group is discussed in more detail under the heading of Consultant Group.

### Gaining Entry

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1982), access to the site of fieldwork is one of the first obstacles that must be overcome. In the process of planning strategy for entry, there is discussion in the literature about overt and covert approaches (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982). My approach to entry was forthright. In January 1991, a telephone call requesting an appointment preceded a visit to the superintendent of schools for the primary site. There was full disclosure as to the nature of the study and the role the high school was being requested to assume. The superintendent agreed to provide access to the high school and to the necessary school files/records through the head of the guidance department. While I was prepared to discuss with the superintendent the level of intrusiveness of the study and potential benefits to the school from the study as suggested in a variety of discussions on gaining entry to fieldwork sites (Erickson, 1973; Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; Lincoln and Guba, 1989), I found little questioning about or resistance to my request. The focus of concern was maintaining confidentiality. In closing, the superintendent suggested I

telephone him should I encounter any difficulty in gaining admittance to the school or gaining access to data through the head of guidance at the primary site. An edited version of the superintendent's letter of support to The Ohio State University Human Subjects Review Committee appears in Appendix B. The letter was edited in order to maintain confidentiality.

Entry to the parochial high school, site for selection of the consultant group, was facilitated through a telephone call and subsequent visit to the school principal. Again, a forthright approach was taken. The nature of the study was disclosed as well as the role the school would assume in selection of, and access to the student consultants. The request was made to interview the student group during school hours but not during classroom instruction time. The principal agreed to facilitate the scheduling of interview time. An edited version of the principal's letter of support to the Human Subjects Review Committee appears in Appendix B. Again, the letter was edited in order to protect the identity of individuals, the school, and the community.

The initial phases of gaining entry to both sites went smoothly. This may be attributed to the notion of insider access. While I am not part of the public or private elementary and secondary school systems in the community, I am a member of the educational community and hold a recognized position in higher education within the community. As a result of the professional

network and existent linkages, an element of trustworthiness and rapport already existed (Lincoln & Guba, 1989; Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; Wax, 1971). Letters to confirm agreements were sent to the superintendent of the primary site and the principal of the second site after the visits; copies appear in Appendix B.

The first meeting with the head of the guidance department at the primary site took place in mid February 1991. The individual was courteous yet hesitant about providing the data requested even though the superintendent had granted me access to school records. After polite conversational volleys and his attempts to suggest other methods of gathering data, the head of guidance referred me to the guidance counselor assigned to the senior class.

Arrangements to meet with John, guidance counselor for the high school seniors, were made by telephone. We met on March 15, 1991, in his office at the high school. John was attentive, interested and cooperative as I explained my research project and addressed the data gathering procedures. He indicated he could provide the information I requested easily and without much additional effort on his part. He took notes and suggested we meet again in May, close to the graduation date for student participants in this study. A May time frame allowed him the opportunity to collect the most current data on students' post-high school career plans. (At various points throughout this

chapter, the reader will find references to this meeting with John. Several of his suggestions were incorporated into the methodology of participant selection and data gathering.) Since John and I had been acquainted previously, we concluded our initial meeting by sharing conversation about our families and our own adolescent children. We agreed to meet in late May prior to the graduation of the class of 1991.

Facilitating arrangements for forming the consultant group seemed to produce the most apprehension for me as a novice researcher. Having gained permission for my project from the school principal of the secondary site in January, I was eager to get started. However, permission from The Ohio State University Office of Research Risks to conduct the research project with school age participants was not finalized until April 17, 1991 (Appendix C). With only five weeks until graduation, school officials were busy and difficult to reach by telephone. Yet, I had to form a consultant group and conduct interviews with this group before graduation. It was during this period that I first identified two "Subjective I's." Further discussion of my personal insights and awarenesses are located in another section of this chapter under the subheading of "Researcher as Instrument."

By late April, graduation activities kept school officials occupied. Encountering mild difficulty in connecting with the principal of the small



parochial school, where he was active as a teacher and as an administrator, I took advantage of my familiarity with the school secretary. After hearing a brief explanation of the project and my data request, the secretary determined that the guidance counselor could give the information and assistance needed. One conversation with the guidance counselor revealed a willing helper to aid with the logistics of forming the consultant group.

### The Consultant Group

My purpose for a consultant group arose out of Hall's (1983) notion that novice field researchers (1) enter the field without guiding questions or framework and (2) enter the field without an awareness of how their own perspective affects what questions are asked and how answers are interpreted.

Interaction with the consultant group gave me the opportunity:

a) to test my interviewing skills and my pre-determined/focused interview questions for ability to elicit responses about the research topic, and b) to test and/or experience my responses to the students' feedback, i.e., discover "hot" and "cool" spots within myself in relationship to the research topic.

Subjectivity of the researcher as instrument is discussed later in this chapter.

Early in May, the student consultants were solicited from seniors in the top quartile of their class at the small parochial high school (the second site) in

the same Appalachian community as the primary site high school. Thirteen students comprised the top twenty-five percent of this small senior class as identified by the guidance counselor. All thirteen were invited to participate in the research project via a letter written by the researcher and distributed by the counselor. A letter of explanation to the parents and a parental consent form accompanied the students' letters. Copies of letters and consent forms appear in Appendix D. Eight (8) students choosing to participate returned the signed parental consent forms to the counselor. These students were considered the consultant group.

Rosita, the counselor, arranged five meetings with the consultant group during school time in the month of May. Each meeting was a full class period, i.e., forty minutes in length. In order to avoid interruption of the normal instructional classroom pattern, interviews were conducted during students' study hall time.

There were two frames of the interview questions for the consultant group. The first focus involved student perspectives on academically able students who choose not to pursue post-secondary education. The second focus involved student advice about 'best ways' to approach the potential participants (for the body of the research) in order to enhance willingness to participate. The Consultant Group interview guide can be found in Appendix E.

At the first interview session with the consultant group, the nature of the research was reviewed, the role of the researcher in the project explained and an example of a dissertation presented. Comments from students ranged from "Why do you have to do this?" to ". . . and I thought I had it tough to write a ten page paper the last two weeks of school!"

Prior to beginning the interview, issues of confidentiality were explained. Students were told their names and the name of their school would not be used in the final research report. In addition, students were told their comments would not be shared with school officials in any way other than through the final research report/dissertation. Opportunity for questions and for withdrawal from the group was given. All students expressed willingness to help me with my schoolwork and each consented to having his/her comments tape recorded. Students signed consents to participate and to have their interviews recorded.

#### Composition of the Consultant Group

The Consultant Group was composed of seven (7) females and one (1) male student. All students identified themselves as college-bound. Six (6) of the eight (8) students were first generation college-goers. All six (6) of these students indicated they would be attending college with financial aid or

scholarship assistance. Three (3) of these six (6) students were from single parent homes; three (3) were from two parent homes. The two (2) second generation college goers were from two parent families. Financial support for these two (2) students would be provided by parents. All consultant group students identified themselves as in the "college prep" curriculum at school.

While content analysis of these interviews may have proven informative, the primary focus needed to remain on the objectives of this phase of the project, i.e.,

1. to assess my interview/field research skills.
2. to assess the ability of the focused questions to elicit more than yes/no or one word responses from interviewees.
3. to gather consultant group suggestions for soliciting student participation in the body of the research project.

#### Consultant Group Outcomes and Assessment of Research Interview/Fieldwork Skills

The actual interviewing experience with the Consultant Group created several awarenesses with implications for methodology. First, I discovered I was not particularly skillful at asking questions, observing, listening, and taking notes simultaneously. Second, while keeping up with notations and

responses from the group was futile for me, it was also distracting for the group.

According to Brown (1954), the researcher must have tools for collecting data in a way that is unobtrusive to the relationship. Having also planned to audio tape record the interviews, I had equipped myself with tape recorder, several tapes, a highly sensitive microphone and an adapter for power in event of battery failure. These pieces of equipment proved to be invaluable. I determined I would trust technology and avoid notetaking during any of the interview sessions. Equipment was tested just prior to each interview and batteries in the recorder were changed three times during the entire data collection period as a preventative measure. The tape recorder had an activation light that allowed the recording function to be monitored.

#### Consultant Group Outcomes and Assessment of Interview Guide

From five forty-minute interview sessions with the consultant group, eighty-seven typewritten pages of transcription were produced. I discovered that students responded in most instances with four to five word answers to the questions in the interview guide. Longer responses were easily prompted by researcher probes such as "go on;" "can you elaborate;" "explain that for me." I determined the interview guide provided a framework for the body of the

research; yet also it was essential to utilize open-ended statements and questions that elicited clarifying or expanded responses from the participants.

### Consultant Group Outcomes and Solicitation of Participants for the Body of the Research Project

The Consultant Group eagerly shared their opinions of how to solicit the participation of other students for the body of the research. They all indicated that a written appeal to the student asking for help with my school work was an effective approach. It had worked with them. They also said "pay them" or "give them money." Both suggestions were incorporated into the methodology for soliciting students to participate in the body of the research.

### Population

The population from which four primary participants were chosen for this study was defined as all seniors in the primary high school who ranked in the top twenty-five percent of their graduating class. Seniors in the top quartile were identified by school records listing students according to class rank by grade point average. Sixty students were identified to form the

population for this study. Within the group there were forty females and twenty males.

### Participant Selection

According to Patton (1990), "qualitative inquiry typically focuses in-depth on relatively small samples . . . selected purposefully." Contrary to probability sampling which is dependent upon randomness and statistically representative samples, purposeful sampling selects "information rich" cases from which one can learn a great deal (Patton, 1990). Through purposeful sampling the researcher strives to gain credibility for data produced versus gaining generalizability for data produced from probability sampling (Patton, 1990). The purposeful and systematic process of participant selection plays a major role in the emergent design of this study. Without interaction between participants and researcher, any emergent design would have been lost (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The three students who eventually agreed to participate in in-depth interviews were selected from the top quartile of the senior class at the primary high school site. The selection process is discussed in the following paragraphs.

By the May meeting at the primary site, the guidance counselor had produced for me a computer printout listing those students ranked in the top

twenty-five percent of the senior class as of February, 1991. Sixty names appeared on the list. Supporting demographic data were provided by common application forms used to teach students how to complete college applications. The completed forms were copied and the copies were given directly to me. For each student who submitted the form, I had an address, phone number, and in some instances race, and/or ethnicity, and the parent or guardian's name. For students in the top quartile who had for whatever reasons not submitted the common application forms, the guidance counselor provided a piece of paper for each student, listing name, address, phone number and parents'/guardian's name.

At our meeting in March, John had suggested that international students in exchange programs and students in special education programs be eliminated as potential participants. For the purpose of this study, I viewed this suggestion as appropriate. The names of three (3) female exchange students and two (2) special education students (1 male, 1 female) were removed from the list of students (60) in the top quartile of the senior class. The student population for this study now consisted of thirty-six females and nineteen males.

Of the remaining fifty-five (55) students, the guidance counselor had indicated on the bottom of each common application form the name of the



college or university each college bound student reported he or she would be attending. There were thirty-five (35) students identified as college bound. These students were eliminated as potential interview participants.

Twenty students remained on the list of students in the top quartile of the senior class who were identified by the counselor as non-college bound. Among these students were fourteen (14) females and six (6) males.

Since individuals cannot be required to identify their race or ethnicity on school forms, students completed this information on the common application form voluntarily. For those who did not supply the information, the guidance counselor identified the race and/or ethnicity of students to the best of his knowledge/observation. The purpose of gathering this information was demographic. There is ample literature on the relevance of race and ethnicity to access to school and access to learning to anticipate need for the data (Coleman, et al., 1966 in Cohen, 1982; Astin, 1975; Goodlad, 1983; Goodland and Oakes, 1988). By identifying race and/or ethnicity of students, the list of potential participants in this study included one (1) black non-college bound male, five (5) white non-college bound males, zero (0) black non-college bound females, fourteen (14) white non-college bound females.

This may be an appropriate place to note that upon discussing access or entry to the high school for this study with the superintendent, and upon

expressing the desire to have four diverse participants, the superintendent stated "you won't find any black males in the top twenty-five percent--you probably won't find any black males." In fact, there were eight African American students in the top quartile: four females and four males. All four females were identified by the guidance counselor as college bound with minority scholarships and three of the four black males were identified as college bound with financial assistance through scholarships.

From the final list of twenty students (14 females, 6 males), the guidance counselor was asked to suggest students who might be open and willing to participate in several interviews with the researcher. Two females, one black male and two white males were suggested as potential participants.

#### Initiating Contact with Potential Participants

Initial contact was established with four students by mail. Two letters were sent to each home: one to the student, the other to the parents. The students' letters explained the project and solicited their assistance in helping me complete my school work by participating in the research. Enclosed with each student letter was a five dollar bill. As indicated in the section on the Consultant Group, students had suggested money would provide an incentive for participation. The money was included as a thank-you in advance for

taking the telephone call that would be following the letter. A copy of the student letter appears in Appendix F.

The parents' letters informed them that the students were being solicited for participation in an educational research project. The nature of the project was explained (to both students and parents) as gathering data about "Students' Opinions of Their High School Experiences and Their Plans for the Future." In the letters, parents were encouraged to discuss the solicitation with their respective students/children. A copy of the parent letter is located in Appendix F.

The first letters were mailed on Thursday, September 5, 1991; the plan was to telephone the students on the following Monday. On Sunday following the mailing, the first contact with a potential participant was established. The call came from the father of the selected black male student. Calling me by my first name after identifying himself he said, "Kay, I have bad news for you. Donnie left for the military a week ago." After polite exchanges, I thanked him for calling and wished his son well. As I hung up the telephone, I thought to myself, "this (establishing contact) could be a long process." On Monday morning, September 9, letters to the alternate male student and his parents were mailed.

That same Monday evening, telephone contact was established with the first female participant (the telephone solicitation guide can be found in Appendix G.) Jodi recognized my name immediately and openly agreed to participate. She stated, "Sure, I'll do it." Arrangements were made to meet with Jodi at her home on the following Friday, September 13, 1991, at seven o'clock in the evening.

The same evening (September 9, 1991) efforts were made to establish contact with the second female selected as a potential participant. Upon identifying myself, the father (identified by my inquiry) of the student indicated she had moved from Ohio to another state to live with her mother. The student was employed.

John, the high school guidance counselor, had suggested only the two female students as likely candidates to participate, I was now faced with selecting one from among the remaining twelve females. I purposely selected a student whose academic record demonstrated what Goodlad and Oakes called the "high status" courses or courses generally taken by college bound students, i.e., algebra, chemistry, college prep English. Student and parent letters were mailed to the home of a third female on September 10, 1991. The following Sunday, September 15, Diane was contacted by telephone. Using the telephone solicitation guide (Appendix G) to begin the conversation, I quickly

discovered I had found the second willing female participant. We agreed to meet on September 19, 1991, at Diane's home.

Returning to the names of the original two male students John had identified as most likely open to participation in the project, I attempted my phone calls to them also on Sunday, September 15. One male student's phone had apparently been "temporarily disconnected." Repeated telephone calls to the second male found no answers.

Days passed as I persisted in locating and communicating with both prospective male participants. In both instances, I made noon time and evening trips to homes looking for the young men. Eventually contact was made; both agreed to participate. Yet only one kept his agreement. Details of the solicitation of each of these students are described in Chapter Four.

### Researcher as Instrument

The instrument through which this interpretivist study was conducted is the researcher's self (Lincoln and Guba, 1989; Peshkin, 1988; Erickson, 1986). Putting into practice what Agar, (1980) has called the "funnel approach," I began with "breadth and humanity," strived for depth and focus, and worked to gain science at the narrow end. "Without science, we lose our

credibility. Without humanity, we lose our ability to understand others (Agar, 1980)."

A major concern of interpretivist inquiry is the subjectivity of the researcher. The core of this concern is expressed in Malinowski's (1922) notion that once the researcher enters into a relationship with the participants, impartial and unbiased observation and interpretation become impossible. Peshkin (1988) has encouraged an awareness of subjectivity. By looking for positive and negative feelings, i.e., warm and cool spots during the course of the researcher/participant relationship, the researcher uncovers his or her own areas of subjectivity. Identification of my own "warm and cool spots" enabled me to manage my "Subjective I's (Peshkin, 1988)." Awareness of my own subjectivities was enhanced in the early stages of this study by interactions with the consultant group.

Throughout the course of this study, several "Subjective I's" were identified. At the beginning of the project, I became keenly aware that within me was a strong "Novice Researcher I" and a "Compliant Student I." These two identities seemed quite compatible and/or counterbalancing. Between these two "Subjective I's" came the effort to manage apprehension and exhilaration associated with the roles of researcher and student.

As I attempted to get the project started, I was aware of the almost panicked feeling when confronted with a minor delay such as waiting for approval from the OSU Human Subjects Review Committee or being unable to make contact with school officials for days at a time. The counterbalance was the exhilaration experienced as the student, who desiring to do the academic work well, made progress. Talking to myself and deliberately seeking out more stabilizing identities within myself seemed essential during those times.

As I had anticipated, that part of me which I shall call the "Caregiver I" emerged early in the project. I chose not to deny that part of me which has been formed by family, society at large and education. After spending twenty-five years as a health care provider, one does not erase that part of the identity. There is little doubt in my mind that the selection of the interpretivist research approach for this study is closely related to my "Caregiver I." I am a helper; however, after years of studying the helping role, it becomes quite easy to identify when that role is being assumed. As interviews progressed, the triggering of the "Caregiver I" was at a level of awareness and the "Novice Researcher I" was able to redirect events. Delineation of roles was relatively easy since comfort level of each was so different. The "Caregiver I" was comfortable; the "Novice Researcher I" was uncomfortable. I monitored myself by this comfort level.

During the course of conducting the three sets of interviews, I discovered that each student struck different aspects of the "Caregiver, I". The snapshot of Jodi's life, with exception of the religious overtones, mirrored my own in many ways. Her life triggered the caring "Emancipated I" within me. This was the easiest to control, since I have assumed responsibility for my own emancipation and recognize others must take responsibility for their own or ask for assistance. In Jodi's situation, I had no emancipatory role.

Diane's situation was different. Her uncertainty, her lack of direction struck loudly at the "Therapist I". In some areas, I failed to recognize this. A peer debriefer pointed quite easily to these instances in her review of transcripts. These data were separated from more focused data.

The picture of Ben's world was indeed serious. Fatherless and perhaps even motherless in some respects, the "Nurturant I" surfaced. While I resist describing myself in a work of research as "mothering", the word best describes the "Nurturant I" triggered by Ben and his life. This part of me was easily recognized. I had no "mothering" role here.

At this point in the text of the study, my bias as an educational administrator is noticeable. By selection of the research topic and literature reviewed, my interest in access to school and learning and interest in attrition has been displayed. While I do not make the assumption every academically



able student should pursue post-secondary education, the assumption is made that students should make an informed choice and educators have the responsibility to actively seek out and engage in providing all students, and particularly all academically-able students with information that facilitates informed choice in regard to academic pursuits beyond high school.

### Peer Debriefing and Member Check

At intervals during the interviewing periods, transcripts were read by a colleague and doctoral student with whom I work. In discussions that followed, her probing questions forced me to become aware of and/or acknowledge my biases. Learning about myself was continuous during the course of conducting this research. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), debriefing keeps the researcher honest.

During the final interview with each student, I repeated questions and read responses aloud soliciting the student's agreement or disagreement with content and validation for meaning of the content. At the end of parent and teacher interviews, I summarized their responses and comments, soliciting validation or non-validation for meaning. As typed transcripts became available, they were shared openly with student participants. Disagreements with interview content or assigned meanings were clarified and noted. I

discovered that the students were quite precise about their meanings and any misinterpretations on my part were quickly corrected by them.

### Data Collection

Data for this study were produced from school records, i.e., both primary and secondary sites; interviews with school officials, the consultant group, the students upon whom this study focused, their parents, and selected teachers. Supporting information was provided through observation of the school environment; the students home situation; and observation of the students' neighborhoods and community. Interview and observation data were collected via audiotape recordings, transcription and fieldnotes.

During the preliminary phase in which the consultant group was established and interviewed, a filing system for document handling was maintained. A central file labeled 'Consultant Group' held the list of the students in the top quartile of the senior class at the secondary site high school. Copies of solicitation letters to potential consultant group students and parents were maintained in the same file. As parent consent forms were returned to the school and given to me by Rosita, the guidance counselor, a separate file for each group member was created. As this phase progressed, each consultant student's file contained the signed parental consent form; the signed student's

consent to participate, and the signed consent to audiotape record. Transcribed audiotapes were kept in a separate notebook in chronological order according to interview dates. The consultant group interviews occurred on May 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 1991.

Also during May, John, the senior guidance counselor, at the primary site high school, provided me with a list of all seniors in the top quartile of the class and copies of documents titled Common Application Form. This common application provided demographic data for all senior students in the targeted population. Supporting information included lists of courses and course grades (transcripts) for students in the top twenty-five percent of their class who were identified as non-college bound. For academically-able students who had not completed the Common Application Form, John provided sheets of paper with the same information as available from the form.

A second central file labeled "Primary Site-Central" was established for copies school of records. Once John suggested specific students as potential research participants, separate files were established; one for each student. Each file contained the students' common application form, academic transcript, copies of solicitation letters to student and parent and notes regarding contact efforts. For both the Consultant Group and the Primary

Group, I kept dates for interviews in my personal daily calendar in order to avoid any conflict between research activities and other activities.

During initial interview sessions with members of the Primary Group, each student, parent, and teacher was asked to sign a participant consent form and a consent form to be audiotape recorded (Appendix H). Signed consents were placed in each student's respective file. As interviews progressed, demographic data forms (Appendix I) were added to each student file.

In addition to signed consents, each recorded session began with identification of the interviewee by first name, the date, and the acknowledgement of the interviewee that he or she knew the discussion was being tape recorded. At the conclusion of each interview, the next meeting date and time was established; the tape was labeled with the participant's first name and the date of the recorded interview. The tapes were given to an expert at transcription and word processing. The tapes were transcribed as heard by the transcriptionist. The transcripts were stored on disk and hard copies were filed in a researcher's notebook divided into sections: one for each student participant.

A looseleaf notebook labeled "observations" was kept for field notes. Notations about the school, participants' home situations and researcher responses were recorded in this notebook.

Data collection overall began in January 1991 and ended in mid October 1991. During the early months it was sporadic, becoming more consistent during the Consultant Group Phase. From this period in April-May until late August, collection of data was again intermittent. Once potential participants had been contacted and they agreed to participate, data gathering became intense. As a novice researcher, I was concerned about managing three or four series of interviews simultaneously. I envisioned that I might bring responses/reactions from one student interview to another. In an effort to avoid this situation, time periods were staggered so I seldom did more than two interviews per week. This allowed time for pre and post interview reflection before engaging in the next interview session.

Collectively, data for this study consisted of school records, all words/responses gathered from interviews with participants, respective parents, the participants favorite teacher, school administrators/counselors and of all observations made by the researcher as reflected in field notes.

### Processing of Data

Data for this research project have been reported in the case study format. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the reporting mode for naturalistic inquiry is the case study. The same authors (Lincoln and Guba,

1985) support such a format by offering two central rationales. First, the report format raises understanding and maintains continuity and second, the format provides advantages for the inquiry. Those advantages are listed as:

The case study supports "reconstruction of the respondents' constructions."

The case study presents a holistic description that allows readers to experience the respondents world vicariously.

The case study is a vehicle for demonstrating the relationship between researcher and participant.

The case study supports opportunity for readers to probe for factual consistency and trustworthiness.

The case study provides a thick description which supports transferability of knowledge or information.

(Lincoln and Guba 1985, p 359)

Data collected during this study were processed or categorized in several phases. First, contextual data was divided into general and student specific categories. For example, data about the community and school were placed in the general context category and information/data about students' neighborhoods and homes were placed in the student specific context category. Four other categories were established for each student: a category for student responses pertinent to a priori questions in Chapter One; a category for parent responses; a category for teacher responses and a category for school official responses. These categories supported arrangement of data in a manner that

resulted in a narrative, chronicled perspective of each student's world. It also supported triangulation of parent/teacher responses with student responses.

### Summary

Chapter Three has addressed the interpretivist nature of this study; identified the focal event to be three academically-able students from one Appalachian Ohio high school who chose not to pursue post-secondary education immediately after high school and described the settings and context in which the study was conducted. Procedures for participant selection were outlined and phases of entry were discussed. Areas of researcher subjectivity were identified and methods of data collection and data analysis were reviewed.

## Glossary

**Academically-able student** - a student ranking in the top twenty-five percent of his or her high school class.

**Bright student** - academically-able.

**College prep** - curriculum designed to prepare students for college.

**Consultant group** - the academically-able seniors participating in group interviews and selected from the secondary site parochial high school.

**Focal event** - the event or phenomenon of interest in this study, i.e., academically-able seniors choosing not to pursue post-secondary education immediately after high school.

**High status courses** - courses designed as college prep and/or science and mathematics courses such as algebra, trigonometry, calculus, physics, chemistry.

**Post-secondary education** - education after high school including two and four-year collegiate programs and/or the military.

**Post-secondary education immediately after high school** - enrollment in a post-secondary education program by September 1, 1991.

**Primary site** - the high school from which the three case study senior student participants were selected.

**Secondary site** - the high school from which the Consultant Group was selected.

**Student participants** - the three senior students upon whom the case studies focused.



## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

#### Introduction

Data are presented to create a contextual picture of the community, school, and participating students' worlds. In some instances the data are presented in narrative descriptions developed from observations, interviews and documents; at times, the data are presented in raw or unedited form as they were collected and/or transcribed. In whatever way the data are rendered, I have attempted to present them so each reader can make his or her own interpretation of the data. My interpretation or evaluation of the data is presented in Chapter Five. All names are pseudonyms and names of schools and communities have been changed or omitted to ensure confidentiality.

#### The Community

The community under study is nestled in the confluence of two rivers at an outer perimeter of the Ohio Valley. Once a thriving industrial area, the community is now faced with persisting economic decline and a steadily

deteriorating physical and social infrastructure. The once famous pottery factories and numerous coal mines are gone. Steel manufacturers have come and gone. The largest employers are now health care and education. Called by some "the gateway to Appalachia," this community suffers chronic unemployment and economic depression.

As an established community, townspeople frequently relive the past as evidenced by regular stories in the only newspaper about the old days. The stories are accompanied by pictures of how the streets and buildings of the community used to look. Remnants of the past are visible: the paddlewheel boat on the river; old canal locks; and historic houses and buildings, most in disrepair.

Delaware, Hopewell, and Shawnee Indians once made their camps on the banks of the rivers running through the town (Schneider, 1949). During the Civil War days, the community was a depot for the underground railroad as freedom seeking slaves made their way to Canada (Snider, 1979). The coming together of men and women, i.e., Native Americans, African Americans and European/white settlers during these historic periods is still discernible but not always obvious in the community today. Despite the history of interracial mixing, the community is still geographically segregated

by race and socioeconomic level. The Klu Klux Klan held a rally in this county three years ago.

The community is divided into quadrants by a river which runs North and South and by an interstate highway which runs East and West. The dissection has prompted formation of distinct smaller communities within the larger community. The area that expands to a suburban type setting to the north of the interstate and to the west of the river boasts residential properties of highest value. This part of the community is inhabited by a predominantly white population. "Locals" refer to this area as the "north end" of town.

The area immediately to the south of the interstate and west of the river is urban and houses predominately black citizens. It is a mixture of commercial and residential buildings, generally older homes. This part of the community is bounded on the most southern side by a tributary of the major river that divides the city. In essence, this small area is bounded by the interstate on the north, the river on the east and a tributary of the river on the south and west. This is called the "west end" or "west side" of town.

South of the tributary but still west of the river is the "south end" of town. The south end is racially integrated and mostly blue collar middle class workers. This setting is rural and suburban.

The area east of the river and south of the interstate is densely populated, urban, commercial and residential. Most homes are over fifty years

old. A racially integrated lower socioeconomic population inhabits this "east end" of town. The area east of the river but north of the interstate is essentially rural with much undeveloped land. This area is not commonly designated as "an end" of town.

In general, the city is the hub for trade and commerce for six surrounding rural Appalachian counties. Service oriented businesses have replaced the heavy industry in this small town of 28,000 people where only thirty-seven percent of people over twenty-five years of age possess a high school diploma (U.S. Census, 1980).

Like many small cities in America, it is both city and country. One can move quickly from high traffic and commercial areas to places of gently rolling hills, valleys, and streams. During Fall, the hills are vibrant with color and during mild winters, trees are often covered with glistening crystal from a slow rain turned quickly to ice. At times, it is not difficult to think one has passed backward through time twenty or thirty years.

### The School

The primary site high school was built in 1953. It is a multi-story building with long rows of short windows in the middle of each story. The

building is buff brick with ceramic clay tile designs under each row of windows. The building has its own athletic field and sports stadium. The building is located in the north end of the community where single family homes owned mostly by whites range from \$25,000 to \$250,000. Students throughout the city are transported to the school by buses.

Approximately 1,200 students are enrolled in the high school. It has one principal, three assistant principals, four guidance counselors and eighty-seven teachers. The principal was in his first year during the student participants' senior year. While he did not know the three students who participated in the study, he did know and talked about the student who had agreed to participate, yet did not follow through. He had known this student from his principalship at a local junior high school.

According to John, the counselor, the school is relatively safe and well controlled. There have been no incidents of major fights; no guns have been found in the possession of students on the premises (only one or two knives); and while he is sure there are drugs, no major drug related incidents have occurred. John stated that of the three assistant principals, two are "disciplinarians" and one fulfills an administrative role.

In addressing the roles of the guidance counselors, John explained that a counselor is assigned to a freshman (ninth grade) class and assumes guidance

responsibility for that class through grade twelve. He broke his job down this way: The first year (ninth grade) the job is "to identify trouble makers"; by the third year the job is to "separate college-bound from non-college bound" students; and by the fourth year, his job is to "work primarily with college-bound students." As John and I talked about numbers and students, he related that while each freshman class numbers about 400 students, graduation classes are significantly smaller, sometimes "by almost one half." According to John, about twenty-five percent of all ninth graders in this school "drop out" before grade twelve. But figures are not exact because the school keeps no "drop-out" data. Since this figure did not account for the whole difference between numbers of incoming ninth graders and outgoing twelfth graders, I asked John what happened to the remaining students. His response was that several of these students are generally "held back" and counted as members of other grades.

As John talked about his role with college bound students, I was able to gain additional information. Based on John's account, information about college and application processes is disseminated to students in various ways. In all English classes (except those of Special Education), information is passed on about the SAT and ACT tests. Anyone may take these tests but no students (according to John) are solicited or encouraged as individuals to take the tests.

Impending time lines as test dates approach are announced over the public address system. "The rest is up to the student and parent."

During the eleventh grade year, English teachers distribute the "college folder" which carries information on how to complete college applications, solicit information, and complete financial aid forms. Students are encouraged to share this information with their parents. A repeat folder and information is distributed through the English classes again in grade twelve. According to John, no solicitation of students occurs.

Parent contact on the part of the high school is limited to mass mailings about the Post-Secondary Options program and two or three other academic programs associated with local colleges. Responsibility for parent outreach addressing recruitment and financial aid is assumed by the local colleges and other colleges wishing to recruit at the high school. John's opinion was that it is the role of colleges to recruit or talk with students about attending college. His role at the school is to assist students who seek him out. He actively helps students who identify themselves as college-bound.

During the period in which the student participants attended the high school, several opportunities were available for experiencing college. The local branch campus of a four-year state institution offered (and still does) a high school scholars program and an early admit program. According to John

and the director of student services on this campus, the participation rate in these programs for the high school during the 1990-91 academic year was zero. The local two-year technical college offered (and still does) a program in which high school juniors and seniors, when recommended by a teacher, may take one course per quarter tuition free. According to John and validated by the admissions office at this college, only one to three students participated in this program during the 1990-91 academic year. All four students selected for this project would have qualified for any one of these programs. But none participated, inquired or were solicited. The Post-Secondary Options program which was in place during 1990-91 was inactive in the high school during this period. According to local college officials, officials at the high school told them they could not implement all procedures in time to participate during 1990-91. According to one college official, the number of students participating seems to vary according to guidance counselors, yet numbers have not ever been significant.

### Observations

During my visits to the school, it was relatively easy to see the principal for chats. I attributed this to insider access. We talked about the progress of my work; he even attempted to contact my "unwilling fourth



participant". We talked about why able students don't go to college. He was relaxed, sincere, yet dispassionate about these students. He had no answers but reflected upon "their home lives".

In my visits with John, I was interested in the physical change in the environment that took place from my first visit to my last. When I first visited John, his office was in a large open area accessible to walk-in traffic. He had a study table and a supply of informative materials. Over the course of the nine or ten months I was in and out, things changed. The last time I visited John, a high counter had been installed between two walls. I had to walk through a small opening with student aides at the counter; then walk behind them to John's office which had been reduced in size by one half. On the last visit, I waited for him to finish conversation with a student. I observed that the college information bulletin board seemed now almost inaccessible. I had not noticed before the materials on it. The colleges advertised were located in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New York. There were postings for an Ohio private four-year liberal arts college and one small notice for the local four-year branch campus institution. There was a large military poster with the college information. I had to study the bulletin board to make any sense of it. My "Emancipated I" was stirred by the reconfiguration of the counselor's space and the apparent inaccessibility to information.

Prior to the participants graduation, I had visited four different classroom settings: a social studies class, two English classes and a science class. In all instances, teachers were pleasant and cooperative. I visited the classes on a warm spring day; the temperature in the building rose to eighty-seven degrees by ten o'clock in the morning. In three of the four classes, several students had their heads down and eyes closed. Teachers did not respond to this behavior. In the fourth class, the only "college prep" class I visited, all students appeared engaged. After each visit, I thanked the teacher and departed.

In February 1992, the local newspaper headlined the results of the state proficiency tests from local schools. The results within the county are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Freshman Test Scores

<u>School</u>	<u>Read</u>	<u>Write</u>	<u>Math</u>	<u>Ctzn</u>	<u>Total</u>
*School 1	62	69	29	54	22
School 2	82	86	59	57	40**
School 3	88	78	68	75	57**
School 4	69	68	44	48	30
School 5	76	72	38	67	25
School 6	80	75	54	56	37

\*School 1 is the primary site.

\*\*Indicates a school that met or exceeded the statewide average of a 40 percent passing score on all four parts of the exam.

Local Newspaper, February 8, 1992

### The Student Case Studies

Three case studies have been presented. In each, the world of the student participant has been represented through narrative descriptions developed from observations, interviews, school documents and through excerpts of interview transcripts. The transcript excerpts have provided a view of the students' worlds through the words of the students, parents and teachers themselves. Within the transcripts, the student interviewees are identified by a name; parents are identified by the designation Mom and/or Dad, the teacher is designated as Teacher, and the researcher is identified by the designation ER. The transcript excerpts in each case study represent from ten to fifteen percent of the total interview content. The interview guides are located in Appendix J. In several instances, the students allowed me to enter very personal parts of their lives. It is partially because of the personal nature of the information that their identities must be treated with confidentiality.

In each case study, I have attempted to take the reader to the student's neighborhood; to share the experience of the first meeting; and provide a sense of the student's family. Finally, I have attempted to sketch a glimpse of how each student's future prospects have been shaped. In each case study, the data are chronicled and rendered factually to create a picture open to critical interpretation. It is readily acknowledged that the narrative which describes

each student's world and the selected transcribed excerpts are subject to researcher bias. Yet, data are presented based on the decisions outlined in Chapter Three. While language is elusive, the facts have been rendered concretely enough to take any reader into these student's worlds in order to make critical interpretations. Let us now meet Jodi, Diane, and Ben.

## Jodi

### Her Neighborhood

Jodi's neighborhood is located in the southeast quadrant of the city (the "east end"). It is one of the older neighborhoods in the community; it is densely populated and close to the downtown area. Many of the homes are built on hills rising from the floor of this river valley region. Described by a local realtor as fifty years plus in age, many of these brick and/or frame homes have slate roofs, three floors and big porches. The homes in Jodi's neighborhood are estimated to be valued from \$17,000 to \$40,000. Residents are described as lower to middle income employed and unemployed. In the realtor's words, the neighborhood has been traditionally "blue collar" and "heavy Catholic." Income of residents was reported by the realtor to be as low as \$10,000 annually. The realtor stated that absentee landlords use their rental properties in this neighborhood as government subsidized low income housing. The rent at \$250 or \$300 per month was viewed by the realtor as overpriced, especially when a \$10,000 annual income could purchase a \$19,000 home at 9½% interest for thirty years at approximately \$100 per month. It was the realtor's view that credit for these home buyers must be "squeaky clean." It has been her experience that some individuals living/renting in this neighborhood have difficulty in qualifying for a home mortgage loan.

Jodi's address and a local map led to the main street of this urban neighborhood and into the side streets of closely aligned older homes. The streets were narrow and roughened with years of driving on the old paving brick. The correct street was found easily enough but the street came to an abrupt end at the interstate highway that transected the city. The highway had been cut through the hillside on which this neighborhood rested. Cars sped along approximately 200 feet below the dead ended street.

It was a warm fall evening; there was a young man sitting on porch steps watching two barefooted toddlers in diapers. On inquiry about the location of Jodi's address, he responded, "I ain't lived here long 'nuff t' know." The street was narrow, and three young girls, most likely about twelve or thirteen years of age, overhead the inquiry and gave directions: "Up two blocks; over the bridge; turn at Oak Street."

Jodi lives two houses from a tree covered guardrail that marks the other side of the interstate highway that carved its route through her street. Jodi's street was asphalt paved and had no sidewalks. The age of the home seemed consistent with others in the neighborhood. The small one story single family home was aluminum (or vinyl) sided, had a shingled roof and replacement windows. From the outside, Jodi's home appeared to be the best maintained of six to eight houses in the block.

### The Initial Meeting

The first meeting with Jodi took place on Friday, September 13, 1991. Twenty-three heaved cement steps led to Jodi's front porch where several healthy looking plants sat on the banisters. The hum of cars could be heard on the interstate. Field notes related concern that no one would answer the knocks on the door.

A young woman came to the door. She was about five feet four inches tall, slender, with very dark shoulder length curly hair. Her eyes seemed as dark as her hair. She was wearing a black Tee shirt and jeans; she was in her bare feet. The fairness of her skin was a sharp contrast to the darkness of her hair and eyes.

Introducing myself, "You must be Jodi." "Yeah, come on in." The house was cool; it had been a hot day. All the observable windows and front door had been closed. No window air conditioning units could be seen. Jodi motioned to be seated; she disappeared to another part of the house to summon her mother.

The house was long and narrow. While seated in the living room, it was possible to see the dining room and kitchen. The kitchen appeared considerably newer than the home itself. Items in the room were arranged neatly; tables were free of dust. The style of the furnishings was associated

with the 1950's. The dark green carpeted floor was well walked-on; the orange ruffled curtains hung symmetrically in the windows and the aqua fabric on the couch and matching chair seemed almost new in spite of the dated style. There was no television or radio visible in the living room. The painted fireplace mantle, the tables and the walls were filled with photographs; many of which appeared to be Jodi and other family members.

Jodi returned to the living room with her mother. Introductions were made. Jodi's mother was about the same height as her daughter. She had lighter hair and eyes, was trim and neatly groomed. She wore blue jeans and a sweat shirt with athletic shoes/sneakers. Mrs. Evans revealed that her husband was working the afternoon shift at a rural power plant where he was/is a welder.

The purpose of the research project was explained with a referral to the letters which they (parent and student) had acknowledged as received. Both Jodi and her mother were again told the focus of the study was to gather students' opinions about their high school experiences and future plans. Procedures of consent and confidentiality were explained and opportunity for questions was given. Jodi and her mother were both curious about how Jodi had been selected to participate in the study. The response to this question was throughout the study given openly, i.e., the researcher is interested in the



school experiences and future plans of students who placed in the top twenty-five percent of their high school class. You (the student) were listed by your school as in that top twenty-five percent. In addition, your senior guidance counselor (John) indicated you most likely would be willing to talk with me (the researcher).

"Mr. Hayes (John) would give my name for something like this," Jodi responded laughingly. Her laugh and subsequent broad smile revealed very white, aligned teeth. A mental note was made questioning if she had had orthodonture/braces at one time.

Some readers may ponder the relevance of teeth to the context of this study. Another brief story will clarify the relevance. When I first came to southeastern Ohio and this Appalachian region, I worked with an older woman, in her eighties by now, who became a nurse many years ago and returned to her home in the rural hills of Ohio to work with a country doctor. She shared many stories of her experiences from home delivery of babies to trying to teach personal hygiene to people who could not afford soap and/or who did not have indoor plumbing, i.e., running water. Of particular significance was the story that at a rural high school, the poverty level was so high that it was not unusual for high school students to have severely decayed teeth. The crux of the story is that it was a status symbol among these students to have dentures

by the time they graduated from high school. I cannot attest to the factuality of this story yet it has had an impact on my awareness of poverty in this part of Ohio.

Both Jodi and her mother signed consents to participate in the research project. Jodi's mother left the room and the first interview session with Jodi began. Permission to audio tape record the interviews with Jodi was obtained via another signed consent form. Jodi verbally consented and acknowledged she knew her comments were being tape recorded at the beginning of every interview. Jodi's consent was audible on every tape and was transcribed in each set of interview notes. The same procedures were utilized with both parents and Jodi's teacher.

### Jodi's Family

Jodi was born eighteen years ago in this community. She is the youngest of four children. Jodi's twenty-five year old sister and her husband reside in a house across the street from Jodi and her parents. They have no children; both Jodi's sister and her spouse are employed. Jodi's two brothers are twenty-six and thirty years of age. The younger brother lives and works in another small community about thirty miles to the west. He is married and employed by a large construction company. The older brother lives in Jodi's

community. He is employed, married, and father of two small children. All of Jodi's siblings graduated from the same high school as Jodi. None have pursued education beyond high school.

Mr. and Mrs. Evans are Jodi's natural parents. Jodi's father and his older brother by twenty years and their sister, the eldest, were born in a very small town in rural Indiana. According to Jodi, "He had twenty people in his high school graduating class." Mr. Evans' father farmed his land and worked as a coal miner. Mr. Evans' brother left the Indiana farm and relocated to Southeastern Ohio. During a summer visit with his older brother, Mr. Evans met Jodi's mother; they later married and made their home in this town. Jodi's father is and has been a welder for a large power company located approximately twenty-five miles from their home in a more remote area of this river valley region. Mr. Evans' parents are both deceased; his seventy-nine year old sister remains in Indiana. Jodi stated:

We go back to Indiana a lot. Family ties are something that's strong in our family . . . We are always making overnight trips to Indiana to see her (Jodi, 1991).

Jodi's mother was born and raised in this community and graduated from the same high school as her children. Her parents are still well and living in the community. Mrs. Evans is the youngest of four children and the

only female offspring from her parents. She is not employed outside the home; she sells cosmetic products from her home and devotes time to the family's church. Jodi described her mother's efforts:

She is very active in our religion and she's what they call a pioneer which they devote ninety hours per month, Jehovah's Witnesses, ok, that's what we are and she devotes ninety hours a month to go and having Bible studies for anyone that wants to talk about the Bible. That's what she does. She really enjoys it and you can see that when she comes home and she's had an encouraging day or someone talked with her and you can even see that in her so she does that primarily and she sells Avon on the side (Jodi, 1991).

Based on Jodi's accounts, she is at least a third generation American.

She believes all of her grandparents graduated from high school. She recalled her maternal grandmother attending her fiftieth high school reunion.

Financially, Jodi's family seems to live comfortably yet modestly. Mr. and Mrs. Evans own their home and also own the house/property adjacent to their dwelling. As a surprise graduation gift, Jodi's parents took her on a trip to Hawaii.

In order that the context of Jodi's family life can be better understood by each reader, the following excerpts from the parent interview are presented as transcribed. Hence, each reader is able to make his or her own

interpretation of Jodi's family environment. Jodi's parents expressed their views about raising and schooling children:

**EXCERPT ONE**      **MOM:** ". . . from the time that they started school, if they had homework then that was done first before they played or watched TV or anything else and I always felt the education that the schools provide was as important as anything else they had and I enjoyed school. I was a good student in school and so was Jim and I just felt that they should be taught from the time they were young to get the best out of what the school system provided for them. So we tried to instill it in them."

**DAD:** "We took an interest in school but Beth had more opportunity than I did for parent/teacher conferences because I had to work. She never missed one. She was down there for all the children. This woman was up every morning, breakfast was ready, the kids were . . . clothes were put on, out the door, making sure that they weren't late, got them on the bus and was home when they came home, and took some interest in their report cards. School wasn't a babysitter, it was a place where the kids were learning. I think that has something to do with it. We were interested, so the kids were interested."

**EXCERPT TWO**      **DAD:** "If there was ever any problems with the children, we'd gone down to school and talked to the administrators and we straightened things out. It wasn't the school, it was the kids I straightened out. The problems we ever had in school were Mickey Mouse. I can't even recall but . . . We weren't educational. The kids weren't involved at all plus they weren't involved in the sports. We

sent them to school to get an education. I believe you go to school . . . the reason why I sent the kids to school."

MOM: "They did things at school but we did it with them. We didn't send them to the games, we went to the games and it just kind of was a family thing. If they had functions at school, we went with them. We didn't send them. I don't know, I never liked that. That's where the trouble starts when you send kids out. So we always went with them."

EXCERPT  
THREE

ER: "If we can deviate from that a little bit in terms of, obviously you were together in how you were approaching the purpose of school with your children. When did you decide as a couple what that would be?"

MOM: "When our oldest one started kindergarten I guess. It just kind of fell into line. I don't know, we never really set down and talked about it, it just kind of came naturally to us. That's the way I was raised. You went to school and you got an education and if you got in trouble at school then we got in dutch with mom and dad at home and that's just the way we did with our kids."

DAD: "Oh, yes. I never missed school. Mom had me up every morning and put me on the bus. But, Beth and I, all the time the four kids was going through school, we never pulled our kids out of school for any reason. We didn't take vacations. We missed a lot of things because the kids had to go to school."

ER: "So attendance was important."

MOM: "Yes."

DAD: "Attendance was important. If they were ill, sure that was something. I mean if we want to take vacation or just play around, no, no, they went to school. I wanted them in school."

MOM: "They had to be sick to miss school."

EXCERPT  
FOUR

DAD: "We never downgraded the school or teachers. If there was something the teacher did that we didn't approve of, I'd phone. I always did until . . . I always told my children, school's the boss. I am at home and they are when you are away from home and you do what the school says and I expect you to. We were serious about it, why wouldn't the children be."

MOM: "Yes, and still, the respect the authority that the school system had while they were there. They were to respect that system."

ER: "So you weren't pitting the child against the school?"

MOM: "Yes."

DAD: "It was school."

ER: "School and you working together?"

MOM: "Yes."

DAD: "Yes, that's what I wanted to say."

EXCERPT  
FIVE

MOM: ". . . our rules never changed from one kid to the other. So as the other ones come along, especially Jodi, she knew what the other kids did at that age so she knew that she wasn't

going to be any different. I think she already expected, well the other three this is what they couldn't do and I can't either. They always had things to do like their chores, and they always knew that if they did them and you didn't have to hassle with them, it made the family run smoother."

ER: "So they had responsibilities?"

MOM: "Yes, they all did from the time they were old enough to have responsibilities, taking out the garbage and . . ."

DAD: "I didn't let them get jobs that interfered with their school work. I didn't like them to work after hours at Wendy's until ten o'clock at night. They had to get their school work done."

DAD: "Tom carried papers right around here."

MOM: "In fact, as one got out of school, the next one took the route and so they all carried it."

DAD: ". . . which was nothing more than responsibility to do a job, take care of the money, pay your bill. I thought it was an excellent training. The monetary value wasn't very much."

MOM: "But what they had, they couldn't blow. They had to bank some of it and when they all got old enough to drive, they all had to have the money for their own car insurance or they didn't drive."

DAD: "When the children got their license, I had no objection to getting a license, but they never got to drive. We never turned our children loose with a car just because they were sixteen and had a license. If we went someplace, we drove, Jodi's been out of school and just two weeks ago she bought a car and now she can kind of come



and go. I still monitor when I expect her to be home."

**EXCERPT  
SIX**

**DAD:** "I think that the home life has a lot to do with school. I don't feel that you can divorce the two."

**MOM:** "It carries over."

**DAD:** "The example that we set toward the responsibilities I have as a father and her as a mother, that all pours right into the where they take their responsibilities. We didn't let our children get a paper route and not take care of it. We saw that that was done just like we saw that their school work was done."

**DAD:** "That getting up, and having their breakfast ready when we go to get them off to school, I think is important. I'd see other parents, the kids know how to run the microwave and they throw something in it and mom is still asleep and dad has gone to work and I don't think that gets the day off to a good start."

**EXCERPT  
SEVEN**

**DAD:** "Our children were never latchkey kids. They didn't have to have a house key. She did what she wanted and she was home when the children were. They never came home to an empty house. I think all that contributes."

**MOM:** "It's just the way you're raised. That's the way I was raised. Mom was always home."

**DAD:** "My mother was always home, always up before I left."

MOM: "I always felt the need to be home with the children."

EXCERPT DAD: "My wife and I don't fight with each  
EIGHT other. This is security here in our home. I've never heard one of our children say, I can't wait to get my own apartment and move out."

DAD: "When our kids got married, that's when they left. None of them have ever had an apartment. You're liable to look up anytime and here they come in the door."

### Jodi

Jodi was eighteen years old in August of 1991. She lives with her parents and expressed no intention of leaving home at this point in time. Jodi is currently employed full-time at the local shopping mall as a sales associate for a nationally known retail department store. She works a varied schedule which becomes known to her a week in advance. Interviews with Jodi were always scheduled for her evening off at her request. In response to casual interviewer comments about employment in a department store, Jodi said:

Oh, it's awful. You walk in there and you see all the merchandise coming in the store and you think well I like this and this and this. I usually end up bringing a lot of it home (Jodi, 1991).

Over the weeks of interviewing Jodi, acquaintance was made with her parents, her sister, her maternal grandparents and Bo. Bo is Jodi's cat; a stray she rescued from their property next door when tenants vacated and left the cat locked in the basement. The cat joined the interview regularly. Initially, it rifled through the tape recorder, microphone wires, and various consent forms. Sometimes Jodi would hold and stroke the cat; other times it would curl up on my jacket or coat which was usually placed over the arm of the couch. The cat was treated kindly.

As the relationship was established, I was able to walk about the living room looking more closely at family photographs. Jodi provided narratives on each photo: the people in the photo; how old they were when the photo was taken; how they were related to Jodi. It seemed everyone was accounted for by photograph: Jodi, her siblings, their spouses and children, maternal and paternal grandparents, siblings of Jodi's parents and Jodi's parents.

As the data was collected, the snapshot of Jodi as a student began to develop. The more data gathered, the sharper the picture created. Jodi described herself as a student:

EXCERPT  
ONE        JODI: "I started school at \_\_\_\_\_ which is closed now but I started school down there and I remember my kindergarten teacher; she was real interested in making sure that I was occupied all the time."

JODI: "I remember one time in fifth grade when it was parent/teacher conferences. They come in and sit in the room and we had to make a folder for all of our papers and I was hyper and on the folder I wrote that I didn't like school because it was boring and all that stuff and that's when my teachers realized that I had to be occupied. They would either let me help them grade papers or do different chores if they had something extra for me to do."

"Then I liked school a little bit better. I always had fun at school. That made it enjoyable."

**EXCERPT  
TWO**

ER: "You mentioned being bored. That sounds like the school work wasn't too terribly difficult for you."

JODI: "No. I usually got through my classes quickly. In high school with Algebra because it was hard for me, they would take the time to help me understand it. I averaged A's and B's and my lowest GPA was probably a 3.3. I was always on the honor roll and that's a 3.0 at the high school but you know I always made like a 3."

JODI: "I would catch on quickly. The teachers would wait until the rest of the class was gone and go over it until I got it or they would just help me and I'd get real upset if I got papers back that were marked wrong or things like that."

**EXCERPT  
THREE**

JODI: "I always had a high expectation or it was what I thought others expected of me more than anything. My parents were like we don't expect you to have straight A's every time but I did and if I didn't bring home a report card, like I would bring home 3.8, and I would be like well they

would put it on the refrigerator and showed everybody that walked in the door but to me it was just like look at those two B's. Those B's should have been A's and anyway that put the pressure on because I just, I started having headaches and be under so much pressure just because I thought I had . . ."

EXCERPT  
FOUR ER: "Did you have a job while you were in school?"

JODI: "I often thought about it. I thought it would be really nice to have a job but I think I put so much pressure on myself to get the grades I did that if I would have got a job, I would have had problems. I think my parents helped a lot because only if you want but if you do I think that it would be a mistake and to just wait until I graduate."

EXCERPT  
FIVE ER: "When was the first time, as you look back that you can remember knowing or being aware of what kind of student you were."

JODI: "I never paid that much attention to it until the fifth or sixth grade. I would strive for A's or things like that. So I think up until then yes. It didn't phase me or anything. It was probably around the fifth or sixth grade."

ER: "Did the teachers know what kind of student you were?"

JODI: "Yes, I guess so. They would always tell me I think you can do a little better, or you know something along that line, because I think they knew I had the potential for it."

ER: "Last week you mentioned too that you seemed to be working but maybe not quite working up to your potential. Was that something you thought?"

JODI: "I think a lot of it was me because I would set unrealistic goals. Then if I didn't reach them I would think that it would be my fault. Then sometimes I set it way above something I could reach. I think a lot of times it was me."

ER: "How do you think you came to set goals that you term as unrealistic?"

JODI: "I like things in my life to be organized and perfect so I think if I like things like that then my school grades have to be perfect and then when they weren't, I got upset. I think it's just me. It's nothing around me or my environment, I think it's just myself that made it that way."

Jodi's parents described her as a student:

EXCERPT  
ONE ER: "How would you describe Jodi as a student?"

DAD: "Very willing. We never had to force her to do her homework. She did it all on her own."

MOM: "She was very conscientious about her grades and what she did to the extent that sometimes she would have headaches because she would worry so much about getting A's on her tests and . . ."

DAD: "Twenty dollar bonus too for straight A's."

ER: "You rewarded her financially for . . ."

MOM: "Yes, we did all our kids."

DAD: "If it was a straight A course, it was twenty dollars. It was a standard thing with all the kids."

MOM: "If she got a 4.0 then she got to go eat where she wanted. But she always was a good student."

ER: "From first grade on?"

MOM: "Yes, always a good student. Enjoyed school."

EXCERPT  
TWO

ER: "What kind of actions on her part let you know early on what kind of student she was going to be?"

MOM: "She was always a reader. All our children were readers because we encouraged them to read and we always did a lot of home reading with them with our religious affiliation, we did a lot of reading and so they read early on. Then she just always liked school. She always played school and she just did good."

ER: "She played school?"

MOM: "Yes, she was reading from the Bible before she went to kindergarten. So she was an excellent reader."

DAD: "The books we read got to be a ritual. She just couldn't go to sleep at night unless she

crawled in bed with me and we read for fifteen minutes every night. Same book half a dozen times, of course. That's when she was five."

MOM: "Yes, a real good reader before she ever went to school."

EXCERPT  
THREE      MOM: "They were all National Honor Society. All of them."

DAD: "I don't think the other kids got quite the grade average. She was probably the highest of all four. Ken was 3.5."

MOM: "Yes, they were all in National Honor Society, but Jodi turned out to be the best student, as far as grades she was scholastic. For grade average, she was the highest."

Jodi identified her English teacher as her favorite. I met with the teacher at the high school on October 31, 1991. Mrs. Rollins has a Bachelor of Arts degree plus twenty graduate hours. She has taught college prep English and composition at this high school for twenty-two years. Jodi's teacher added to Jodi's and her parents' perspectives:

EXCERPT  
ONE      ER: "I'd like for you to review for me if you will, just briefly under what circumstances you've known Jodi as a student."



TEACHER: "I knew Jodi as a student in my English IV college prep senior level English class. I also knew her as a member of National Honor Society because I was the advisor and she was a member of the group. I saw her both as a student academically but also in an academic but social situation too."

ER: "How would you describe Jodi as a student?"

TEACHER: "I would describe her as being very conscientious, very interested, very attentive. I would describe her as being a hard worker, maybe an over achiever, little bit. I don't know what the formal test scores were but I think that she did well because she was willing to spend maybe a little bit more time than some other students. I don't know what her IQ was or what her test scores were. Just from observation in class, she didn't always get everything the very first time, so I would guess that she probably is an over achiever, but she did well for me. She made A's. She always did what I asked her to do."

ER: "From your perspective, she's a relatively bright student?"

TEACHER: "Yes, I would say she is. Not my brightest but certainly above average of the students that I had."

EXCERPT  
TWO

TEACHER: "I had her in composition class too. I forgot that. I had in her composition class as well as in English IV senior level class. She would, maybe the first draft in a writing composition assignment or even the second draft

not do as well, but she would be willing to just take that and just labor over it again and again and again and again until she got it to the point where it ended up to be a good B+, A-, A paper, but it took her revision after revision after revision where some of the other students would be able to do it much quicker. She didn't give up. I guess that's what I'm saying. I mean she was willing to spend the time revising, and she was willing to question me about parts of the paper and she took constructive criticism very well. She was really good about trying to listen to what I had to say to her and to make improvements but she just didn't do it as quickly I guess as others. So I don't know whether that's being an over achiever or that's just being diligent and persistent. I don't know."

EXCERPT  
THREE

ER: "What do you think most teachers would have expected from her?"

TEACHER: "You mean grade wise or behavior?"

ER: "Level of work or behavior."

TEACHER: "I would guess that they would expect that she would do A, B+ work. She made some B's. She got some B's occasionally. I would guess that most teachers would expect that she wouldn't have fallen below a B for a grading period. Except maybe in math."

In February of 1991, Jodi ranked fifteenth in her class of 259. Her transcripts indicated she achieved A's and B's in geometry, biology, and English and C's in algebra. Jodi's grades ranged from A to C- over her high school years. While Jodi was described by herself, her parents, and her teacher as in the college prep track in high school, evidence of "high status" courses as defined by Goodlad and Oakes (1988), i.e., mathematics, sciences, etc., was missing. Jodi's transcript displayed grades of A in accounting, business practices, and computer programming. According to Jodi's teacher, her conduct was always appropriate. By Jodi's account, the only form of discipline received during her high school years was one or two detentions for gum chewing.

As Jodi talked, she expressed her views amidst descriptions of school experiences. From her elementary years, Jodi recalled names of several favorite teachers. When I asked her what made those teachers her favorite teachers, she responded and continued:

EXCERPT  
ONE        JODI: "Because they took time and they were interested and sometimes it's really scary if you've never been away from home and she's kind of a mother to you and she would make sure that what you were doing was right and that you knew what you were doing was right. She would always come around and she'd pat you."

**EXCERPT  
TWO**

JODI: "I've heard teachers making comments before that well I really don't like doing this. I don't like being a teacher and it kind of slayed me because I would always think well if you don't like it why are you being one. You can tell by the way that they treat the kids and the way they do lessons whether they enjoy their work or not."

ER: "The way they do their lessons - you mean the way they teach a lesson?"

JODI: "Yes, the way they show it. Sometimes, especially like in math it would be real easy to say well, you do this page of problems, so on and go on and then just make you look it up in the book and I think if they really enjoyed their work they would show you on the board or they would make sure you knew. I haven't had the teacher myself but I've had friends that have the teacher and they said that he would just tell them to do it. I don't think that's right either. It's your (the teacher's) obligation to make sure the kids understand."

**EXCERPT  
THREE**

JODI: "I don't think I ever really faced a problem like with not getting along with my teacher until like junior high."

ER: "There's a little transition or different kind of experience. How old were you, what grade here?"

JODI: "Probably be about the seventh. I think it was when I first started. It was kind of hard for me and I remember I would always ask the teacher is this right and she would say you can do it this way. She would yell at me a lot and I think it was personality more than anything."

ER: "Have you had other experiences with teachers in which they weren't quite as positive?"

JODI: "Just things like that. I think it was personality. They would seem bored."

ER: "Meaning lack of interest."

JODI: "Yes."

ER: "Were there many?"

JODI: "I don't think it's a whole lot because the majority of my teachers, in junior high, I got along with them pretty good except one or two and it was the same way at the high school. It was just one or two that I had that I really didn't feel . . . The majority of our teachers are that way. A lot of them schedule around your schedule. I had a lot of them do that. The ones that do stick out in your mind, it just seems awkward because they're there to teach you."

ER: "What makes them stick out?"

JODI: "I'd say it would be disappointment. You know you just sit there and think this is a waste of my time."

EXCERPT  
FOUR

JODI: "I had one teacher at the high school and it was the first couple of weeks we went through this segment where you had to learn whether you learned by hearing, eyesight or by writing. You know it was wild because she would write on your card, she uses visual, or she hears and then when she got to know you one on one, she would teach you that way. She would teach the class

then if you had a problem she would teach you the way that you learned best. I liked it because you could catch things really good and then there's other teachers who would write on the blackboard and explain it and then they would just explain it again instead of having you get up there."

EXCERPT  
FIVE

JODI: "I remember most about my teachers at the high school because I think I looked at them more as a friend than as my teacher. Even in junior high I thought, Oh, that's my teacher but I would still rather them show interest in me. When I got to high school it was more friendly but still a teacher level but they were also your friends more than they were just someone who had to go to work everyday."

ER: "Who was your favorite teacher at the high school?"

JODI: "At the high school? I had two or three that I really enjoyed. The health teacher was student oriented. He was funny. He was very funny. He could give his lesson but yet he didn't make them boring and he got you activated. You would have to do charts or you would do something you would be interested in. Another teacher I really liked was Mrs. Johnson. It was kind of wild because she said do whatever you want so we had all kinds of different things and she would post them on the wall and she would just sit back and let you go for what you want and use your own imagination."

"I think my favorite was Mrs. Rollins. She was very nice. You learned when she would teach you that way.

You also have to go to the board and do it. And you had no choice about it actually. She would go back and she would talk to you one on one."

ER: "Can you name a common thread among all three of them."

JODI: "They got to know you as a student. She knew just about everything that was going on and you could tell her anything and you knew it wouldn't go any further than her. They were really interested in you."

Described as having a lot of friends by her teacher, Jodi had "good rapport with students . . ."; "worked well with groups . . ."; "served on school committees . . ." (Jodi's teacher, 1991). Based on accounts from Jodi and her parents, she seldom studied with friends. Jodi talked about friends and other students in the school setting:

EXCERPT ONE ER: "What about your friends, were they good students too?"

JODI: "Not really. Actually, all the people I hang with at school was in the regular classes and then I was in college prep. I had friends in college prep but the people that were like my best friends or the ones I always hung out with was in regular classes because they weren't on my same level I guess you would call it."

"Yes, they would talk about their problems like with grades or something they didn't understand. I'd try to help them or explain it to them. We talked about it. It wasn't one of the most talked about subjects but we did every once in a while."

EXCERPT TWO ER: "Did they know what kind of student you were?"

JODI: "Yes. If I would turn my report cards over they would remark about it like if I would drop my grades and it was like well you dropped your grade, what happened or is something wrong with you this week or something like that. They knew what I expected of me and what kind of student I was."

ER: "How did they, in general, respond to you in terms of what kind of student you were?"

JODI: "I took a lot of ribbing about it I guess. I think it was more teasing than anything."

ER: "Ribbing?"

JODI: "Just like teasing me about it or if I would get an A and they would get a B then they would say something or make some kind of comment about it. Just the fact that I had a better grade. I think it was all done in fun."

EXCERPT THREE ER: "And how did you respond to that?"



JODI: "I either just kind of laughed it off more than anything or it was like well if you'd sit here and study you'd get the grades I did or some smart aleck comment like that."

ER: "As you look back at that, how do you think they viewed your being smart?"

JODI: "I think a lot of them felt like if I had the potential, I'd like to have it that way because even if I would set goals they were happy for me when I reached them or one of my best friends would always be happy when I made different scholastic ability she would always be real happy. She always made the comment, I wish I was as smart as you or something to that effect."

ER: "So, in essence, your friends didn't feel they were smart."

JODI: "As smart."

ER: "They didn't feel as smart?"

JODI: "Yes."

ER: "As you look back at that, were they smart?"

JODI: "They could put more effort in it. Especially this one in particular, she could have got the grades I did if she put more effort into it. A lot of them just seemed to do enough to get by and were satisfied with being in regular courses."

ER: "What do you think makes the difference between the students, particularly the one you think was as smart as you are and didn't put forth

the effort. What makes the difference in whether the student puts forth the effort or not?"

JODI: "I think how much they care about their education or how much they care about themselves to worry enough whether to sit down and not watch TV so much because you have to study on your homework."

ER: "What about the school situation. Were those individuals, your friends, treated any differently in school than you were or were you treated differently then them."

JODI: "Not really. I wouldn't say so. Course, it depends on who you hung out with, you know. All you hung out with would be like the kids in college prep or really, really 4.0 every time ones. I think they would tend to put you down more."

ER: "Your friends would tend to put you down more if you hung around with the 4.0. Is that what you're saying?"

JODI: "The 4.0 would put you down. They would put you down more than what I would anybody else. I guess I always felt that if you can't do or you don't do then that's your own problem. You shouldn't be put down for it, especially if someone can't do it more than won't do it then you really shouldn't put them down for it."

ER: "So are you saying there's a difference among students in terms of the way 4.0 treat other students the way students who are good students but maybe not 4.0 treat other students and then students who are average or below."

JODI: "Yes."

ER: "So there is a difference among students."

JODI: "Yes. And it's wild because it's like clicks because a lot of times the college prep kids, that's all they would hang with the college prep and the regulars would hang with the regulars and then the ones that was below that would hang with them because they really didn't mix that much."

ER: "What about the differences in the way the school meaning principals, guidance counselors, teachers, treated those different groups or clicks?"

JODI: "I don't think they treated them as different as what the students did. You have to treat them different a little bit just in your technique and style. You know to teach them. But I don't think personality wise they really treated them that different. I've been in mixed classes before, like our government class is mixed and he treated everybody the same and just talked to them one on one."

ER: "At what point do you remember or recall that clicks started to form? "

JODI: "In the beginning, ever since like first or second grade. There was always clicks in school. When you're in elementary school, they're not that bad because there's not that many different people in one class but when you get to junior high, you know the rich kids come in and then the middle class and things like that and that's when the clicks really start to form."

ER: "Now is that in the early years or later?"

JODI: "I would say like from sixth grade on."

ER: "O.K. So, I've heard you mention two things that divide kids into groups. The first one was grades. Then the other is money?"

JODI: "Yes, money is a big one."

ER: "Money's the big one. Do grades and money go together."

JODI: "No, I don't think so. If you have the ability, it doesn't matter whether your family's rich or not."

ER: "But if you don't have the ability, and you have money, which group do you belong to?"

JODI: "Depends on how much money you have. If you have a lot and you live on the right side of town, then you can belong to the rich group. A lot of times it's mixed like the 4.0 kids are the ones who are really smart and the preps would be the real smart and rich and if you have enough money you can belong to the real popular group of kids. If I had to choose between the two, I would say that the money groups is more influential I guess than what it would be knowledge or the ones who are college prep. It's more than regular. It would be more money than anything."

ER: "If you're smart and a 4.0 and you don't have money can you belong to that group?"

JODI: "You can but I don't think you would be accepted as well as if you didn't. Because, I mean a lot of things depends on your style of your

clothes and things like that. If you have both, you've got it made."

### Jodi's Future

As the interviews progressed and as opportunities arose, Jodi was asked to address her vision of her future. She was also asked to recall how she had envisioned her future during her junior high school years.

EXCERPT ONE ER: "When you were fourteen years old, where did you see yourself after high school?"

JODI: "When I was fourteen. I saw myself married. I really did. I think I've had that plan ever since I was a little girl. That much of my life has never changed because I don't know why I just have that feeling, I saw myself married. Now, of course, I had a big rich house and everything like that. That part of it was a dream but I did see myself married. I guess I used to think about college and going on to school."

ER: "Used to."

JODI: "Yes."

ER: "Before fourteen, after fourteen, at fourteen?"

JODI: "Yes, I'd say at more than anything. And before then because I used to think maybe if I go through all that and then get a job I can have the money and I could have everything. But then

after I heard it all the time and the more I thought about it, the more I realized I really don't want to go on right now. That part of my plans did change."

**EXCERPT  
TWO** ER: "When people talked about college with you, they equated it with material things like money, home?"

JODI: "Yes. Money, car, house."

ER: "As you have gotten older, those things based on what you said about your religion and where you want to be and what you want to do, those things are not as important to you as other things?"

JODI: "Right."

ER: "You mentioned being happy, being with the person you want to be with."

JODI: "Yes, if you are a billionaire and you got everything at your fingertips but you're not happy, then all that money's not worth anything because it's not going to buy you happiness. I'd rather be dirt poor and happy than rich and miserable. And you know, even if my plans don't work out for the future I think I can make myself happy. As long as I'm happy, that's fine with me."

**EXCERPT  
THREE** ER: "What will happen if it doesn't turn out that way?"

JODI: "If what I want in my future doesn't work out, then I'll just have to redirect that feeling into something else. It takes a lot of energy to make a marriage work and it takes a lot of compromising. If I can't have that, it may take me a while to get over and to accept it but eventually I'm sure I will and then I'll have to be able to accept it and move on with my life."

EXCERPT  
FOUR

ER: "What are your friends going to be doing?"

JODI: "One's going to college, the majority of them are going to college. One of them I lost track of after graduation just because I haven't been able to get a hold of her. But the others I know of were all going to college, like small community college and one of them is going to barber school."

ER: "Your plans for the future?"

JODI: "Mine. College isn't in my plans because, I don't know I guess I got burned out on it more than anything. I heard college from freshman on and it was just drummed in my head that I have to go to college and I've had teachers come up to me and say with your brain and ability it's just silly to waste it by not going to college. But to me, I'm not wasting my ability because I'm putting it into what I want. I don't want college. I think if I can live my life and have a job I like and do what I want and still make ends meet and provide for myself well, . . . I know other people who have gone three or four years to college and have a job that's worse than the one I have now. If I decide to go to college, it will be a long time down the road just because I want to do what I

want to do now and if I'm happy at it then I'll just stay that way."

ER: "What do you see yourself doing two or three years from now?"

JODI: "Hopefully, two or three years from now I will be married. That is something that I would like to do. Not now, but you know like twenty-one or something I can see myself married and being with my husband and doing whatever he likes to do or something we both like to do and work together like that and have a relationship where he'll be like my best friend and we can work together and things."

During the interview with Jodi's parents, Mrs. Evans sat on the couch beside me. Mr. Evans sat on a straight chair pulled up to the coffee table in front of us. The proximity facilitated ease of recording both parents comments. Both parents were consistently cordial and pleasant. Mr. Evans began by stating he probably would not have much to say. Once we had begun, both parents spoke with clarity about their parenting philosophy and their daughter as a student. Finally, they spoke about Jodi's future:

EXCERPT FIVE ER: "What kind of expectations do you think the school had for Jodi? Meaning teachers or . . ."

MOM: "Probably, many of them were disappointed that she didn't go on to college



because of the ability that she had. Lot of them expected her to."

ER: "How do you know that?"

MOM: "Parent-teacher conferences and they would say something to her, well, are you going to college? With your ability to learn and grades, you know, it's a shame if you don't but they knew she was a good student."

ER: "How did you respond to their expressions of disappointment?"

MOM: "Well, grade wise, there's no doubt Jodi has the ability to go to college, but we're Jehovah's Witnesses and we just felt that being in the higher education, not that there wasn't a need, but that Jodi could spend her time being more active within our religion and that she's doing. We felt that that was more important. Along that line, there was no doubt in mind if Jodi would have taken the scholarship test, she would have gotten scholarships. She just can do it and even at her job one of the girls told her that they were very surprised that she has caught on to her job as fast as she has. Most eighteen year olds don't.

ER: "Did any teachers ever approach you. You indicated they seemed to express some disappointment that she wasn't going on to college?"

MOM: "Yes, they did and we explained why and they accepted that explanation and that was it. They didn't really pressure her and try and change her mind and because she's doing just exactly what she told them she was going to do or what she wanted to do and that's what she's doing."

ER: "Did any of them ever pursue the question of whether she could pursue additional education within the framework of your religion?"

MOM: "Yes, they said or mentioned the fact that the universities are here and you know, that's true. If she ever wanted to take a night course, the availability of the technical college and branch campus is here so that's always something that if she wanted to do she could."

ER: "Is there anything in your religion that would be against her attending college?"

DAD: "It's not the education, because education has been official and good for her but we feel the association and the people at the colleges and the things that happen from the moral standpoint and the drugs, alcohol and that list, that association we don't want her to get involved in."

ER: "So it was a concern about what kinds of experiences would occur."

MOM: "Yes, because we had her take everything at the high school that would give her a good education, like computers and all that where she could go into the work field and have a good rounded knowledge of what's going in there. It's just mainly the association that she would get in with."

ER: "How does Jodi see her future?"

DAD: "Jodi sees her future as she's going to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses and be active and she's currently, well she's working part-time and she's currently devoting sixty hours a month going from house to house talking to people about

the Bible, telling them about God's Kingdom . . . Her future is built around that and I'm sure that some day she'll want to become married and she will be interested in some one who is also interested in Jehovah's Witnesses. Her future is looking forward to being a partner and one of Jehovah's Witnesses and working toward that."

EXCERPT  
SIX

ER. "In your opinion, what will Jodi be doing five years from now?"

DAD: "What I would like to see her do, is like my daughter across the street is doing. Marry and be a housewife. If she has to work it will be to help support the family. But I don't have any desire to see her become a career woman or anything like that. I'd like to see her be a housewife and a mother, raise a family."

MOM: "Most of our family were, very few of the women on either side, were career women. We mostly just had our families and took care of them and helped them with their families. There's no doubt, she'll probably . . ."

DAD: "Help support the family. Things are tough nowadays."

MOM: "Almost everybody does anymore."

EXCERPT  
SEVEN

MOM: "She very possibly will get married at some time but I think she really wants to do and she feels she's old enough and I know whoever she marries will be someone equally as active in our religion as she is and they'll base their life around that."

ER: "And that's important that she find a mate in the church?"

MOM: "Yes, very important."

Jodi's teacher seemed genuinely surprised during the solicitation telephone conversation when I indicated that Jodi had been selected for this study as a non-college bound student. During the interview, she discussed her perceptions of Jodi's academic ability and potential for the future based on her views of the student and the student's family:

EXCERPT ONE ER: "Did she ever discuss with you her plans for her future?"

TEACHER: "I don't recall that she ever did. I guess I just assumed that she would go on to school except that, and I don't know, maybe this is coming up later, except that I do remember that her religion did not allow her some of the freedoms that other students had. In other words, she didn't celebrate any holidays, and I was always really careful when I put prompts on the board writing prompts that I did not, like the one today, Halloween used to mean . . ., she wouldn't respond to that because she didn't celebrate Halloween, didn't celebrate Christmas and didn't celebrate any of those kind of things so I had to be really careful. I knew that from the beginning. She told me that."

**EXCERPT  
TWO**

**ER:** "When I called you the first time and had indicated that Jodi had not gone on to college or had no plans to go one to college, you seemed surprised and you said in the beginning of the interview you had assumed that. Was there anything in her behavior, whether she said it or something she did or her academic history, that lead you to believe that she was going on to college?"

**TEACHER:** "Well, I guess I make the assumption that if they are enrolled in English IV College Prep, that they are at least seriously considering it because we do have other English courses they could take, so I guess when I look at my students in my classes, I just automatically assume that they chose to take this class because they are making plans or they are at least considering that as a strong possibility. That coupled with the fact that she made good grades and she was elected to National Honor Society, and almost all of our National Honor Society students, I guess I just assumed that probably she would. But after I talked to you on the phone then, there were I guess maybe some indications made, I don't think she ever told me that she wasn't. She went through the procedures. I had students fill out common college applications and I mean she went through the motions so I guess I just assumed that she would go. I don't know why she didn't except again, I guess just from the things she said about her family I would think, and this is just out of my head, that maybe her father, in particular, would perceive that it wouldn't be necessary for her to go being a girl and being, I don't know. I don't know why I even say that because I've never met her father. I have no reason to say that but maybe her tight religious belief would prohibit her from being

exposed to the freedoms of college or something, I don't know."

ER: "You've been thinking about this since I've talked to you?"

TEACHER: "Yes, I always had thought it until you told me she didn't go I guess. But then in retrospect as I think back, I know that she was expected to lead a very moral life and she did. I mean she was very ladylike, very demure, very well not prissy, I don't mean that because she wasn't that, but just very moral I guess. Part of that I'm sure was her family background and part of it was her religious faith. I guess I can see that maybe her dad thought that going to college would just tarnish her some way or taint her or something, I don't know."

### Conclusion of the Interviews with Jodi

For the concluding interview with Jodi, I reviewed the content of the previous interviews conducted with her. I repeated questions and read her responses aloud soliciting her agreement or disagreement with the content and/or meaning of the content. In some instances, Jodi looked at or read the transcripts herself. I asked for and was granted permission to reestablish contact with Jodi in the event data needed to be validated or clarified in the future. Copies of letters thanking Jodi and her parents for their participation can be reviewed in Appendix L. A letter of thanks was also sent to Mrs.

Rollins, Jodi's teacher (Appendix K). It can be noted that each student was paid a small honorarium for participation in the research project.

In summary, Jodi's case study characterizes her neighborhood, her family life and her school life. Data for this characterization was gathered from student, parent, teacher and school official interviews, from school records, and from observations.

## Diane

### Her Neighborhood

The area where Diane lives is east of the river and north of the interstate highway. This area of the community is rural; there is much undeveloped land. It is several miles to Diane's house from the point where the river and interstate transect. It is necessary to travel the interstate east to the next exit beyond the downtown area. Once exited from the highway, the roads are paved yet narrow and winding. The gently rolling landscape is dotted with a mixture of residential architecture. Some houses appear to have been part of farms; others appear newer. Many of the newer houses could be described as three bedroom ranches. Some of these dwellings are clustered in suburban neighborhood settings; others sit quite apart from each other. Residents in this area are described as predominantly white, middle-class, professional or semi-professional. Homes are primarily single family dwellings valued from \$25,000 to \$80,000.

Driving for several miles after exiting the interstate, it seemed a long time on the continuously curving road. Diane's house sat closer to the road than others as though it had been there longer than the road. There was a large oil or gas collection tank and pump directly across the road from the house. (Not an unfamiliar sight in rural southeastern Ohio where oil and gas



drilling has been part of the economy.) The house appeared to be an older one-story farm house. It was small with narrow, weathered white clapboard siding. A bench swing hung on the front porch. The front yard was sparsely grassed due to the shade of large matured trees. The gravel drive was heaved in the center; there were patches of green between the tire lanes. At the end of the drive was what I assumed to be the garage. It looked like a small barn, recently painted. A dilapidated chicken coop (without chickens), a dog house, and some other small, old outbuildings were visible in the side yard. The yard was mowed and trimmed. There were newer houses to either side within loud shouting distance. To the rear was an open and expansive countryside with tall grass, rolling hills and trees. During my arrivals at Diane's house mid September through much of October, this countryside provided me with some breathtaking views of sunsets and autumn colors.

### The Initial Meeting

The first meeting with Diane took place on Thursday, September 19, 1991. After driving into the gravel driveway and stopping behind a late model truck, I quickly surveyed the situation. There was no walkway to the front porch; the front door appeared closed behind a screen door. There was a side entrance facing the driveway; it was built into the old stone foundation of the

house. The earth around the foundation looked as if it had been intentionally scooped out in order to create the doorway sometime ago. A pathway and three concrete steps led down to the door. The inside door was open behind the screen door; lights were on. This entrance was chosen.

The knocks brought a barking dog to the door. It was a small blonde, wavy haired spaniel; it seemed harmless enough. A woman looking to be in her late thirties or early forties answered my knocks. She was light haired (brown) and fair skinned. She wore eye glasses with large round frames. She looked to be slightly overweight for her height and body build. She was wearing jeans and a sweatshirt.

After an introduction, Diane's mother was smiling and overtly friendly. She opened the door and extended an invitation to enter. Field notes reflected amazement at the level of warmth and friendliness in her greeting.

The entrance opened into a basement kitchen. The ceiling was low and the floor felt uneven as I walked. The kitchen looked to have been updated several years past. The floor was carpeted in a yellow, orange and brown large print pattern. The room appeared neat and orderly. It was apparent that at one time the kitchen had had an indoor hand pump for well water.

Mrs. Johnson led the way up a set of stairs (heads had to be lowered) to the main part of the small house. This would be the only time the ground/

main level of the house would be seen. After this first meeting, all of the interviews took place in the basement kitchen at a small round colonial style table.

The living room of the house was dark. Only the light from the television screen and the waning natural light through windows provided light for the room. Mrs. Johnson extended an invitation to be seated. Diane most likely would be home any minute from work. There was casual conversation and playing with the dog. The room had a colonial style couch and an upholstered rocker in shades of brown. A portable television sat on a metal stand; a few plants hung in the windows. The room was orderly.

Shortly after seven o'clock, Diane came up the stairs from the kitchen. She was tall and lean with fair skin and blue eyes. It was later revealed that her natural appearing ash blonde hair had been lightened. Her hair length fell slightly below her ear lobes; it turned casually under. She wore blue denim overalls and a red and white checked blouse/shirt and white sneakers.

She sat beside me on the couch. The purpose of the research project was explained; both Diane and her mother acknowledged receipt of the letters. Both Diane and her mother were told the focus of the study. Procedures of consent and confidentiality were explained and opportunity for questions was

given. Neither Diane nor her mother asked how Diane was selected for the study. This information was volunteered by me openly.

Diane was not one of the two female students suggested by John, the high school guidance counselor. She was that female selected by me after one of the two suggested by John had been identified as having relocated to another state. This information was not revealed.

Both Diane and her mother signed consents to participate in the research project. After the formalities, Diane suggested we go down to the kitchen. Perhaps we could manage (the recordings) better there. As we sat at the table, the recording equipment was prepared. The same procedures as described in the first case study were used in audio recording the interviews with Diane, her mother and her teacher.

### Diane's Family

Diane is the younger of two children. She was eighteen years old on September 30, 1991. On occasion of the first interview, Diane joked about always being the youngest student in her classes; she was eagerly awaiting her eighteenth birthday.

Diane and her mother live alone. Puff, the cocker spaniel is their companion. The farmhouse in which they live belongs to Mrs. Johnson's

parents. Mrs. Johnson's parents and her brother live in more modern dwellings to the west side of Diane and her mother.

Diane's brother, Jason, is a year older than she. He lives in a major metropolitan area about sixty miles further west. Jason is a second year accounting student at a proprietary college which offers two and four-year degrees. He supports his academic efforts by working for a nationwide parcel delivery service. Diane recollected that her mother helped Jason complete financial aid forms when he entered college.

Diane's mother, Jane Johnson, graduated from the same high school as Diane; she currently works as a nurse's aide for a local hospital. She has been employed there since she and her children returned to town six or seven years ago; she said she enjoys her work.

Mrs. Johnson and her husband, Diane's father, divorced several years ago. Mrs. Johnson described the early years of their family life:

EXCERPT  
ONE      MOM: "He raced horses when we first got together. That's what we did. Then we lived in Florida when the kids were little. We traveled the circuit is what we did. Every three months we were like a bunch of gypsies. We'd pack up and off we'd go. The kids were just little and that's another reason why I didn't work but anyway, that's what he did, raced horses. Then, he got a permanent job in \_\_\_\_\_ where we lived for at least seven years because they were in

kindergarten through grade school, in the oil business because that's what my father does. So he got him a job taking care of oil wells and things down there. There was fifteen or so many. So we lived down there but then his real love was horses and so we just kind of drifted. He wanted to go back to horses and so that's what he does now. He still races horses but he lives in Florida."

**EXCERPT  
TWO**

**MOM:** "Diane started school really a year ahead than what she should of. Her birthday was the end of September and she was five. Really she was a year young to start school but she was ready."

**ER:** "How did you know that?"

**MOM:** "I just felt that she was smart. Jason would bring home his things from first grade and Diane could do them right along with him. I didn't work, I was not a working mother at first when my kids were little. I didn't start working until they both were in school all day and I think that made a big difference too. I was with her for a whole year before she even started kindergarten and we all kind of went to school. When my son went to school we all . . . that's just the way we did. And that was great."

**ER:** "Can you elaborate on that? We all went to school. What does that mean?"

**MOM:** "Because that was a big deal. We'd set up on the front porch and watch Jason get on the bus. We'd go in and get our housework done and then we'd go out and wait for Jason to come

home. Then we'd set down and whatever school work he had to do, that's what we would do and of course, Diane was always right there."

EXCERPT  
THREE

MOM: "I knew Diane was smart and she's not going to be slow in anything she did anyway. Growing up as an infant she was not slow. There was no problem. I had two bright kids and healthy, and eager to learn. You know, when they are little, whatever mommy says, that's the gospel."

EXCERPT  
FOUR

MOM: "I can remember when they were little. We used to raise horses and drive a lot and we'd go down the highway and if we would see an automobile or a truck, I would catch myself saying, look at that big red truck. It was just things that you would just . . . and they were learning all the time. "

ER: "So there were things that you were doing to help them?"

MOM: "I think so. I was a non-working mother so I think that had a lot to do with it too, how they got started."

ER: "You've mentioned a couple of times, you were a non-working mother."

MOM: "I think I gave lots more. I worked straight midnights but I worked only part time. Of course, I was gone all night and by the time I came home from work, which would be almost eight o'clock, the kids would already be up,

breakfast, dressed, on the bus and off to school. They'd be gone."

ER: "Did they do that by themselves?"

MOM: "I mean their dad was there but yet the alarm would go off and Diane would be up and ready to go and yelling for Jason to get up, let's eat, we're going to school and I would never worry about it. They just did it."

ER: "And how old were they at that time?"

MOM: "That was first grade. First and second grade. That was grade school. Like I say, I only worked part time, but it was just set that mommy won't be home until . . . and then I'd come home and sleep and then I'd be up by the time they came home from school and that would be our evening together, supper time together and then bath time and homework time and like I say we go lay across the bed where it was quiet and we'd read or do the math or whatever, the spelling words. It worked out fine."

Diane was about twelve years old when Mrs. Johnson and the two children returned to this community. Mrs. Johnson talked briefly about the circumstances:

**EXCERPT** ER: "You were in another part of Ohio as a two  
**FIVE** parent family right up until you came back here?"

MOM: "Well my ex-husband was an alcoholic.



I think that's why the kids and I were so close, because I was always protecting my kids."

ER: "You had to protect them?"

MOM: "I can remember one time, this is for an instance, we only had the one vehicle at that time and we're waiting for daddy to come home because we were all going skating and so this one little neighborhood boy was to come and go with us. Of course, their dad never come home, never come home, so I mean we were making excuses all the time and I think it might be a reason why she never brought anybody home. We never knew what kind of condition he would be in."

MOM: "It should have been a big relief because the kids and I talked. We talked before we moved back. I said you guys, I know it's going to be rough because I'm taking you away from all of your friends but I said we have no choice. If we stay down here, he won't leave us alone and my parents live here and you know my parents said, you guys move back, we'll help you get established and get yourself rolling and that's what we had to do, break away. We talked about it and Diane was ready, I mean, yes, let's go. Let's do it. I mean I don't want to blame it on that, but it should have been like a relief to get away from him because I know I was relieved when we moved away from him and got away. It was hard. Like I say I had worked down there for six years, I had a steady job and I worked on the maternity ward where I loved working, and when I moved back here I had almost a two dollars an hour cut in pay, I mean you know, just, it was not a bowl of cherries but yet we had each other and that. We just had that closeness, that bonding I think that started out from when they were little that carried us through."

Diane

During the interview period, Diane was employed full time by a locally-owned apparel shop. She described her job as "fun" and "easy." The interviews were usually conducted later in the evening after Diane arrived home from work. Each week we sat at the kitchen table; the dog licked and begged for attention. His ears were stroked. Diane sat across from me; she generally rested her head in her hands as she spoke.

During the fourth meeting, Diane shared her photograph album and a box of high school memorabilia. The photographs helped to bring Diane's world into clearer focus. These are Diane's descriptions of herself as a student:

EXCERPT  
ONE      DIANE: "I started kindergarten in \_\_\_\_\_, on the Ohio River, kindergarten and grade school all through sixth grade and then back here seventh and eighth grade and then to high school and ninth."

ER: "Tell me a little bit about kindergarten, first, and second grade."

DIANE: "It was little. There was thirty people in the graduating class. It was so small then we came here and it was really big. It was all country down there, things like farming, cows."

ER: "Did you live on a farm?"

DIANE: "Yes and it was fun. I had all guy friends. I was kind of a tomboy. We had horses, my dad raised horses. His whole family has horses. My parents got divorced and we moved back here because my Mom's whole family is here so that's why we came back."

ER: "When you were in kindergarten and the first grade, what was your first impression of school?"

DIANE: "I hated it. I hated school because I wanted to stay home all the time and every possible time to stay home I stayed home. I didn't like school until probably fourth grade. Fourth and fifth grade I started liking school."

ER: "What made the difference?"

DIANE: "I don't know, I guess I wasn't little anymore so I started liking it. When I was little I always wanted to be outside and playing with the animals and just getting dirty and having fun. I didn't want to go to school. Then in fourth grade I started getting girlfriends and wasn't such a tomboy anymore. Probably about fourth grade when I started getting into school, liked school better. I think sports started about then too, fourth or fifth grade. I started playing softball and basketball, of course it was a boy's team, I was on the boy's team because my dad was the coach. That was the only way I could do it. It was funny because I was so skinny. They called me toothpick. That was my nickname in school."

ER: "So sports and friends made it easier for you. What about teachers?"

DIANE: "Teachers. Chuck Hollings was my favorite teacher. He was a family friend, then I

started getting interested in school again. Probably fifth and sixth grade because I had good teachers and the years before I really didn't like them as well. That probably makes a difference too. Fifth grade he was like a family friend and he was friends with my dad and always done things together and that kind of stuff and then sixth grade, everybody was so close in this town and everyone knew everybody. The sixth grade were friends of the family too. That's when I started liking teachers and started interest in school more."

DIANE: "There was me and my brother. He's just a year older than me. We was good in school. We always got good grades. We were on the honor roll and all that kind of stuff. I always got good grades but my conduct has always been . . ."

ER: "Your conduct?"

DIANE: "I've always had like "C's" just because of my conduct. In school I always got C's and D's in conduct. I was always interrupting the class and always trying to make everybody laugh."

EXCERPT  
TWO

ER: "You had good grades you say. You were a good student. Is that the first time you were aware what kind of student you were?"

DIANE: "Yes. It gets harder and if you're still doing good then you think you must be good if it's getting harder and you're still doing good. When you're younger and you get all A's and B's it's kind of expected because it's not really hard. I would think it would be expected but maybe it's

not. All through school I was always on the honor roll. I think the middle of my junior year was the first time I had ever been off the honor roll like ever. Then from there it went down hill. Just because I couldn't wait to get out I guess."

DIANE: "Probably in the middle of my junior year was when you're wanting out because you're thinking you're going to be a senior next year and you can't wait. I think that was the first time I was acting up and I could see my grades going down and classes were harder too. Junior year classes tend to get harder than freshman and sophomore and that made a difference too."

ER: "What kind of classes did you take?"

DIANE: "I took all college prep classes and my junior year I think I took Algebra II. I didn't get along with it so well. That was when my grades started dropping too. I just took whatever I had to take to get out. That was kind of my fun year."

ER: "How did you get into college prep?"

DIANE: "The year before they . . . I don't know, if you took it the year before. Actually, all my friends took it so I guess that's probably why I started. I don't know if they have it in sixth grade or even in eighth grade I don't know if they had college prep. All my friends had gotten in it so I thought I would too. It was never very hard so I just thought most of my classes were like that. When you're a freshman, there's a few that just did their regular math and if you choose prealgebra that way you get one step ahead. So that's how I ended up getting algebra II in junior year."

ER: "Are your friends as good a students as you are?"

DIANE: "Yes. Better. We're all the same but yes they continued to stay good and I didn't, I don't think."

ER: "You have been in the top twenty-five percent."

DIANE: "Yes, but it could have been higher, should have been higher."

ER: "Why should it have been higher?"

DIANE: "I don't know. Because I'm a better student than that. I just didn't apply myself I guess, I've been told."

ER: "You've been told that? By whom?"

DIANE: "My teachers, my parents, family. Here all these years you've done this and you've done good and you've always done this and this year what happens, you're lucky to get an A. I was expected to get an A. They just thought I would. Personally, I think it's expected that you would kind of but it's not going to be as good because everyone wants to get out and you get senioritis everyone says and you can't wait to get out. That made a difference, big difference, plus my classes were easy."

ER: "What about other people's expectations for you?"

DIANE: "I don't know. I would think more my grandparents even than my parents. I couldn't honestly say my parents because they have

always, if I've done good they say yes and if I haven't then they say well that's okay you could do better but it's okay They never really growled at you for doing bad. They were never really forceful parents. I always wanted to do good for my parents, just for my family because my mom always wanted to say my daughter . . . She's always wanted to do that so I guess that's who I was trying to please."

**EXCERPT  
THREE**

**ER:** "When was the first time that you were really aware of how bright you are or what kind of a student you are?"

**DIANE:** "Sixth grade, probably younger. A lot of the kids didn't do as well sometimes. But then I was compared to my brother too and he got good grades then too and then he dropped too. I don't know why but he did. We were just always good kids in school I guess or younger anyway and everyone just assumed that he got good grades and I did too. When you got to seventh grade you start getting a real report card. It's not so much your conduct or anything like that. I got good grades in junior high too."

Diane's mother talked about her daughter as a student:

**EXCERPT  
ONE**

**ER:** "Would you describe for me how you see Diane as a student?"

**MOM:** "Just the high school years, not her junior high?"

ER: "You may go back as far as you like. You can start in kindergarten and move up if you like. That's what I asked Diane to do."

MOM: "Always, always perfect in school. I mean I'd go for the parent-teacher conferences, there's not a thing wrong, you know your child is well behaved in school, gets her work done, gets it on time you know and I always heard that all through grade school and junior high was fine and then when high school came along you know you just kind of drift and that's what is sad. I told Diane, you know they were taking algebra and geometry, things that I never took in school which I'm ashamed to say, but I couldn't really relate to what they studied and that's sad."

ER: "Describe for me a little bit about what you mean by drift."

MOM: "You know like in grade school they bring books home and we'd sit and every night in grade school and . . ."

ER: "You could help them with their work?"

MOM: "Yes. If we had a story to read we'd lie across the bed and we'd read a paragraph each. It got to be a fun game. I'd want to read a whole page and Diane would say, Mom, you're only supposed to read a paragraph. But we would, we'd read and the same way with spelling words, things like that when they were in grade school I just did fantastic with them and the kids, just perfect. Then when they get in junior high, then they don't start bringing their books home and you say, now you got your homework done, yes, I had study hall today so I did it before, you know, things like that and they just didn't bring



their books home like they did in grade school. You just don't seem like you're as close, well I didn't feel like I was as close to them in junior high and high school."

ER: "They become more independent from parents in terms of support and doing homework in school?"

MOM: "Yes, I think so."

ER: "Then what about on into high school?"

MOM: "High school is even worse, you know. I'd say to Diane, are you taking enough credits now you'll be able to graduate because she would say she had a couple of study halls and of course she only went a half a day her senior year because she worked half a day and went to school half a day. But that's all the credits she needed. I mean it's sad that you don't keep more involved when they get into high school because it would be time for parent-teacher conferences. The kids say, oh mom, you don't need to go. So I wouldn't go. You know, that's sad and that should never of happened, but high school was different here then when they were in grade school. See that's the thing. Like their graduating class down where we used to live would have been like sixty-nine and the graduating up here, what is it, three hundred and some. Around four hundred. The kids, I'm sure they didn't enjoy junior high and high school here to be truthful. Because like I say, they started in kindergarten down there and went all through grade school, you know, and we knew everybody and you get up here but then . . . "

ER: "So from your perspective, size makes a difference in terms of the communication that goes on between students and parents, parents and teachers."

MOM: "Oh yes. You see the teacher on the street and they wouldn't know you from Adam. In the grade school, we had cheerleading squads and my ex-husband took care of the basketball teams, coached for that, and I was a coach for cheerleaders and the teachers were all involved and everything. It was such a close knit and then when I got my divorce and moved back to town, I drug them off from all their friends, you know that had to be dramatic for them and Diane was in seventh grade and Jason was in eighth grade. They did fine. In junior high they got on the honor roll and Jason played basketball. They did fine, my kids adapt really well. But when they got to high school it was just too big. It's sad."

ER: "So you felt that loss of contact with the school? Do you think they got support from other sources then at that point?"

MOM: "Well, I would imagine. If there had been any problem, I know I would have heard from a teacher, I would say, of the kids. But they were always straight A students and honor roll but then they started failing. Not failing, but not getting on the honor roll here and they would bring home C's and that just wasn't like Diane. She'd be embarrassed if she got a low grade or you know."

ER: "That was when and what year in school for Diane?"

MOM: "That was in grade school and junior high. But then when they hit high school, I just don't know. I think because they were so involved in extra activities, not necessarily, but they were in everything, band, and everything else going on but yet they did great with their grades. Everything just rolled right in together. But when they went to high school and it didn't have close knit friends, I think the move was a big downfall for my kids. I really do and I regret it and hate it but we had no choice."

ER: "Seventh was when she started here, did ok junior high, you noticed a little slide in high school?"

MOM: "The ninth grade is when they start high school here so they're up there with the big kids. Diane played tennis, she was into tennis and everything, and did fine but that was the only thing she wanted to get into. In junior high she played volleyball and got involved like that. They really went gung ho but then it was just like they got shot down or something. Junior highs all go into the one high school and seems like all these kids have grown up together, then you go into the high school and if you're new a person, you're not really in the crowd yet."

Diane identified her chemistry teacher as her favorite. Mr. Grey holds a graduate degree from an Ohio public institution of higher education plus forty-five hours beyond the Masters. In the following excerpts, he described Diane as a student:

**EXCERPT  
ONE**      "Under what circumstances have you come to know Diane?"

**TEACHER:** "She took college prep high school chemistry course, so the circumstances under which I interacted with her would have been mostly laboratory work and I would identify her as pretty much an introvert, at least in the setting of my classroom, and I identified her as not an especially good reader from CLOZE reading tests which I give. I think she was mechanically a good reader but she wasn't real good with reading comprehension and I tried to make a lot of effort to determine how my kids best learn and Diane, as I remember, was pretty much a hands-on learner and I think she even expressed a few times informally that some of the classes that she didn't like were those which were mostly auditory. She doesn't learn well by listening. She learns better by doing. So I think a lot of her success in my classroom was simply the fact that a lot of chemistry or the chemistry that I attempt to teach is hands on mini lesson approach to where they are introduced to a topic and I try to make an effort to verbalize it, to write, and to have them do it so we can try to access all the basic learning channels that these kids have and I also think those successes allow her to build her self image a little bit because I perceived her at times to be somewhat not confident compared to her peers. She seemed to lack confidence in herself. Just in questioning, I use a lot of questions in my classroom, and just her body language at times, not making eye contact, there were little ways that I could determine that she maybe knew an answer but she didn't have the confidence to verbalize it in the classroom. So basically, to sum it up, I would say she was somewhat introverted, somewhat lacking confidence because she was in a

class of students who were pretty good academic achievers, and as time went on I think, she was especially good in lab with glassware, pouring equipment, measuring with data, she seemed to be more sequential than she was global. She was much better at following instructions in a lab environment than she would have been, let's say reasoning where she was having to take a number of specific pieces of data and try to generalize all that into one concept. But she was excellent in lab. One of the better students in the class."

ER: "Overall, how would you describe her academic ability?"

TEACHER: "I would say overall, her math ability would have been average to slightly above average compared to the rest of my chemistry students. I would say her verbal skills, i.e., reading comprehension, were probably average to maybe below average based upon the group of students I had."

EXCERPT  
TWO

ER: "She described herself frequently as fickle. You're shaking your head yes. Can you expand on that?"

TEACHER: "As a teacher, I would see that she is somewhat moody, as within the same day. See her in the morning in the hall she's pleasant, but somewhat subdued and at other times she would be pretty vivacious and maybe telling a joke. I think maybe her view of herself is accurate if she means that she's somewhat nervous, difficulty in sitting still for prolonged periods of time and being that classic stereotype of the good student as

far as the hand always up to answer the question, focusing on exactly what the teacher is doing at all times, she wasn't that way. She was on and off. Even within the same class period. She might for a few minutes be observing a demonstration let's say and even volunteer an answer to a question but then the next ten minutes she might have been flipping through a book or maybe have a magazine there that she'd glance at not out of disrespect or even lack of interest as much just a seeming inability to concentrate in one area very long."

EXCERPT  
THREE

ER: "What kind of expectations did Diane have for herself as a student?"

TEACHER: "I think she was one of those kids, by in large, that didn't really push herself too hard and she seemed to probably have expectations of her parents on her mind because I know grades were important to her more for the grade than for the sake of learning. I don't know that I phrased that very well. I think sometimes she seemed to be expected to get grades from someone at home. That's my impression."

ER: "Did you ever meet her parents?"

TEACHER: "No, I've never met her parents. I had her brother in class previously. They are both very polite kids and they weren't embarrassed about being polite in front of their peers which I respect kids for that. No matter who they were with, they would always say hi, they would smile, they would not feel that it was uncool to talk to a teacher and I appreciate that."

ER: "She describes herself and her brother as good kids and good students."

TEACHER: "Very respectful."

EXCERPT  
FOUR

ER: "What do you think most teachers expected from Diane?"

TEACHER: "I think for me, my expectation of her, in general of all students, but I guess I'm trying to focus on her, I learned early that her lab work seemed to be what she enjoyed the most so I think even subconsciously I focused a lot on what she did on lab reports and took a lot of time and effort to read through them and compliment her especially, written comments on her paper or what she was doing right. I liked to use positive reinforcement, reinforce the things that they are doing correctly because that only helps me if they establish a positive feeling toward me early in a course then it benefits me later as a teacher. I was proud of what she did so I wanted her to know that I was being sort of picky with her on her labs to make her feel as though they were special to her and I really think she felt that way. She took extra effort to make them neat, or might take the trouble, as I remember a few times, she would recopy something and it was more important for her to recopy it than it was for me to have her recopy it. So, she took pride in what she did and I think pride enters into that. But again, that pride was somewhat sporadic. It depended a little bit on what kind of mood she was in and maybe she was preoccupied, that's sort of a good word to describe her facial expression maybe is preoccupied like she had other things on her mind at time. Of course, we all do."

ER: "Any idea what sort of things she might have had on her mind?"

TEACHER: "Not really. I couldn't really say. I just remember her or the overall impression I get from her is very positive, honest, she never seemed to try to cover up her feelings, she was pretty much spontaneous and if she was in a mood to participate she did. She seemed to enjoy participating in class. She sat toward the front of the room, and she was one of those kids that you could tell she sat there because she just seemed to like the proximity to the teacher. It's like it gave her a feeling of security, guidance or I'm not quite sure what that feeling is, but I just know it was there. She felt comfortable there. Of course, I had other students that were the opposite but she seemed to establish early on in the year that she wanted to have a positive relationship with me as a teacher. I think sometimes teachers underestimate how important that is to a student.

School files indicated Diane ranked fifty-seventh out of 259 students.

Diane's grades ranged from A+ to D-. There were three D's spread over two years and three different courses, i.e., one in English III, one in Algebra II and one in college prep World History. She received A's and B's in Spanish, Biology, Chemistry, and Latin. She received B's and C's in Algebra I and two C's and a D in Algebra II. According to Diane's teacher, her conduct was always appropriate. By Diane's account she received no detentions or discipline for inappropriate behavior.



As Diane spoke, she talked about her school experiences recalling several favorite teachers. I asked what made those teachers her favorites:

**EXCERPT  
ONE**      **DIANE:** "Ones that can have fun, smile at you and are friendly. That means a lot to me if someone can smile at you or can be nice to you instead of just proper and organized all the time or down to earth more. One to one teachers were, the better ones."

**ER:** "One to one. Tell me what you mean by that."

**DIANE:** "They would maybe say hi to you in the halls or how are you or ask you something personal. If you told them you a test in something else, they might ask you later on, how did you do. You know, just a little more personal I guess. I liked that more."

**ER:** "So teachers that take the time to get to know you."

**DIANE:** "Yes, instead of just teaching you something and know you're in the class but not really an individual."

**ER:** "Who was your favorite teacher in high school?"

**DIANE:** "In high school? Mr. Grey. Chemistry."

**ER:** "Chemistry? What was so great about Mr. Grey?"

DIANE: "He was that way. He was real talkative. He was real fun. He was a fun teacher. A lot of people would say he was their favorite teacher. I couldn't say my favorite because he was easy but he was a little more lenient and understanding. He always came and watched my tennis matches and if I had a tennis match he would understand if I didn't get my homework all done or something like that. He wasn't so by the rules all the time. He was a little more caring. He was nice."

Describing herself as having only a few close friends, Diane and her mother both indicated Diane seldom studied with friends. According to Diane she was easily distracted; her teacher described her as learning better in "hands-on" situations. Diane talked about school activities and her school relationships.

EXCERPT  
ONE

DIANE: "I did Drama Club for two years, yearbook staff for four years and the newspaper, Key Club, November through January I think it was, Student Council all that kind of stuff. I played volleyball my freshman year. I was too skinny, my wrists always got bruised so I quit that. That was only for one year. Really, for only half season because I was too lazy. I couldn't do all that exercise. I want to all the practices and then I went to one meet and I was pretty tired of it so I quit. I'm kind of fickle with everything. I've always been that way but I played tennis for four years and I really liked it. That's the only sport I really stuck with. I liked

yearbook. that was fun because I wrote on tennis and I did like the tennis in the sports area and the guys and the girls. And the newspaper, that was fun writing stuff."

EXCERPT  
TWO

DIANE: "With guys, I'm fickle. I'll say that I like someone so much then finally they go out with me and we'll go out less than a week and I dump them. I dump everybody. I'm horrible. I'm fickle. I change my mind so quick. I'll want to do something and I'm one hundred percent behind it and then the next month I don't even like it anymore. I've always been like that. Same way with friends. I get tired of friends."

ER: "Do you change friends a lot?"

DIANE: "Not close friends. My close friends, she's been my friend forever. I guess groups, just groups of people or anything. I don't want to get tied down with anything. I like to change quick."

ER: "So you don't have a steady boyfriend?"

DIANE: "No."

EXCERPT  
THREE

DIANE: "In high school there was a group of girls who was always fighting or always changing friends. I guess kind of the popular group. You know girls that were just stupid."

ER: "There's a group of girls who were always changing friends but they were popular/stupid?"

DIANE: "Girls that, because there were a couple in my class but I was never really good friends with them because I knew what they were like. They would just use people. They would be friends with someone until they would just get tired of them or they do something real petty and they thought it was something great and then they get closer to someone else. My friend Sara, we've been best friends since my sophomore year. We were friends with all of them and if we'd do anything we'd do it as a big group but Sara and I, we were never the type to become close friends with anybody because we just really didn't like them for a close friend or anything so we're really true friends."

EXCERPT  
FOUR

ER: "Did you and your friends study together?"

DIANE: "No."

ER: "Ever?"

DIANE: "No, Me and Sara never did. If I studied with any friends it would be at school. I never took time out of school to get together to study or anything like that. Maybe a couple of girls would but I would never be the instigator. They would all come to my house and we're going to study. I might study a little bit but usually I was the one that started watching TV. I would never follow through and study the whole time. I've never been a really hard studier. I don't know why. Boredom I guess."

ER: "Did you talk about grades?"

DIANE: "Yes. Not a lot; just compare. If they got better they would rub it in your face or something. But not really anything mean, just teasing. We always talked about the comments a lot, like the teacher's comments.

EXCERPT  
FIVE

ER: "Did you work during high school?"

DIANE: "The middle of my junior year. I worked mainly on the weekends, Friday night and Saturday night because they really need you on Sunday. Maybe one day during the week so it really didn't affect my grades. It couldn't. My senior year, I started working at Sanderson's Clothiers. The yearbook advisor got the job for me."

ER: "The hours were easy and the work was easy?"

DIANE: "Yes. My senior year, Sara and I, she worked at Brown's and we worked for the same family and I said well how did you get this job, which is weird. They called her too, they called through school or something to get her to work there and neither one of us applied but we both ended up working there. But, we went to school half a day in our senior year so I got out at noon."

ER: "So you got out so you could work."

DIANE: "Yes. I didn't work everyday but I got out everyday at noon. I probably worked every other day, went in at noon or so."

**EXCERPT  
SIX** ER: "You've indicated you're so easily bored?  
Is that a good word?"

DIANE: "Yes, distracted. I don't know. I've always been that way. I've always wanted to do something, if I had a choice between this and this, I always want to do the one that is more fun. I just always want to have fun and I never worry about anything. That's what I always tell my mom not to do but she can't help it. I'm a pretty carefree person.

DIANE: "If someone is making me stressful, I don't talk to them anymore. I don't want to have to think about problems all the time. I guess there's a lot of problems."

**EXCERPT  
SEVEN** ER: "Let's talk about school and what kinds of things about school cause stress for you?"

DIANE: "Deadlines for the yearbook. That's the only thing I really cared about the last year in school - our yearbook and our newspaper. I always wrote for it and it was a lot of fun. This year's a good yearbook, better than last years. We always try to beat the editors last year and deadlines are tight and I can write the body and all that kind of stuff but I can't think of what will these things, like a title. I'm always getting yelled at for that and that gave me a lot of stress. Just because I couldn't think of a stupid title for my topic. I can't think of anything that stressed me. I never worried about what people thought. If someone didn't like me that's their problem. I never worried about that kind of stuff and I just didn't think about if someone didn't like me I was always that way. I didn't want someone to have

to make me think about it. I didn't want anybody to make me be stressful I guess. I just avoided them or stayed away from them. Sara and I, we're both alike. Well, she's more quiet than I am. She's more quiet and more shy than I am. She's the same way I am. She doesn't like to be friends with anybody that isn't really her friend."

### Diane's Future

Periodically, during the interviews, Diane would elude to her future.

Each opportunity was taken to ask Diane to describe her vision of her future; how she sees it now and how she envisioned it while in junior high school:

EXCERPT  
ONE      ER: "What did you see yourself doing when you were in fourteen years old?"

DIANE: "You mean to become."

ER: "Yes, to become. Fourteen?"

DIANE: "I know I wanted to be an astronaut. I don't know why. I think that was way back though. I wanted to be a marine biologist and swim with the dolphins and find out all about whales and marine life. I've always liked that. Sea World is my favorite place to go. I wanted to be a marine biologist and I had it all planned out. I was going to Florida because that's where my dad lives and go to school there because you have to be on the coast to study. I don't know, I was going to do it but I never thought about really doing it."

ER: "So it was a dream."

DIANE: "Yes. I'd be like a shark hunter. I always watch Discovery Channel and I love when they go out and catch the sharks and I like that, to be in the cage among the sharks and stuff. I like that."

ER: "You smile when you talk about that. What happened between then and now? When did you change your mind?"

DIANE: "I don't want to go to school that well. I've had enough of school and I'm not, I don't know, I just can't see, I guess I've got an easier way of what to do because now I'm going to travel school. I'm going to be a flight attendant. That's neat, traveling."

ER: "When are you going to do that?"

DIANE: "In January. I was going in September but that's too soon so this get everything going and it's in Florida."

DIANE: "They came here to tell me you're accepted and gone through all that."

ER: "They came here to your home?"

DIANE: "Yes, for a personal interview. I guess you can't be trained to be a flight attendant. They don't consider it a career, a real career. They want you to learn how to do ticket agent and all that other kind of stuff so you can fall back on it because I guess girls don't like living out of suitcases all their life. I would. I'd like just the adventure to travel like that all the time and not really have to be tied down by anything."



**EXCERPT  
TWO**

**ER:** "I listened to the tape from last week. Let's go back to that point at which you were telling me about the seventh grade or between seventh and eighth grade, you wanted to be an astronaut or a marine biologist.

**DIANE:** "Astronaut was just TV because it wasn't based on anything really. Marine biologist probably was because around that time is when my dad moved to Florida and we moved here and we'd always go out in the ocean and go deep sea fishing and all that kind of stuff. Sea World was always there and that's when I decided that I wanted to go back down there for school and to my dad's."

**ER:** "For school, meaning you had some inclination that it required additional school to be a marine biologist or you thought you could get a special school in Florida."

**DIANE:** "Yes, you could study easier if you were on the coast. That was why."

**ER:** "So, really you were thinking beyond the high school at that point."

**DIANE:** "Yes."

**ER:** "What happened to that dream?"

**DIANE:** "I don't know, guess I didn't want to go to Florida anymore or just want to do something easier. I guess I got lazy."

**ER:** "What happened in those years or how did that come about that you moved from having a dream that involved additional education to a point where you just wanted to get out?"

DIANE: "I decided I didn't want to go that many school years. I don't know why I changed my mind, just did."

EXCERPT  
THREE

ER: "Let's go back to your dream again and how many people knew about your dream?"

DIANE: "Probably just my family, probably six or seven people."

ER: "Meaning, mom and dad?"

DIANE: "Yes, mom, dad, grandparents, brother."

ER: "Did you talk about it?"

DIANE: "Yes."

ER: "In what kind of way did you talk about it?"

DIANE: "When I was in seventh and eighth and junior high and I was planning on doing it, I would actually look for schools and I talked about Florida and I'd try to pick what school to go to and things because I knew a couple of people that went to school in Florida and different colleges. I knew some things that they had told me and I was trying to pick and I'd always say, I don't know, I just talked about it when I got out of school I'd go there and go to school and do that. I was always looking for different colleges, always looking in the college manuals and stuff and look for the ones in Florida."

ER: "Your mom and dad were still together at that point."

DIANE: "No."

ER: "So you would talk with your mom and dad at different times about it?"

DIANE: "Yes. I probably didn't talk to my dad very much. For a while he thought I was coming down but then I didn't talk about it that much with him probably because he never really asked about it anymore. He just assumed I'd change my mind again and my mom, we never really talked about school that much. She knew and she knew that I'd say what about this school. I might have two or three schools I was talking about and she's yeah, yeah, whatever. She probably never thought that I would do it anyway. Of course, she never really was totally, totally interested in what I was talking about because she thought I would change my mind again like I always do."

ER: "Did any teachers ask you any questions about what your plans were for the future?"

DIANE: "Yes. Ms. Rollins, my English teacher, she was good friends with Mrs. Sharp, the yearbook advisor, and so she knew what pieces I'd written in the paper and that kind of stuff and she asked me if I was real interested in writing and I said not really, I like too. She said well maybe you should model. So that's what she told me to do and then my advisor, she was always different. And that's what she said I should do. She says, well I don't see why you should go to school. Just do that."

ER: "I don't see why you should go to school. Just do that? You mean be a model?"

DIANE: "That's what they always said. Mrs. Sharp knew my senior year that I had thought about going into modeling. She agreed that would be fun and that would be good for me."

ER: "You have thought about modeling?"

DIANE: "Yes. That's what my dad wants me to do but I don't know. I've even taken classes and all that kind of stupid stuff."

ER: "So that's what your dad wants you to do?"

DIANE: "Well, he's always been the one. Whenever I go to Florida he always has some kind of something he wants me to do."

ER: "I don't understand what you mean."

DIANE: "Jobs or something like that. There was one in Boca Raton for a weekend and it was fun. You meet all kinds of people like the guy that taught Ronald Reagan how to walk, like the proper walking and models, agents, and powerful people were there. Some guys I've seen in movies and there was all kinds of neat people there. It was fun. I always have fun but I always thought I just couldn't do that. I mean I could but after I did something like that I'd think yes I want to do something like that it would be fun but it's so hard to do it. I'd like to do it, it would be fun but you have to go to New York. That's just where you have to go."

ER: "That doesn't appeal to you?"

DIANE: "Yes, it does. But it's something that does appeal to me but I couldn't do it."

ER: "Why you couldn't do it?"

DIANE: "I don't know. I couldn't do that. I've always thought about just save my money and just leaving and take a bus and go to New York and just do it but then I thought where would I stay and there's so many different complications in doing it. See what I mean. I'm not eighteen. I'm not to say what I can do yet. I can't even . . . I don't know, I just can't. I guess whenever I do turn eighteen then I'll think well I can go to New York now. I don't have to tell anybody."

EXCERPT  
FIVE

ER: "Where do you want to be two or three years from now?"

DIANE: "Just traveling. I don't want to settle down for a few years. I'm just, I don't know, need a lot of friends, I don't know. I don't think I want to live here. It doesn't really matter where I live though because I want to travel all the time. The biggest problem is I don't see what I'll do when I have a day off because it will be like fun everyday. That's the way I see it so far anyway until I start doing it.

Mrs. Johnson spoke with me at her kitchen table on a night when Diane was working late. She had greeted me warmly each week almost as if I had been a long time acquaintance. She had shared openly details of her family's life. As the conversation progressed, she spoke of Diane's future:

**EXCERPT ONE** ER: "Overall, what kind of expectations do you think that Diane's teachers, her school in general, had for her?"

MOM: "You mean like what her future could hold or what she could do?"

ER: "Yes, or what they expected she could do any and all of that or however you want to address that."

MOM: "I think they thought she could apply herself and she could do it if she just put herself to it. I'm sure that's what they felt. You will go far in whatever kind of career you choose."

ER: "That's the kind of statement they wrote on . . .?"

MOM: "Like, you know in their yearbook how teachers will write, you could go far, I know you'll do well in the future, and you have a good head on your shoulders and all that good stuff. If she would apply herself, she could have made honor roll all through high school. I know she could have."

**EXCERPT TWO** ER: "Let's talk a little bit about Diane's future and tell me a little bit about what her plans are for the future."

MOM: "Modeling was her number one goal and that's what she wanted to do. She never really, really wants to go on to college to study. She says, mom, I just don't want to go and study, get books out and study. I'm not one, I'm not going

to force her. If that's what she wants to do then, you know."

ER: "What's she going to be doing in the near future?"

MOM: "She is going to be going to school at the Southeastern Academy down in Kissimmee, Florida, and it's a travel agent like school or traveling. It's like a three-month program."

ER: "Is she working to pay her own way through there?"

MOM: "Well, she's working right now but then we've got financial aid papers to fill out that we should get some kind of assistance but . . ."

ER: "So the school is eligible for financial aid?"

MOM: "Yes, we'll be able to get assistance like that. Like I say, both of my kids realize in today's world you have to have some kind of career. You've got to do something. Like I told Diane, I said for a woman, you think it's easy but it's not as easy as you think it might be. Like Josh says, a man has to have a career and a woman can just get married and be fat. Look at me Diane, if I had gone on to college and had some kind of career we wouldn't be off as bad as we were off. But I never dreamed, you never dream of divorce, you never dream of getting married and having a couple of children and be stuck with raising two kids by yourself. You don't dream about that so that's why I try to tell them that education was so important."

**EXCERPT  
THREE** ER: "I understand your son's at \_\_\_\_\_ in his second year."

MOM: "Yes, starting his second year in accounting. He liked math and that's his love so that's what he's going to go into. But Diane . . .

MOM: "I thought well how about nursing. You know that's my main love, hospital work but she's not interested. "

ER: "Not medical."

MOM: "No, no. She's not into stuff like that. Now she likes fashion where she works now. I think she could be good in marketing or something like that. I think she could be good at things like that. In the back of her head I know what she's wanting. She's wanting to see if she could ever make it into the modeling or into the airline school, travel. See the world. I think that's what she wants."

ER: "She wants to see the world."

MOM: "I think so. She's more adventurous than us. She doesn't want to go on and study, I mean books."

**EXCERPT  
FOUR** MOM: "A lot of her friends are going on to school to be lawyers and things like that but she just says, I don't want to do that. Modeling is her main thing and that's what she's got her heart set on."

ER: "How does she see herself getting into that or breaking into that?"



MOM: "She has to be in it probably before she's twenty-one. They say before you're twenty-one. And I think she thinks now if she goes to this school that will get her exposure to other travel agencies."

EXCERPT  
FIVE

MOM: Well, you know what kind of employment there is here. There's just not much here. But I don't know, one summer she went to Florida and stayed with her dad for a few weeks because he lived in Florida. He moved to Florida. He took her to a modeling convention or something and she had eight or ten different letters from modeling agencies, come back when you're seventeen or send us resumes or when you're 5' 9" we want to see you again. You know, things like this. When we lived down in Gallipolis, even in grade school, I'd taken her to a modeling school. They'd learn poise and how to carry herself and you know she'd just lap that up. She just loved it to death. Of course, she took dancing. We were ballet, baton, and you know what girls usually do but like I say, she's a smart kid and she could apply herself to do whatever. Really, she's got the smarts to do whatever she wants to do but she wants to see the world. She wants to travel. She said, can you imagine mom, going to Tokyo or somewhere. No, Diane, I can't imagine it but if that's what she wants and that's what will make her happy, go for it. That's the way I feel. I try to guide them in the right direction but I don't think, I want them to use their heads and think what they really want to do. You're not going to be happy doing something that you don't really want to do. You're just doing this because this is the right thing to do. This is what is expected of me.

**EXCERPT  
SIX**      **MOM:** "Five years from now, I'm hoping she's into what she wants to be in and if she's in modeling that's fantastic. That would be her real love. She's talked about going down the runway in high fashion modeling and I think fashion designers, she might model until her years are up although some models model for many, many years, she might get into another field like fashion or something. It might lead into something else that she, you know. If it works out for her, I see her in fashion."

Mr. Grey spoke candidly as he sat in my office for the interview. He had spoken about Diane as a student and toward the closing of the interview, he spoke about Diane's academic potential:

**EXCERPT  
ONE**      **ER:** "Did Diane seem like a student that teachers might see as potentially able to pursue post-secondary education?"

**TEACHER:** "That's a hard question. I perceived her to be capable of post-secondary ed simply because she's got a lot of positive personality traits. I remember even having a little discussion with her once, I don't know if she would remember it, about teaching. I think there are certain traits that she has, she's warm, I think she's considerate, she has excellent manners, and all those kind of things I saw, just little things. If papers had to be passed out, sometimes she would volunteer to do that or she had to weigh something on a digital balance, she would wait in line or let somebody go ahead of her. Always

consideration for the other person. I think a lot of those qualities along with her hands-on ability, I think there is certain areas in college where she could do well, I think education would have been one, especially elementary education. I think there is a lot of virtues that would have made her a good teacher. I've found among my own teaching peers, most teachers tend to teach in a learning channel or a method that they themselves best learned and I know that because I'm a visual learner primarily and I had mostly auditory teachers as a student and had a lot of difficulty because I'm not a real good listener for prolonged periods. I'm so acutely aware of that, that I've made a lot of effort as a teacher to try to do as much visual hands-on type of things as I can and try to avoid as much as I can, verbalizing. I think Diane responded real well in that."

ER: "She described herself frequently as fickle. You're shaking your head yes. Can you expand on that now or you obviously see that somehow. So I guess I need for you to relate to me how you see that or . . ."

TEACHER: "As a teacher, I would see that is somewhat moody, as within the same day. See her in the morning in the hall she's pleasant, but somewhat subdued and at other times she would be pretty vivacious and maybe telling a joke. I think maybe her view of herself as accurate if she means that she's somewhat nervous, difficulty in sitting still for prolonged periods of time and being that classic stereotype of the good student as far as the hand always up to answer the question, focusing on exactly what the teacher is doing at all times, she wasn't that way. She was on and off. Even within the same class period. She might for a few minutes be observing a

demonstration let's say and even volunteer an answer to a question but then the next ten minutes she might have been flipping through a book or maybe have a magazine there that she'd glance at not out of disrespect or even lack of interest as much just a seeming inability to concentrate in one area very long."

ER: "Did she ever talk, herself, to you about going to college?"

TEACHER: "I had a lot of casual conversations with students, and I remember her asking a few times about the local technical college, as a matter of fact, because I think the conversation arose, I was teaching out here at that time, as I am now still part-time and a general conversation came up somehow about the college and she was interested in what was going on out here and what courses were offered and what programs were offered and I do remember that but I don't ever remember her being that interested in the college recruiters and that type thing. It always seemed like I'd have the same ten or twelve students always get out of class. Typically at the high school, we reserve third period of the day for convenience to have college recruiters come in and I don't very often remember her having participated that way or being all that much interested. It's almost like she maybe views herself as one fatalistically who just wasn't going to go to college and I've had students like that."

ER: "Were her friends people, I mean you said her friends were good students, were her friends people that seemed to be headed toward college?"

TEACHER: "Yes. They would have been some of the better students in class."

ER: "But she was fatalistic just simply kind of I'm not going to go. Is that something she said or just something that seemed to be, something that students do that teachers pick up."

TEACHER: "Yes, that's a conclusion that I'm drawing from her behavior so maybe fatalistic is too harsh of a word for me to use. Nonchalant. It didn't seem to be a priority for her to pursue information about college and career and I do want to say that my perception, I've taught at the high school for about fifteen years and something that has always bothered me, and I think it's partly the area that we live in is, there hasn't been much of an emphasis or much of a priority placed upon career guidance or disseminating information. The information is available but it's not prioritized."

TEACHER: "In my mind, and I've taught at the technical college level, there is no doubt in my mind that she could compete with students there or typical freshman classes at the branch and there's no doubt in my mind at all that she could do it."

ER: "What would be some reasons why she might not be going?"

TEACHER: "My feeling, my instinct as a teacher is, it has to do with the way she views herself. I just think, I don't know if it has to do with what her family has told her, but I just don't feel that she views herself as one who all along was expected to go to college and do this. It's almost like she was pre-destined that she either was not able to or was not expected to or that she's from a family, I don't know if her parents are educated but maybe she views a young

female, even with a good mind, as one who would just get married and raise kids and not have to get a college education. I can't really say but I think a lot of it is, she did not completely view herself as one who all along was going to do that. I think if she did, she would have verbalized it, she would have gone to some of these college meetings with her peers and that type of thing and I just didn't see that happen."

#### Conclusion of the Interviews with Diane

The final interview with Diane went much as Jodi's had gone. The same procedures were followed for closure. In Diane's case study, the reader has been taken to her neighborhood and the initial meeting via narrative descriptions. Through presented excerpts from the interviews, a picture of her family and school lives was drawn.

## Ben

### His Neighborhood

Ben lives in the same section of the city as Jodi, the student represented in the first case study in this chapter. The neighborhood is in the southeast quadrant of the community or the "east end". The area lies east of the river and south of the interstate highway; it is immediately adjacent to the downtown area. Ben's residence is situated on one of the most highly traveled main streets which is routed east and west through downtown and through this urban and densely populated neighborhood.

The homes in Ben's neighborhood are estimated to be valued from \$17,000 to \$40,000. Residents are described as lower to middle income employed and unemployed. A local realtor reported income of some individuals in this neighborhood to be \$10,000 annually. Rental properties in the realtor's opinion are overpriced at \$250 to \$300 monthly. According to the realtor, this neighborhood has been traditionally "blue collar" and "heavy Catholic".

Locating Ben's house required parking the car on a side street and walking up and down the city block. The heavy traffic flow did not permit driving slowly enough to identify the exact location from a moving vehicle.

Ben's residence was a three family dwelling. It seemed a bit newer than most homes in the area which have been described as at least fifty years old. The two story structure was clapboard sided and looked like three distinct houses connected together. Each had its own front porch, separate walk and steps leading to the street and city sidewalk. The multiple family dwelling sat on a hill up from the street and curb. From the street, Ben's porch could hardly be seen. It was hidden by two huge pine trees: one on either side of the porch steps. There was very little footage in the front between the house and the curb; perhaps twenty-five feet or so to the steep bank at the walk and curb. The small yard had only patches of green grass.

### Making Contact with Ben

In Chapter Three of this work, it was indicated that efforts to make contact with the prospective male participants would be discussed as each of their case studies was presented. In Ben's case study, the purpose of delaying this discussion was two-fold: first, the details of the contact were too lengthy to discuss in the methodology segment of this study; second, the process of this contact contributes to a broader view of Ben's world.

During the second week of September, Ben's home had been telephoned repeatedly between nine o'clock in the morning and ten o'clock in the evening.



There were no answers. After a week of no success, I made a trip to the house during the noon hour. I parked the car; crossed the street; and climbed the heaved cement steps toward the porch. An American flag was suspended by two of its end corners from the porch ceiling. A kitchen table with chrome legs was placed against the porch railing to the right of the front door. The house was dark on the inside. When no answer came after repeated knocks, I leaned by forehead against the screen door and peered into the house through the screen and the glass panel door behind it. A sheer orange curtain covered the window. I could see toward the back of the house to the kitchen. Natural light filtered into the kitchen probably through a window which could not be seen. Knocking again, I thought I saw a tall lean man in the kitchen. He moved out of sight as I knocked louder. I went to the back of the house; knocked; no answer. I departed.

The same afternoon, I went to Ben's house again at five o'clock; parked on the side street again and proceeded to the front door. This time, the glass panel door inside the screen door was ajar about eight inches. I knocked. A small light haired (actually, he was extremely blonde) boy about five or six years of age came to the door and walked onto the porch. In a few seconds, he was followed by a woman who looked to be in her early forties; about five feet seven inches tall with light brown shoulder length hair and eyeglasses.

Her hair was wet; she was wearing a bathrobe and holding it closed around her. I introduced myself; she apologized for her appearance. Apologies were given for appearing unannounced. Mrs. Smith acknowledged she had received the letter. She seemed vague about her willingness and about Ben's willingness to participate in the research project. She was also vague about how contact could be made with Ben.

Not much time had been spent thinking about paying the students for interview time, although it had been suggested that it may be necessary to use money as an incentive. That suggestion had been mentally filed. In conversing with Ben's mother, I heard myself saying, "Of course your son will receive a small amount of money for his participation in the research." Fieldnotes reflected the genuine surprise at how quickly Mrs. Smith responded with greater clarity. She said:

If you call tomorrow morning at nine-thirty, he'll be here. He works late but he drives me to work every morning because I don't see well enough to drive. (Mrs. Smith, 1991)

After my inquiry about where Ben worked, his mother was asked to please tell him I would be calling. She was thanked her for her time.

The next day, Ben was telephoned at exactly nine-thirty in the morning. A young man answered; he identified himself as Ben. After introduction, he acknowledged receipt of my letter. The project was explained briefly and his participation requested. He responded without inflection; his voice sounded neither particularly curious nor interested, yet he agreed to participate.

### The Initial Meeting

The first meeting with Ben took place on Sunday, September 20, 1991. Ben answered the knocks. He was tall and thin with blond short cropped hair and blue eyes. He was wearing jeans, a knit pull-over shirt and athletic shoes. After introducing myself; he gave a quiet greeting and pushed open the screen door. The living room was dark; it smelled of tobacco smoke. It was dark enough to stand a few seconds so my eyes could adjust before walking across the room. Sitting out toward the center of the room was a large upholstered chair. In it was a young woman, watching television. As I walked between her and the television set she was watching, the heels of my shoes sounded loud on the bare wood floors. The young boy entered the room; Ben made no attempts at introductions. I introduced myself to the young woman and boy. Ben was awkward; he gestured toward the couch. About this time, a middle-aged adult male entered the room but did not approach me. I said, "Hi, I'm

Kay Roach." He squared his shoulders and said, "Hello there young lady" (it was dark in the room but not so dark that he could not see that I was in the same age range as he). He did not give his name nor did Ben. He left the room quickly. Ben was asked about his mother, he said she would be down (stairs) in a few minutes.

The room had only one lamp, the bulb seemed dull under a dark lampshade. The couch on which I was sitting was placed against a wall behind the upholstered chair in which the young woman sat. Consequently, individuals at one end of the couch were looking at the back of the chair when seated on the couch. The furniture arrangement resembled a theater in which all seating faces the stage, i.e., television. While papers and equipment were assembled, Ben cleared miscellaneous objects from a table in front of the couch and invited me to put the equipment on it. The younger boy was curious; we engaged in useful conversation. He responded readily to questions; he spoke quite articulately. His name was Joey, he was six years old, he went to Hillview School where he was in the first grade. The thing he liked best about school was art. He proceeded to point out in the next room, which might have been called the dining room but it was void of any furniture, his dog and her new puppies.

There were items piled around the perimeter of the dining room and in the center was a child's plastic swimming pool about five feet in diameter. Not much else could be seen from where I was sitting. The same seat was assigned to me for every interview and I never saw any more of the house than could be seen upon entering and sitting on the couch. The working portable television in the living room was sitting on top of another television set. Against an adjacent wall was a very small table with a computer on it. The keyboard was on top of the small computer monitor. I learned later Joey "loved it" but it had been "broken" for some time. Immediately at the end of the couch was an aquarium. It was difficult to see the fish through the less than clear water. It was lit and appeared to be inhabited by several tropical fish.

Ben's mother appeared. She was wearing jeans, casual shirt and athletic shoes. After introductions, she pulled a straight chair to the end of the couch but had difficulty staying seated. She seemed restless and her speech pattern was rapid. As I began to explain the research procedures, she interrupted expressing curiosity about how Ben was chosen. Ben seemed embarrassed. He said quietly to her, "You don't understand. I told you about this. We got the letters." My explanation continued and her questions about

the selection of her son for participation were addressed. Ben's mother seemed to detect his discomfort and said, "I worked all day cleaning the house."

The necessary forms were signed consenting to participation in the study by Ben and his mother. Ben's mother read her form holding it closely under the light from the aquarium. Ben pointed to where she should place her signature. She reported her eyesight to be quite poor even with eyeglasses. In fact, so poor she has been unable to obtain a driver's license.

After Ben and his mother signed consents to participate in the research project, his mother left the house through a rear door in the company of the adult male encountered several minutes earlier. Meanwhile, Joey and the young woman in the chair, Toni, were watching television. Ben got up and turned down the sound on the television. The interview continued with Ben. The same procedures for audio tape recording were followed with Ben, his mother and teacher as with those participants in the first and second case studies.

At the end of the first interview session, Ben suggested the second interview be scheduled when only he was at home. After the initial meeting, except for the interview with his mother and the very last interview, our appointments were scheduled for morning hours before Ben left home for work.

### Ben's Family

Ben was born eighteen years ago at a hospital in this community. He is the middle of three children born to his mother. Ben's twenty year old brother, Mark, is in the Navy. According to Ben and his mother, Mark dropped out of high school before graduating. He took the GED, joined the Navy and left home. Mark was married at eighteen and divorced at nineteen.

Joey, the six year old boy in the house is Mark and Ben's half brother. Joey was fathered by a man other than Mrs. Smith's first or second spouse. Joey is an articulate and engaging first grader. Somewhat on the thin side, he is a blond, blue-eyed attractive child.

Ben and Mark also have a half sister fathered by their natural father and a woman other than their mother. The girl is about eight years old; Ben has had little or no contact with her.

Ben's mother is currently widowed. Her second spouse was killed in a motorcycle accident several years ago. Since then, she has had two male companions. Her mother and father are still living and well close by. Mrs. Smith was born in this community. Her father is a retired pipe fitter who traveled extensively on his job and her mother has an antique stall downtown in an abandoned department store. Mrs. Smith spoke of at least one brother and one sister. Mrs. Smith is employed by the sister in a small ceramics

business. Mrs. Smith has had a problem finding employment because of her poor eyesight. According to Mrs. Smith, she works hard and long hours for little pay.

Ben has been estranged from his father since he was about eighteen months old. His father has been in and out of prison for many years for bank robbery and arson. Ben's father is currently in prison. Neither Ben's father nor his mother graduated from high school. His mother passed the GED several years ago. According to Ben's mother and Ben, both maternal grandparents graduated from high school. There was no mention of paternal grandparents. Ben took pride in being the first in his immediate family to have graduated from high school.

The young woman sitting in the large chair on the first visit was Toni, Ben's girlfriend. As it turned out, she said very little even though several prompts were given. The young woman was small with dark skin and dark eyes. According to Ben, she is one year older than he is; she graduated from high school last year. Her home and parents are in Massachusetts. Ben related that Toni is pregnant; he described their meeting:

Her aunt lives down here and she moved out here with her aunt because she didn't want to be in Massachusetts. You know people riding around and driving their cars on Maple Avenue. People



riding around trying to find girls. That's what we did (Ben, 1991).

Toni is about four months along in her pregnancy. She is unemployed and living with her aunt who lives in Ben's neighborhood. According to Ben, they are not going to marry but they are going to live together once he saves enough money for an apartment and the baby.

Financially, Mrs. Smith and her family of three do not appear to live much above poverty level. They appeared to have little in terms of material things. Mrs. Smith rents the multi-family dwelling in which they live. Some help has been given by her parents. The male companion, who according to Ben has not been living in the dwelling but only receiving his mail there, lives on disability from the government. On the only other contact with this man, he interrupted an interview session by entering the room complaining of not receiving his government check. He asked Ben for money; Ben refused. Even after inquiry, this man's name was never disclosed.

The following excerpts from interviews with Mrs. Smith are presented as transcribed. The participants own words help establish a context in which Ben's family life can be understood. Ben's mother talked about Ben and their family life:

**EXCERPT  
ONE**      **MOM:** "We moved a lot. He changed schools quite a bit. But it wasn't any problem with him."

**ER:** "He was able to adjust?"

**MOM:** "Yes, he adjusted really well, always made new friends. We moved to Texas and he went to school there for a while then came back here and I think he's been in every city school in town."

**ER:** "So you were in Texas for a while in the early years. He said something about Florida."

**MOM:** "Yes, he went to school in Florida for a little bit. He didn't like it down there. It was rough. He was going to play football down there too, but he didn't like the coach."

**EXCERPT  
TWO**      **ER:** "You said something, I think the first day I was here and you may choose to elaborate on it or you may choose not to. That's okay. You made the comment that he's had a rough life. Do you remember making that comment?"

**MOM:** "Oh Ben, having a rough life. I meant moving and then his dad is in jail and I got married again and I guess he was kind of mean to them, which I didn't know this. He said that he really was and then moving from state to state and school to school but he didn't turn out too bad. It might have not hurt him, helped him maybe. Moving, having to deal with new teachers, new kids, new school and all. I'm surprised. My mom thinks so too, she says what all I've drug them through they turned out pretty good. I really am surprised."

**EXCERPT  
THREE**

**MOM:** "He hasn't seen his dad for a year. Him and Mark went up and visited him but I'm not sure when it was. I have to go by what car they were driving. They go through cars. It must have been Mark's car when he was home. I can't even remember when he was home, July. He doesn't tell a lot of people, you know, well, my dad's in prison. He really don't talk about his dad much. Just the people that know he's in there. He's always been there since from the time Ben was eighteen months old. In and out, in and out."

**EXCERPT  
FOUR**

**MOM:** "Ben used to write him letters all the time and then when he was out this last time, I think he lived in a larger city for about a year. He'd go up and visit for a while but he didn't want to stay up there very long. They just don't get along and his dad, they like each other and they are nice to each other, but he's not his favorite like Mark is. He's got a big stack of letters where he wrote to him."

**ER:** "So Mark and Ben have the same father?"

**MOM:** "Yes."

**ER:** "But Mark had a better relationship with his father?"

**MOM:** "They were close. Mark was everything to him. When Ben came along he liked Mark better. I couldn't choose. I like them all. He's nice to him, it's always Mark and Ben noticed that to. All grown up and the way he treated him, the way he treated Mark, different. He never let it bother him though. But he started

writing letters for a while. He's got a big stack where he'd write back, then all of a sudden he just quit writing. Nothing to say anymore. Not enough time. He'd visit him once a year or something. They like him and they still care about him but he's not part of their life anymore. Writing letters is kind of a distant way to communicate. I don't think he really knows his dad. The short time he would go up there and spend two weeks. He'd be ready to come home. Well, I lived out in the country and didn't get to do much."

Ben's mother talked about Toni, Ben, and their situation:

EXCERPT  
ONE      ER: "When did he tell you that Toni was pregnant?"

MOM: "He dropped a couple of hints a couple of months ago. I might be . . . . I said, what are you talking about. He was pointing at diapers in the store and I didn't pay much attention and then he told me when she was two and a half months. I believe she is four months now."

ER: "How did you feel about that or respond to that?"

MOM: "I think it's great. Even if they don't get married. It's up to them. They're talking about getting married next year but they're not getting along to well."

ER: "They're not getting along?"

MOM: "They argue a lot. She wants her way, he wants his freedom. But I don't butt in. He asked me what to do. I said I don't really know what to tell you. I thought she kind of tricked him."

ER: "You think she tricked him. In other words, you think she got pregnant in order to get him. Is that what you're saying?"

MOM: "Yes and I asked him, do you think that? He said no. She didn't think she would get pregnant. So, I asked him how he felt about it and he seems like it's okay. It's just the money. He said if we get married, I couldn't afford all this so I said . . ."

ER: "If he gets married they couldn't afford . . .?"

MOM: "He couldn't afford the baby and her . . ."

ER: "Baby and her and everything if they get married?"

MOM: "An apartment and all that."

ER: "So he's working to save money?"

MOM: "Yes."

ER: "If they don't get married, she can get assistance?"

MOM: "Her aunt talked her into that."

ER: "Talked her into . . ."

MOM: "Going and getting assistance but then I told Ben he should pay. Go down there and voluntarily pay child support."

### Ben

Ben was eighteen years old in July 1991. He lives with his mother and younger brother, Joey. He works full time as a relief manager for a fast food restaurant chain. He pays no room and board to his mother. She stated she could not take his money since his car often needs repair and he is trying to save money to pay for the upcoming birth of his child. He continued to express uncertainty about marriage. He talked about living with his girlfriend as though it would be a trial period before getting married. Ben stated: "I'm pretty happy right now. The way stuff's turned out I'm not sad about it. I'm happy."

Over the weeks of interviewing Ben, acquaintance was made with Joey, the youngest brother; little was seen of Ben's mother, her companion or Toni. Several attempts were made to include Toni in the interview sessions, she declined. Ben had asked to conduct the interviews when he was home alone. During the interview sessions, Ben was cooperative yet quiet and reticent. His affect was usually flat and his voice was without inflection. He smiled occasionally but the smiles seldom appeared full or spontaneous. Notes were

made about never seeing Ben laugh. Ben was reasonably handsome; even though his complexion was pale and slightly pitted from adolescent acne. He always appeared neat and well groomed. Ben consistently sat on the couch beside me. During each interview, he folded his arms around a stuffed bear or dog (which generally held a place in the corner of the couch). He would stroke and squeeze the toy animal as he talked. He spoke about his school experiences and about himself as a student:

**EXCERPT**      **BEN:** "I was born in this town at the local  
**ONE**                hospital and went to school a lot of different  
                      places, mostly in this area. We moved to Texas  
                      and Florida but we always seemed to move back  
                      here. There were several places that I liked a lot.  
                      I liked Florida and I liked to study but we always  
                      had to move around for different reasons. I  
                      attended three schools around here."

**ER:** "How many years did you spend at the high school?"

**BEN:** "I was there for about three years, for six weeks or so my eleventh grade year I went to Centerburg and then my twelfth grade year, I went to the vocational school. You was in one class not like you go to a different class and everybody would be different. You'd have the same people in each class."

**EXCERPT  
TWO**

ER: "What kind of classes did you take there?"

BEN: "I was only there for about two hours a day. I took business and the main course was marketing education, and history. That was the only three classes I took that year."

ER: "What kind of classes did you have at the high school?"

BEN: "I took general classes through the ninth, like the basic classes, science, biology, math. I liked mostly the gym classes."

BEN: "But out of my written classes, I'd have to say math would be my favorite, all the math classes."

ER: "Any particular math class?"

BEN: "No, it just seemed like it made more sense than anything else, just the numbers made more sense than the English or biology. I got good grades in biology but math seemed to be my favorite of all the written classes."

**EXCERPT  
THREE**

ER: "How do you describe yourself as a student?"

BEN: "I don't know, I try to get along with anybody. I try to get along with people, anybody wants to be friends or most people that really don't even talk to you, it's hard to become friends with people like that. They always got along with you but I always knew I never, like I said, one of my friends didn't graduate and some of them did so I get along with people who try to get along



with me. So that's probably the kind of student I was."

ER: "How do you describe yourself as a student? Book work."

BEN: "Well, it's apparent really I tried to study a lot. On some things I didn't study a lot on. I did get good grades but some things I tried real hard to study, it still didn't help. If the teachers explain it a little while then I usually can get it. Once I usually have it. I can remember that on the tests or from my exams."

ER: "So it just takes one time for you if it's well explained?"

BEN: "Yes, if it's explained good then I usually don't have to study very hard. I study but not real. When I do study real hard stuff I don't really understand, it doesn't really help if you don't understand it the first time because you don't really understand what you're studying. That's the difference between the teacher who explains it and a good teacher are the one's that don't really seem to care or try to explain it."

EXCERPT  
FOUR

ER: "Thinking back to kindergarten, first grade, second grade, third grade, when was the first time that you realized that you were a good student, maybe better than some of the others."

BEN: "Well, what mostly got me to try to be a good student was my grandmother. She was always telling me that I could be the first one, she could tell I was smart or something like that. She could tell I better go to college or something."

You know, do other things that most of my cousins or brothers or anybody wouldn't be able to do. That's when I figured I should try. I really didn't try for me, I really tried for my family so they wouldn't think of me as down more than they would think of me as a good person."

EXCERPT FIVE ER: "What was the best thing that ever happened to you in school?"

BEN: "When I first started school until the end of school, what the best thing was? It would be when I first started sports. I didn't like a lot of people until I started that then everybody seemed to like me more when I was, I just seemed to get along and seemed like I had more friends. And I liked that. It's better to have friends then when you don't. That's probably the best thing that happened. Even though it does seem like some didn't like me, but I don't know."

EXCERPT SIX ER: "Can you tell me more?"

BEN: "It probably wasn't too important to what I tried for at high school. That's really the level I tried a lot harder than I usually did. Because after I came out of seventh grade I barely made it, I figured well I better try. I don't want to have to go through that again. I don't want to fail every year so after that I really tried and made pretty good grades through high school."

ER: "Did you fail the seventh grade?"

BEN: "No, I came close."

BEN: "After that, I figured I don't want to have that feeling anymore."

EXCERPT  
SEVEN

ER: "You had said that there are some things that stand in the way of school?"

BEN: "Mostly, what probably effected school was other people not wanting to go to school, skip school and stuff like that."

ER: "Explain how that works."

BEN: "Some of their friends would want to stay home from school one day and try to hide out from their parents or something like that."

ER: "You had friends that skipped? Does that mean they tried to convince you to skip too?"

BEN: "I did every once in a while. But things that affected me was most probably my mother. She usually would keep me up at night because we used to live beside a bar and she and my grandma and grandpa. She would drink a lot and then come home and yell and that would keep me up all night and I'd really be hard to get up the next day for school and stuff like that."

ER: "So your mother's drinking kept you up at night?"

BEN: "Me and my brother. Sometimes when he comes home from the Navy and she's drinking, he won't even stay. He don't like it at all. He'll ask me if I want to go somewhere and we'll usually

go do something until she passes out or something."

**EXCERPT  
EIGHT**

**ER:** "So ultimately, this did have an impact on school for you. Mother kept you up at night, you didn't get a lot of rest. What about in terms of support for doing your school work and whatever? Did your mother provide any support for that?"

**BEN:** "Not until like the seventh grade year as I told you I almost failed. After a couple of report cards, she would make me set at the table and make sure I did my homework but she usually never really asked me. She would ask me if I brought home any books or had any homework or anything. She would never tell me to do it."

**ER:** "Earlier in your school years, first, second, third, fourth grades, how did you do?"

**BEN:** "I did all right all through that until the seventh grade was like a high school and they switch you up to the kindergarten and it's like all one class up through sixth grade there's only one big class the seventh grade that's where we would switch a whole bunch of different teachers and that would kind of confuse you at first until you really get used to it. I think that's what it did to me in seventh grade, try to get used to all the different ways like in seventh and eighth grade there was like one teacher for every different period and that kind of confused you. I mean you have to get used to all of it, each teacher and how they are. That's probably reason why in seventh grade it was the hardest for me until I got used to it."

ER: "Were there other things going on in your life at that time that you think contributed to your adjustment to school?"

BEN: "Probably more, Mom, the guy she was with then would, they would fight a lot and I didn't really want to go to school because I figured they were going to fight some more when I was gone and I figured my mom would get hurt or something. I missed a whole lot of days that year. That's probably the main reason why I almost failed plus my older brother would stay home and when he stayed home I would want to stay home. I don't know why but he didn't like that school down there where we was before because all the kids would beat up on him and stuff. He thought he'd quit in the eleventh grade and that's probably the main reason because he knew he couldn't pass and he wouldn't have enough credits even if he would have took full periods of classes."

EXCERPT  
NINE

ER: "What would you describe as one of the worst things or the worst experiences that you had during your years at school?"

BEN: "The year that I almost failed was my worst because that really brought a scare into me because most of the people in my family would quit school but they never failed a year and that would have worried me if I would have. Then after that year, I figured I have to try harder and I don't want to be like that anymore or every year. I didn't want it to be that close every year."

ER: "You must have come to think that school was fairly important in a person's life in order to

say to yourself I don't dare to fail. Where do you think that came from or that notion that you shouldn't fail?"

**BEN:** "That was probably most from my grandparents. My grandmother would always tell me that I was real smart and that I'd be going to college and be smart enough to go to college because there was nobody in our family that went to college and the fact that she had said I'd be the first one to go to college, that made me feel that I had to do all the work to satisfy everybody else because I felt they was dependent on me to go to college."

Ben's mother seemed the most difficult to interview. She appeared less than comfortable, expressing difficulty in remembering Ben's school years. She indicated she and Ben had talked and she had asked him what kind of questions I had asked him. As the interviews progressed, she described Ben as a student:

**EXCERPT ONE**      **ER:** "Essentially then, speak to what kind of student Ben has been for as far back as you can remember."

**MOM:** "What do you mean?"

**ER:** "What kind of student?"

**MOM:** "He was about average and in certain grades he didn't care about school at all, like

seventh grade and the only thing that kept him going to school is he wanted to play sports, basketball and football. But, he never got to."

ER: "Did he play basketball in high school?"

MOM: "No, he tried out in the seventh and eighth grades for football but he quit because three or four of them ganged up on him or something and wouldn't let him play quarterback and then when he went to the high school he said there's so much competition that he couldn't. He always wanted to play, but he never got to."

ER: "He didn't play basketball?"

MOM: "Yes. He didn't mind at all. Now, his older brother, it hurt him a lot. He didn't like to move that much. He's shy. Ben's more outgoing. Made friends easy, loved sports and stuff."

EXCERPT  
TWO

ER: "Based on his high school years and that's more recent, you said you were trying to think about that today, what kind of student was he in high school?"

MOM: "There was one year he didn't do to well because he missed a lot of school. I can't remember his freshman year though. In tenth grade, all of a sudden, one year was real bad grades and then the next year he had straight A's and on the honor roll and I was really surprised that he changed that much. I had to talk to his teachers a few times for him missing school so much and they said that he could do a lot better work than he was doing and then all of a sudden

he just changed his whole attitude and started getting straight A's."

ER: "And that was while he was at the high school?"

MOM: "Yes. See, a lot of that was he didn't want to ride the bus. His older brother was supposed to take him and then he'd be late or miss the bus and he wouldn't want to go because of him being late and he'd drive him in his truck. Once they got that skipping school out of the way, then he . . ."

ER: "Then he was skipping school?"

MOM: "Just staying home, wouldn't go in late because he says if I have to go in late, I'm not going in at all because they give you a lot of hassle. Once he got that out of the way, then he started going regularly after he got his license. He went every day and never missed. So then he got straight A's."

ER: "Straight A's. He must be pretty smart to get straight A's."

MOM: "Yes, I couldn't figure it out but it was from him missing so much would hurt him, not completing everything. But he didn't take easy things either, like I did. He took algebra and stuff like that."

ER: "What do you think made him change from the one year of not doing well and missing a lot to attending and doing well?"

MOM: "I think one of the things, well we had to go to court for him missing so many days."



ER: "He went to court for truancy?"

MOM: "Right and after he went it changed his attitude because they'll put you in the juvenile hall. It really changed him. I think just showing up everyday and as long as he wasn't late he didn't mind school at all. He wanted to get into the vocational and you have to have certain grades for that."

ER: "In terms of truancy and going to court, what year was that grade nine, ten, eleven?"

MOM: "I think that was eleventh."

ER: "Eleventh grade, his junior year?"

MOM: "Yes, because tenth grade, that's why I was asking. I thought it was his tenth grade year but it was eleventh. His tenth grade year he got straight A's and then in eleventh he just went way down and that's what the assistant principal told me. He said last year he had straight A's, this year he's D's and C's, just because he's not showing up. So after he got his license and got a car, he went to school every day."

ER: "When he was responsible for getting himself there?"

MOM: "Yes, because I told him you can't wait around on Mark because Mark never, I said, he don't care. So he finally straightened up and started going. Especially talking to that lady down there."

ER: "Talking to the lady . . .?"

MOM: "At the, it's before you go to court. You have to talk to some lady for skipping school."

ER: "Referee or judge or truant officer for juveniles?"

MOM: "Yes, juvenile court. Talked to her once then he got taken to court. He just decided he's going to have to straighten up. Then his grades have to be pretty good to get in the vocational and fill out the application and all that."

EXCERPT  
THREE

ER: "How did he decide to go to the vocational school?"

MOM: "He was going to go to it in the eleventh year but he signed up late so he got in on time for his senior year. I didn't know how they did that. I didn't know you had to have certain average for your sophomore and freshman years before you can get in or they can accept your application."

ER: "What did he do at the vocational school or what was it he wanted to study?"

MOM: "He was going to go into drafting, but the class was full or something and then a friend of his got him into this market management where you can be manager or something being in marketing and stuff. So, that helped him a lot in getting this job. Two months after he started working for the restaurant, they offered him a relief manager's position I think because of the school. He participated in something where you had to go to compete with other market management classes and he won third place."

ER: "Is that right?"

MOM: "Yes. That probably helped getting the job. You have to stand up and act like you're a sales guy and deal with an irate customer that's mad about merchandise or something like that."

ER: "I'll have to ask him about that. He didn't talk to me about that."

MOM: "It was all these schools in competition and his senior year teacher, I met him like three times, because I was going to school down there at the same time and he has really pushed Ben to do things saying, you can do this, you're really good at that."

ER: "So there was a teacher at the vocational school that . . ."

MOM: "Well, he was the only guy in the whole class too. That's why he stood out so he was really on him all the time."

ER: "Meaning the other students were female."

MOM: "Yes, yes. Out of the whole class, he always got on him a lot. He got him into the competition. He could have gone to the state but he didn't want to go. He said it made him too nervous getting up there but he won around here."

MOM: "The trophy's up there."

ER: "Oh, he's got his trophy. I'll have to look at that more closely. Did Ben ever talk at all about any of his teachers?"

MOM: "Just his senior year. Mr. Brown."

ER: "His senior year. And that's the teacher you've just been talking about."

MOM: "When he went to high school, I can't remember because his grades were so good you didn't have to go to parent-teacher. One time I did. I met a couple of them, math teachers or something. He was real funny. I can't remember the names. They said that I didn't even have to show up but they was glad I did show up because he had straight A's. I thought I was supposed to show up. He had straight A's so I didn't go after that. I think that was his sophomore year."

ER: "So he really did well his sophomore year and junior year kind of fell down and freshman year did he do well?"

MOM: "That's what I can't remember, freshman year. I imagine he did. We moved here when he (Joey) was one, that's five years ago so he had to have gone from here. I can't remember freshman year. I saved all the report cards. They're in the junk drawer or something. I can't remember what he took, his teachers, or anything."

ER: "What have you expected from Ben in terms of school work? Has he brought much work home?"

MOM: "No, he hardly ever, never had hardly any homework until his senior year and he was taking marketing and then he had to study and he ran for the class president, he had to make a speech for that."

ER: "His senior year?"

MOM: "Yes, his senior year because somebody nominated him and he said, well I may as well. He's pretty shy, he don't like to get up with a speech and of course he won."

ER: "So he was class president his senior year at the vocational school?"

MOM: "DECA, yes."

ER: "The DECA group? Yes, I'm familiar with that."

MOM: "I was surprised that he wrote up his own speech and everything and all the girls voted for him because he was the only guy in class. I said that's probably why you won. I didn't really push him and he didn't hardly have any homework, he just kind of always did it his own way."

ER: "You've said, I think now, a couple of times that you've been kind of surprised."

MOM: "Yes."

ER: "Tell me more about that."

MOM: "You mean about his grades."

ER: "Well, you said you were surprised by some of his activities or that he won or his grades?"

MOM: "Well, he's shy and I didn't think he would go into stuff like that. He was nervous but he forced himself to do it that's why I was surprised. Cause, boy I wouldn't have done it. Got up there and made a speech and all of that, but he did. Mr. Brown kind of pushed him and

kept giving him encouragement. I met him down there. He's a talker. He's real outgoing, real friendly. Real nice guy, so he really liked him. He must have helped him a lot."

ER: "Are you surprised at how smart he is?"

MOM: "Yes, because in his junior year of school he was getting D's and F's. That's why he had to quit basketball on the night of the scrimmage or something. One of the first games or something. The teachers told him he couldn't play because he had two F's. He didn't study at all. We lived down in \_\_\_\_\_ and that's a rough place. All the kids down there just run around."

ER: "Okay, so you were saying that maybe some of the people that he was running around with . . .?"

MOM: "Yes. He never studied, never did homework so he barely passed, I think it was seventh or eighth grade. Eighth grade we was in Florida but not very long. We came back here and he got into the city schools. That's why I was surprised. Moving and him going to so many schools, that it didn't hurt his grades that much."

Ben's teacher has been teaching at the same high school for twenty-five years. He has a bachelor's degree in health and physical education and a master's degree in traffic safety. Beyond the master's he has forty-five hours. The interview was conducted in Mr. Carson's classroom at the high school. He described Ben as a student:

**EXCERPT  
ONE**

**ER:** "If you would give me a little background about what are the circumstances under which you have known Ben?"

**TEACHER:** "I first met him, I had him in class, right in this room, I forget how many years ago. It's been like two or three, something how time gets away. I had him in study hall a year or two later and he just was a real good student, with good attendance. Also, I think he did well academically and just a real congenial student to get along with. That's the best thing I remember about him. I'm glad that he did a good job as a student, etc., but then I think I found out he was a 49er's fan, you know football, so I follow football some, you know that kind of helped us to get acquainted or whatever and then he'd be friendly when I would run into him, etc., at other places. I remember just about a year ago, it was after supper time, I can't remember what I was doing and didn't eat supper till late and I was by myself up at Wendy's and he come in there to eat and he sat down with me and we talked. You know, it's just been a good relationship, so that's just real quickly how I got to know him, etc."

**ER:** "If we can expand on that, can you identify the class which you had him and then expand if you will on good student."

**TEACHER:** "Well, if I remember right, he was in a class that wasn't one of my better classes that year but he just didn't let anybody around him affect him. Particularly, academically is what I mean by not a good class if I remember. But you know he didn't, there didn't seem to be any peer pressure and if there was for him to do badly. He just went ahead and would do a good job and you know do assignments where maybe some others

wouldn't and like I think I maybe mentioned, regular attendance, paid attention in class, etc."

TEACHER: "I can't remember exactly what his grades were but I would guess at least B's or I would think that he got good grades, maybe he got A's. I think it would be in that range somewhere. I'd have to go back and look at my old grade book to know for sure but I remember he did well. He was pretty quiet and from that standpoint, you know somebody that's quiet, it's hard to really get to know them. But he seemed like a good person from my own associations with him. He was just a good genuine boy, young man that I could tell. He seemed to respect authority real well, etc."

EXCERPT  
TWO

ER: "Did you ever get a feeling from Ben about how he felt about himself in terms of his own ability?"

TEACHER: "Well, he just generally seemed to show confidence when we were talking. He just seemed to have confidence. Like I say, he was not real outgoing or he was kind of the quiet type and so I didn't pick up anything as far as any lack of self confidence."

ER: "Did he participate in class, raise his hand, initiate responses?"

TEACHER: "Yes, I think he did respond. Like I said, he was very shy and I think he would respond somewhat in classes, etc."

ER: "That you know of, did he ever get into any kind of trouble here at the high school?"



**TEACHER:** "No, just like I say he was sort of the model student. Especially if I remember right, the class he was in wasn't the best class particularly academically, and he was a bright spot in my day, you know just from his attitude and you could talk to him and converse, etc."

According to school records, in February of 1991, Ben ranked forty-ninth in a class of 259 students. His transcript reflected the ups and downs discussed by Ben himself. His grades ranged from A to F. He had a 3.71 GPA in grade ten and a 1.83 GPA in grade eleven. He had A's and B's in English, biology, pre-algebra, and computer literacy. Ben had two F's in team sports, one D in algebra and C's and D's in history and civics.

Both Ben and his mother indicated Ben studied little at home. Ben also indicated he seldom studied with friends. Ben and his mother told of periods of truancy and absenteeism. According to Ben, he received at least two detentions for fighting which he did not initiate. Ben's teacher failed to validate this information. He described Ben's conduct as respectful and appropriate; his attendance as good. During his senior year, Ben took two or three courses in business at the vocational high school. Ben excelled in these courses, won some contests and was elected to office in a school organization.

Ben's Future

Ben talked about his relationship with Toni and impending fatherhood early on in the interviews. While stroking a stuffed animal, he spoke about his responsibility for the baby. I asked him to share his present vision of his future as well as his vision at age fourteen.

EXCERPT      ER: "Age fourteen, try to think back. At age  
ONE            fourteen, what did you envision yourself doing?"

BEN: "That's kind of hard. I can't remember when I was fourteen. The youngest I can remember, I pictured myself in an office job with tie and stuff, desk and tie, having a real big house. I never thought it was going to be real hard, hard as what it is now. People never realize when you're younger, but there's a lot of other people out there going after the same thing you are and you just kind of be one level higher than anybody else to be able to get it, the position you want."

ER: "What kind of things make you want a level higher than the next person in order to get that, in your eyes."

BEN: "I'd say be able to take in information quicker, learn stuff quicker. Just how good you can work better than other people . . . do better than anybody else if you're quicker. That's what I would say a level higher would be just to be able to remember everything."

**EXCERPT  
TWO** ER: "Where do you see yourself three or four years from now?"

BEN: "Three or four years from now I'm hoping, not to win the lottery or nothing like that, but at least to be making a pretty good sum of money."

ER: "How much if a pretty good sum?"

BEN: "At least \$15,000 a year or something like that. The people where I'm working now are saying that I could probably be promoted now to a higher rank of manager into another store but it's fifty miles away but I told them no right now because it's too far away to drive from where I'm at and my car's not really equipped to go back and forth every day or every other day actually."

**EXCERPT  
THREE** ER: "Did any teachers talk to you about college or have teachers talked to you about how bright you are?"

BEN: "There's was a couple, mostly in high school not younger, grade school. One of my history teachers would tell me that the way you take notes and they would say that's good enough for what most or better than what most college people do now or when they were in college better than they did then. They said I should go to college. There was only a couple of them that did that."

ER: "How old were you when you heard that for the first time as you can remember, when you heard that you were smart enough to go to college. How old?"

BEN: "When I really started trying, really studied hard enough to get, well I never really got below a B."

ER: "So, is that when you heard from your grandmother that you were smart enough to go to college?"

BEN: "Yes, then she would give me incentive to get good grades by paying me."

ER: "She paid you for your grades?"

BEN: "You could call it that but she called it rewarding but every time I'd get a certain grade point average, she'd give me more money for the higher I got."

ER: "You went into high school thinking about the possibility of college?"

BEN: "I thought it would be kind of easy to get to go to college if you don't have money because of the financial aids and grants. I never knew about them until my tenth or eleventh grade year and that's when I figured I might as well do my best so I can get to the best college. My girlfriend is pregnant now and that kind of in a way stops me but I'm still going to go probably not until next spring. I got to save up all of my money now so I can go to college classes. The job I'm on now, they said they would help me out with that. Scheduling on the days I go to school because I'm one of the managers out there right now and they said when I attend college they would work me like the days I go to college, if the college is in the morning I could work a few night weeks or study the other nights."

BEN: "I would have had everything ready to go right now because I did have applications for the college and I planned on going to the university right here where I'm at and I'd be ready to go and have money saved for that also."

ER: "You had financial aid lined up?"

BEN: "Yes. I had papers filled out. I was going to go with one of my friends to the college he was going to and he already had his financial aid papers. He had everything. He'll be going winter quarter in January. That's probably when I would have went if this wouldn't of happened."

ER: "Certainly you can choose not to answer if you like. Given the notion that you were going to college and evidently preparing for that, how did you feel when your girlfriend told you she was pregnant?"

BEN: "I never really thought about it until a few weeks later when I was thinking everybody would tell me about what a responsibility . . . . A lot of people saying that you have to put off college and that kind of hit me then. At first I was kind of, I wasn't happy but I wasn't sad. It was like It happened, we'll have to deal with that. But when I first found out, it kind of made me down for a little while but then I thought about it and now I figured I could go within the next year or so."

Ben's mother talked about his future:

**EXCERPT ONE** ER: "Do you think Ben's education at the high school prepared him for the future?"

MOM: "I think the education he got at the vocational school really helped him."

ER: "Made the difference for him in terms of getting a job?"

MOM: "If he hadn't of changed from the regular high school and went over there, I don't think he would have done as well. Also, he got offered a manager's job another place he worked. I think it was \_\_\_\_\_ but he was still in school and they was waiting for him to be closer to graduation and he quit right at the time school was letting out because he wanted to have fun during summer. He worked all, you know, going to school and working at nights. I think the eleventh grade. So I think that's what helped getting his education in marketing experience. He wasn't at the restaurant very long at all, about a month before they started mentioning it to him then he started taking tests and one day he came home and said he had to buy manager's clothes. I thought that was pretty neat to do that type of work."

**EXCERPT TWO** ER: "Ben talked a little bit about planning to go to college. Tell me about that."

MOM: "Yes, he was going to sign up and take the course out here at the branch campus, what you take and get a grant for and the paperwork

was so hard trying to figure it out, to fill it out and then finally when he started working for the restaurant, they offered him the relief manager's position. He said well I'm just going to skip school because he couldn't do both."

**EXCERPT  
THREE**

ER: "He related a little bit about Toni and that was an obstacle in terms of thinking about going on to school too."

MOM: "Oh, I didn't think Toni . . ."

ER: "Tell me a little bit about that."

MOM: "I didn't think Toni changed his mind about school. He changed his mind about school before Toni."

**EXCERPT  
FOUR**

ER: "Where do you think Ben will be about five years from now?"

MOM: "I have no idea. Probably still at the restaurant. As long as they pat him on the back and he goes to these manager meetings and they are real nice and they appreciate the job he's doing and they tell him so, he'll stay there. As soon as they make him mad, he'll quit. That's what he did at \_\_\_\_\_. They don't care about nobody down there. Somebody quits, they don't care because somebody else will be there to take their place. They are really nice at the restaurant. I ask him about school if he ever planned on going maybe next year after this other guy is signed up. He said, no, not now because of Toni but prior to that he wasn't going to because he

thought on the other job, the money would be quicker. It hasn't come as quick as what he thought. They still make him take tests. He's kind of like a relief manager."

Ben's teacher seemed flattered that Ben identified him as his favorite teacher, yet he was the most difficult to interview of the three. His responses were short; he expressed no knowledge of Ben's family life and he shared no personal insights he may have had about Ben:

**EXCERPT ONE** ER: "Did he ever talk to you about what his plans were for the future whether he planned to go on to school?"

**TEACHER:** "No. All of our conversations would be before class or if we would get done a little early, not everyday, so I never talked to him really outside of school that I remember until last fall I mentioned about eating with him up at Wendy's one evening."

**EXCERPT TWO** ER: "Based on what you saw from Ben, would you say that Ben could succeed in college?"

**TEACHER:** "From just what I remember, I would think putting forth effort, I would think he could myself. From what he did in here. I don't know exactly how hard really he had to work to do well in here but I think definitely he did put forth effort. He did study and like I said turned in assignments, etc. How much time, I don't



know but I would say generally my estimation would be or my assumption would be that he has the ability."

**EXCERPT  
THREE** ER: "In your opinion, what are some reasons that Ben might not have gone to college?"

TEACHER: "One thing that comes to mind would be maybe lack of parental expectation, you know just never oriented that way maybe. I would guess that maybe that would be one of his main reasons but that would be just a guess on my part as to why he isn't pursuing maybe a post-high school education. That would be the main thing. I couldn't really think of anything right now."

### Conclusion of the Interviews with Ben

During the last interview with Ben, closure procedures were managed in the same way as those described at the end of Jodi's case study. In this case study, we met Ben. Opportunity was presented to catch a glimpse of his neighborhood, his family life and his school life via data gathered by methods described in Chapter Three.

### Accounts of Interviews with School Officials

The principal at the high school did not know Jodi, Diane, or Ben. He spoke at length about the fourth student selected, who failed to follow through

after agreeing to participate. He even attempted to solicit cooperation and participation in the study from this student. In speaking about students choosing not to pursue post-secondary education, the principal expressed his opinion that family values set direction for that choice. Overall, he was non-committal about any role the school might have in those choices and when asked how the school might change to address the issue of academically-able students and their choice not to pursue higher education, he recounted the efforts by counselors to work with college-bound students.

The guidance counselor, John, knew Jodi, Diane, and Ben. He also knew the fourth student selected. John indicated he spoke with Ben about college but not Jodi or Diane. Ben had initiated the inquiries but John assessed that "he (Ben) was not serious about going to college." Neither Jodi nor Diane had initiated any contact for the purpose of discussing college. John did not know whether Jodi, Diane and/or Ben had taken the PSAT, PACT, SAT or ACT. School files indicated that neither Jodi nor Ben had taken the tests but Diane had taken the SAT and ACT. To John's knowledge, none of the students had been recruited by a college or colleges. In fact, the local two-year college routinely sends recruitment letters to all graduating seniors and their parents who reside in the county and the college's service area. Ben acknowledged he had received the letter. None of the students had participated

in the Post-Secondary Options program or other similar programs available locally.

John described each of the students as "out of the mainstream." They were not members of the "clique", i.e., the "in crowd" at the school. Based on John's account, criteria for belonging to the "in crowd" include clothes, money and neighborhood of residence as well as grades. According to John, none of the three students stood out as participating in extracurricular activities; none were identified as having/being discipline problems. Even though Ben and his mother indicated some history of truancy and a few fights, to John's knowledge Ben never presented any discipline problems. All three students were generally described as "good kids" who had demonstrated ability to succeed in a college setting.

#### Student in the Shadows

During the entire project, I was intrigued by the fourth student selected to participate in this study. Much like Ben, Bob was not easily contacted. His phone had been temporarily disconnected and several trips to the address listed in school files found no one living in the lower level of the two family dwelling. An inquiry with a friend of mine at the local post office yielded a forwarding address. I left notes on the door at the new address and talked to

neighbors to no avail. After several weeks, the phone had been reconnected. Finally I reached Bob's elderly mother. After three telephone calls to her, Bob returned my call. He said he worked sixty hours a week but he agreed to be interviewed. He did not want to meet me at his house; he would come to mine. Bob never kept his appointment. Attempts by the principal to reach and solicit Bob for participation in the project failed.

One of the teachers spoke about Bob; the principal spoke about him and John spoke about him. The principal, who had Bob in his junior high school, described him as a "good student" . . . "proud", "neat and well groomed". He and his twin brother are the youngest children living with an elderly mother. Older siblings have been consistently in trouble and the principal thought at least one older brother is in prison.

Bob's twin brother, Dan, was valedictorian of this high school graduating class. School officials helped Dan obtain full scholarships including housing and books at a small private college near home where Dan was to study engineering. According to school officials, Dan was on campus for two weeks, walked out and came home. (The college had contacted the high school counselor.) School officials' attempts to ascertain his reasons for leaving the college failed. It was suggested that a "girlfriend may be in the picture".

Jodi's teacher also taught Bob. She described him to be equally as able as his twin but less focused on academics. Bob worked long and late hours during his school years and was often tired and slept in class. Bob was ranked fortieth in his class in February of 1991. John, the counselor, offered that Bob was not interested in college. The principal and John agreed that both Bob and Dan wanted to improve their lives and saw money as a means.

### Summary

Chapter Four provides a view of the life or world of each student. The community, school, student, neighborhood, and family life are portrayed through narration and interview excerpts. The students, parents, and favorite teacher each speak. The chapter concludes with perspectives offered by school officials and the notion that one academically-able student is somewhere in the shadows of this study.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study has been to explore why three academically-able students chose not to pursue post-secondary education immediately after high school. A narrative account has been developed for each student via in-depth interviews with the students, parents, teachers, and school administrators.

Information in Chapter One provides background for the study and specifically addresses the research questions. Chapter Two provides an overview of two broad bodies of literature addressing premature departure from the "educational pipeline." Those bodies of literature encompass failure to participate in post-secondary education as an access issue and as an attrition issue.

Chapter Three explains practices and procedures followed a) to prepare for the study through formation of a consultant group of students; b) to select the students for participation in the body of the research; and c) to conduct the

interviews with students, parents, teachers and school officials. In essence Chapter Three outlines what was done and how it was done.

Chapter Four presents the narrative accounts of the students' choices. Data gathered from observations, interviews, and school documents are presented in case study format creating contextual pictures of the participating students' worlds. Chapter Five presents the interpretation of data provided in Chapter Four and concludes with implications for educational practice and policy.

Data interpretation has proven to be the most difficult phase of this project. The data are so clear yet so ambiguous. As a novice researcher, I was unprepared for the breadth and depth of data. I was "schooled" enough to know that the "slice of life" rendered would yield a holistic perspective of the participants' worlds and that cause/effect characteristics of data generated from quantitative research modes would be absent, yet I was unaware in regard to the complexity of the truths yielded by the naturalistic inquiry approach. Another unawareness was that analysis of the data would yield more questions than answers.

### Interpretation of Data

Jodi, Diane, and Ben at some point envisioned themselves in college. Perhaps not in those words, but by pictures they had created for themselves: Jodi talked of a big house and car; Diane of animals and marine biology; and Ben of wearing a shirt and tie to work. Each displayed some understanding that accomplishment of these "dreams" required education beyond high school. Each of the students' visions gradually changed. Why?

First, let us look within the students themselves. All three found reasons not to choose college at this point. The two young women were "burned out" on learning and just wanted "to get out." The young man had other responsibilities; he had taken on fatherhood. Looking beyond these reasons, each student was fearful in some way. Jodi, whose family values and decisions were strongest, was fearful that college would mean losing her goodness, her morals and values. In addition, Jodi's father was so clear about his role expectations for her as a woman that Jodi was also fearful of not meeting those expectations and being alienated from the family.

Diane was fearful she would be found out, i.e., girls are "fake." Diane's life was centered around how she looked. Both parents had paid much attention to her outward appearance. Indeed, teachers addressed her appearance also. Diane had little sense of her inner self. When she failed to



receive individual attention, she was no longer motivated. Her grades dropped; she believed she could not do it.

Ben was fearful of success. As he began to realize he could be a bright and successful student, liked by others, voted president of a school organization, winner of a contest, Ben withdrew. He became involved with a girl; she became pregnant. In this one act, Ben perpetuated his family's lifestyle. One could say Ben knew his place as a poor white Appalachian male. He was afraid to choose otherwise.

If the stories of Jodi, Diane and Ben are considered in the light of attrition issues, it is easy to see how their lives parallel high school and college attrition (drop out) data in respect to parental values, educational levels of parents and socio-economic status. Parental expectations for the futures of Jodi and Diane were gender related and stereotypic. Jodi was to be the religious wife and mother; Diane's future rested on her appearance. For Ben, parental expectations for his future were vague and expressed as uncertain. Ben was not free from gender-related issues. His role as the eldest male in a fatherless home resulted in responsibility for manly/fatherly activities, such as transporting his mother to and from work, caring for his young brother and assuming financial obligations for his unborn child.

Among the parents, the highest level of education was a high school diploma. Only Jodi's family could be considered middle class. Diane's and Ben's home life indicated less financial stability.

Other parallels across the three stories include Wehlage and Rutter's (1987) notion that "dropping out" is symptomatic of a mismatch between the individual and the school. John Hayes, the high school guidance counselor, identified all three students as out of the mainstream of the school. They were not part of the appropriate cliques. Could this be a result of a mismatch? If Tinto's (1987) model of college departure were applied, would this mean it is possible then that elements of intellectual and social integration, that is to say, adjustment and isolation have modified Jodi's, Diane's, and Ben's commitment to school, and to education? My interpretation is that it is likely.

Some (Pascarella et.al., 1983; Tinto, 1987) have also indicated that peer influence and individual motivation contribute to college attrition. A point of interest here is that Jodi, Diane, and Ben each had a friend (or friends) entering college. Yet during the time (adolescence) when peer influence is considered to be quite strong, family value systems held up against pursuit of post-secondary education. Recall that according to Baghban (1984) Appalachian families see little relationship between education and employment.

Pursuit of higher education is an achievement. Theories of achievement motivation are linked to expectations. Certainly parental expectations for the post high school academic achievements of Jodi, Diane, and Ben were neither robust nor consistent. In my experience of working with Appalachian college students, I have observed it to be very difficult for them to succeed when little is expected of them. It is not until they have had some small success and have learned to set higher expectations for themselves that greater motivation is evident.

In essence, what I have said in the previous paragraphs is that there is a striking resemblance between the characteristics of high school and college drop outs and characteristics exhibited in the lives of Jodi, Diane, and Ben. It is not beyond the realm of reason that Jodi, Diane, and Ben resemble other students and collectively, these students form a population of "transition drop outs", that is to say, students who depart from the "educational pipeline" at a recognized transition point. While acceptable and appropriate for some, this transition point (high school graduation) may be considered premature departure for others. The "transition drop out" is perceived as academically able to succeed in college, and has at one time envisioned a future that implies the need for post-secondary education but something changes or blurs that vision.

Let us now consider the notion that the school might have done more. The data indicate that Jodi, Diane, and Ben mastered the system; sometimes against insurmountable odds. They graduated with commendable ranking in their class; they were "good kids." In addition, they were respectful of authority and always polite. They were not "in the mainstream" with clothes, money, neighborhood, and grades. They were not the worst but they were not the best. They were essentially unnoticed.

The school might have paid more attention to Jodi, Diane, and Ben. There is little academic potential in "identifying trouble makers". Self-selected college-bound students will pursue higher education regardless of contact with a guidance counselor. In order to maximize the chances these three students would choose higher education upon graduation, the school could have intervened by a) providing parents and students with more information, b) by changing the company kept by the students and/or c) by reducing or eliminating barriers for the students.

More Information. While the school did provide some information for students, it was done passively. To potentially change the direction of students like Jodi, Diane, and Ben, the school must aggressively reach out to students and parents through one to one contact, through churches and/or through community organizations. Outreach could start as early as the middle school

years or as late as grade ten. In the instances of Diane and Ben, information about the process of exploring college as an option was lacking. The parents gave little direction. Parents as well as students could have been taught.

Intrusive guidance with parents and students would have allowed Diane and Ben to make a more informed choice.

In the instance of Jodi, strong family values were at the core of her decision. If one considers that fundamentalist religious values are prevalent in the Appalachian culture, then it seems plausible that information about higher education could be disseminated via communication between school and church. Jodi equated college to large campus life and danger. If information could have been provided within the framework of her family values, perhaps exploration of college on a small campus of a church related school, then Jodi and her parents could have made a more informed choice.

Changing Company. Jodi, Diane, and Ben identified themselves as having only a few close friends. Each had at least one friend bound for college. To potentiate the benefits of peer relationships, the school could develop programs and activities aimed at grouping students like these three with their friends and other college-bound students. In addition, contact with role models such as high school alumni who are college freshmen and other young professionals could allow students like Jodi, Diane, and Ben to

experience a sense of college through others. Jodi, Diane, and Ben could have been solicited to participate in the Post-Secondary Options program.

Mentors are also a way to establish contact and company with students. If 1,200 students are divided by eighty-seven teachers, that means that one teacher could be expected to mentor only thirteen or fourteen students within one academic year. Volunteer mentors from outside the school could also be involved. These mentors could potentially act as coaches and/or role models. Ben and Diane clearly could have benefitted from keeping these kinds of company. Both students had insight beyond that of their parents; Ben needed a coach and male role model and Diane could have been motivated by the individual attention of a professional woman. Given an appropriate match or grouping, Jodi may have also benefitted from a change in the company kept.

Elimination of Barriers. In order to explore reduction or elimination of barriers as a way to maximize chances that these three students would choose higher education we must first recognize that socio-economic status and gender have continued to impose barriers to access to higher education for these three students in varied ways. For Jodi, her gender determined her role in the family and society according to religious beliefs. It is unlikely that even the most intrusive guidance on the part of the school could have altered Jodi's

path. Jodi's curricular track revealed a variety of courses, some selected by her father as courses that would prepare her for her future.

Diane was the only one of the three students who on examination of school records had a curricular program reflective of Goodlad and Oakes (1988) concept of "high status courses". She followed along with her friends. Her choices were not deliberate. Yet even school personnel encouraged a future for Diane based on her "looks".

Ben sought out the counselor to inquire about college; yet, he was perceived as not serious. Unable or unknowing, Ben did not or could not follow through on the preliminary activities without intrusive guidance. It was not offered.

If the internal fears of each student were barriers to informed choice, what could be done via external intervention? In the case of Jodi, little could be done to reverse the gender-related, stereotypic role expectations guided by family religious values. In fact, the family had made it clear to educators they wanted no intrusion into their family system. Jodi's fears would have remained intact regardless of attempts to intervene.

In the cases of Diane and Ben, it is plausible to think their fears, grounded in gender and socio-economic issues, could have been reduced or eliminated via the intervention strategies of providing information and/or

changing the company they kept. Intrusive guidance, direction, indeed attention, could have yielded different paths for these two students.

### Conclusions and Implications for Educational Practice and Policy

In essence, two of the three students would have had a better chance to make an informed choice about college after high school if external intervention strategies would have been applied by the school. In the third case, internal context was the dominant influence. While it is evident that the future for these three students was shaped by a mixture of internal and external context, the family and its value systems was the primary influence. Peers seemed to have little influence on final decisions about pursuit of post-secondary education. Guidance from the high school had no impact on these students. While students talked about the significance of relationships with favorite teachers; teachers were disconnected from students by lack of information about the students as persons.

Reiterating the researcher bias identified in Chapter Three, the assumption is that academically-able students should be intrusively exposed to varied information about post-secondary education. Given this assumption, the implications for educational practice are strong. First, we must not give up on students like Diane and Ben. We must not sit and wait for students to come to



us. We must find them and intrusively guide and direct them toward more informed choices. Teachers must not underestimate their ability to influence them.

Second, we must pay attention to what and to whom we pay attention. While the school paid attention to class rank and accumulative grade point averages, a closer look revealed that Diane and Ben demonstrated inconsistent academic performance over the four years and in some instances from grading period to grading period. These two students performed at A and B levels as well as D and F levels. These patterns looked to be reasonably noticeable by the end of tenth grade. Accumulatively their class rank looked good yet individually and grading period to grading period, the inconsistent performance went unnoticed by school officials. It seems plausible that students like Diane and Ben are the students to whom educators should be paying attention. System-wide administrators should be paying attention to the tone or climate set by the attitudes of high school counselors and high school administrators. When the counselor's role is reduced to identifying trouble makers, sorting college-bound from non college-bound and working with self-identified college bound, need for adjustments in personnel perspectives is evidenced. Administrators must set the direction.

Third, this study not only has implications for educators at the high school level, but also for educators in higher education. Public secondary schools should not be expected to change the course of participation in post-secondary education in Ohio by themselves. Linkages within the communities are in order. The two-year technical and community colleges have much to offer. They are self-made experts at helping students whose lives resemble those of Jodi, Diane, and Ben. While most of this expertise has been directed toward adults entering college, there is great potential to enhance participation in post-secondary education immediately after high school through communication, cooperation and collaboration between high schools and colleges.

Finally, there are implications here for policymakers. They must set expectations and provide incentives for schools to move from the factory model approach to an interventionist approach. They must provide incentives for schools to move from blaming parents, family and home life to assuming responsibility for intrusively guiding the academically-able students who are at risk for becoming "transition drop outs." This is not to say all academically-able students should remain in the "educational pipeline" after high school. But it is to say that all able students should be given the opportunity to

determine if post-secondary education is a viable choice for them. Schools must work to make access a reality rather than rhetoric.

### Implications for Further Research

Implications for additional research can best be addressed by the questions generated from this study:

- How similar or different are these three students compared to others in the same school, different schools?
- How similar or different is the school and its responses to students like Jodi, Diane, and Ben compared to other schools--inside and outside Appalachia Ohio? Outside Ohio?
- Would other students like Diane and Ben demonstrate similar academic records, i.e., instability in grade point average, academic performance year to year?
- Could unstable/fluctuating grades be used as reliable indicators of students at risk for "transition dropout"?
- Could intervention measures such as more information and changing company have impact on gender and socioeconomic barriers in reducing transition drop out?

In addition to the idea that the data from this project could be sorted and analyzed for an ongoing period of time, these questions suggest the need for more knowledge about academically-able students choosing not to pursue post-secondary education immediately after high school. Both quantitative and qualitative work could make a contribution. In retrospect, if I were to change

or add to this study, interviews with peers of Jodi, Diane, and Ben may have added another dimension to understanding the choices they (Jodi, Diane, and Ben) made or provided a potential source of disconfirming evidence.

### Summary

Chapter Five interprets the students' choices not to pursue post-secondary education immediately after high school to be related to both internal and external context. That is to say, reasons for the students' choices are related to themselves and their family life as well as to their school life.

Within the context of the school, it has been suggested that the school apply strategies for direct information dissemination, and changing the company the students keep. While barriers for the students are related to socio-economic status, gender, and internal fears, it is suggested the school can reduce these barriers through interventionist strategies.

Chapter Five concludes with the suggestion that intrusive intervention on the part of the school could have had significant impact in helping two of the three students make a more informed choice.

**APPENDIX A**

**OHIO APPALACHIAN COUNTIES**

### APPALACHIAN OHIO



FIGURE 1: Shaded areas identify Appalachian Counties.

**APPENDIX B**

**ADMINISTRATORS' LETTERS OF SUPPORT**

**CONFIRMATION OF ACCESS LETTERS**

April 12, 1991

\_\_\_\_\_  
Human Subjects Review Committee  
Ohio State University  
1960 Kenny Road  
Columbus, OH 43210

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

This letter will serve to confirm that Kay Roach, a doctoral candidate, will be provided access to \_\_\_\_\_ High School student records in order to conduct educational research.

As Superintendent, I have granted access to school records. She has indicated the information will remain confidential.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent

This letter has been edited to maintain confidentiality  
(Primary Site)



Human Subjects Review Committee  
Ohio State University  
1960 Kenny Road  
Columbus, Ohio 43210

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

This letter is to inform you that I have granted Mrs. Kay Roach permission to conduct her research at \_\_\_\_\_ High School.

Sincerely,

Principal

\_\_\_\_\_

This letter has been edited to maintain confidentiality.  
(Secondary Site)

January 24, 1991

\_\_\_\_\_, Superintendent  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, OH

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you for your quick response to my request to use \_\_\_\_\_ High School as a research site in the process of gathering data for my dissertation. I will contact \_\_\_\_\_ within the next week.

In review of our discussion, my area of interest is in similarities and dissimilarities among students who graduate in the top quartile of their class and choose not to pursue post-secondary education.

Since access to student files is necessary to identify the group from which four students will eventually be selected for in-depth interviews, there is the need to address the issue of confidentiality. Should descriptive data from school records appear in my dissertation, it will be in aggregate form. For example, the GPA of students in the top quartile of their senior class ranged from 3.2 to 4.0.

While the bulk of the research lies in the interviews which will take place after graduation, the initial process of identifying the group, selecting the students and validation of class rank and academic performance through school records is essential to the credibility of the research. \_\_\_\_\_, I appreciate your efforts in facilitating these activities. Again, thank you.

Sincerely,

Kay L. Roach

February 6, 1991

\_\_\_\_\_, Principal  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, High School  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, OH

Dear Father \_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you for seeing me on Thursday, January 24. I appreciate your willingness to facilitate the formation of a student consultant group in preparation for further research on my dissertation.

In review, my area of interest is in students who graduate in the top quartile of their class and choose not to pursue post-secondary education. Eventually four students will be selected from a public high school for indepth interviews. The role of the consultant group of students, those selected from \_\_\_\_\_, will be to provide their views about academically able students who choose and choose not to pursue post-secondary education. I will also ask for their advice about 'best ways' to approach students' from other high schools in order to enhance their willingness to participate in the research project.

As I understood it, you are willing to work with me in facilitating time during school for interviews with the consultant group. Five to nine students ranked in the top quartile of the senior class, would make an ideal group. Four meetings of one hour length will most likely be sufficient. Since all students in the top quartile should be given the choice to participate or not to participate, I will work with whatever the outcome may be.

Page 2  
February 6, 1991

In regard to parental permission for student participation, OSU has some very firm guidelines for conducting research. In essence, all research done under the auspices of The Ohio State University involving human subjects must be approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee. I foresee no difficulty, yet an explanation of the research and consent form should not be distributed to parents until approval is received. In terms of time lines, the requested contact with students will most likely be after March 15. I hope this will not pose a major problem. Thank you for your efforts and cooperation. I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Kay L. Roach

**APPENDIX C**

**ACTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW COMMITTEE**

OSU/RF

BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW COMMITTEE  
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Original Review  
 Continuing Review  
 Amendment

Research Involving Human Subjects

ACTION OF THE REVIEW COMMITTEE

With regard to the employment of human subjects in the proposed research protocol:

91B0045 CASE STUDIES OF FOUR ACADEMICALLY-ABLE STUDENTS  
CHOOSING NOT TO PURSUE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION,  
Brad L. Mitchell, Kay L. Roach, Educational Policy  
and Leadership

THE BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES REVIEW COMMITTEE HAS TAKEN THE FOLLOWING ACTION:

<input type="checkbox"/> APPROVED	<input type="checkbox"/> DISAPPROVED
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS*	<input type="checkbox"/> WAIVER OF WRITTEN CONSENT GRANTED

\* Conditions stated by the Committee have been met by the Investigator and, therefore, the protocol is APPROVED.

It is the responsibility of the principal investigator to retain a copy of each signed consent form for at least four (4) years beyond the termination of the subject's participation in the proposed activity. Should the principal investigator leave the University, signed consent forms are to be transferred to the Human Subjects Review Committee for the required retention period. This application has been approved for the period of one year. You are reminded that you must promptly report any problems to the Review Committee, and that no procedural changes may be made without prior review and approval. You are also reminded that the identity of the research participants must be kept confidential.

Date: April 5, 1991 Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chairperson)

**APPENDIX D**

**CONSULTANT GROUP PARENT SOLICITATION LETTER**  
**CONSULTANT GROUP STUDENT SOLICITATION LETTER**  
**CONSULTANT GROUP PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM**  
**CONSULTANT GROUP STUDENT CONSENT FORM FOR**  
**AUDIOTAPE RECORDING**

March , 1991

Dear Parent:

Your senior student at \_\_\_\_\_ High School has been invited to serve as a student consultant for an educational research project. As a graduate student at The Ohio State University and under the supervision of principal investigator, Assistant Professor Brad L. Mitchell, Ph.D., I am gathering data about academically-able students and their post high school plans. Your son or daughter, if he or she chooses to participate, will join several classmates in four one-hour group interviews for the purpose of sharing their opinions about why academically-able students choose or choose not to pursue post-secondary education.

In addition, students will be asked for their advice about best ways to approach students in other schools in order to enhance their willingness to participate in the research project. During the meeting, notes will be taken. With the participant's permission and signed consent, an audio recording will be made. Information shared by individual students in the consultant group will not be associated with their names either in writing or in conversation with school officials. The names of \_\_\_\_\_ students and the name of \_\_\_\_\_ High School will be kept confidential in any research reports.

Following completion of the final written paper, all notes and tapes will be destroyed.

Attached you will find a consent form that grants parental permission for your son or daughter to be part of the consultant group. Please review it. Please sign it if your child expresses willingness to participate. Finally, return the signed form to Father \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_, 1991. Should you have questions or concerns prior to granting permission for your son or daughter to participate, you may contact Father \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ or me at 452-9624 after 5 p.m. weekdays.

Sincerely,

Kay L. Roach  
Doctoral Candidate  
The Ohio State University



March , 1991

Dear

Congratulations! This is an exciting time in your life. Graduation and new experiences are just around the corner. Certainly, completing your studies must be at the center of your attention. As a third year doctoral student at The Ohio State University, I am ready to begin the final phase of my school work. This final phase is called a dissertation. The dissertation is a very lengthy paper detailing a research project. This letter is an invitation for you to participate in my research project by becoming a member of a consultant group.

With Father \_\_\_\_\_ permission, the consultant group will meet four times at \_\_\_\_\_ High School during late March or early April; they will be asked for opinions and suggestions in two areas. First, the consultant group will be asked to share their opinions about reasons academically-able students choose or choose not to attend college. Second, your suggestions are needed about 'best ways' to approach students from other high schools in order to enhance their willingness to participate in the research project.

During the meeting, notes will be taken. With the participant's permission and signed consent, an audio recording will be made. Information shared by you in the consultant group will not be associated with your name either in writing or in conversation with school officials. The names of \_\_\_\_\_ students and the name of \_\_\_\_\_ High School will be kept confidential. Following completion of the final written paper, all notes and tapes will be destroyed.

Page 2  
March , 1991

I hope you will be willing to join the group and help me complete my school work. With this letter, is a letter to your parents and a parental consent form. Please take them home and discuss the project with your parents. Choosing to participate means the consent form must be signed by a parent and returned to Father \_\_\_\_\_ no later than \_\_\_\_\_, 1991. Thanks for considering the invitation to participate in my doctoral dissertation research.

Sincerely,

Kay L. Roach  
Doctoral Candidate  
The Ohio State University

Brad L. Mitchell, Ph.D., Assistant Professor  
Principal Investigator  
The Ohio State University

## CONSULTANT GROUP FORM

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Protocol No. 91B0045

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN  
SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH

I consent to participating in (or my child's participation in) research entitled:

Opinions About Why Academically-Able Students Choose or

Choose Not to Pursue Post-Secondary Education

Brad L. Mitchell, Ph.D. or his/her authorized representative has (Principal Investigator)

explained the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected duration of my (my child's) participation. Possible benefits of the study have been described as have alternative procedures, if such procedures are applicable and available.

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. Further, I understand that I am (my child is) free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me (my child).

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Participant)Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal Investigator or his/  
her Authorized Representative)Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Person Authorized to Consent for  
Participant - If Required)

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

May, 1991

I \_\_\_\_\_ agree to have my interview participation in the research project titled Opinions About Why Academically-Able Students Choose or Choose Not To Pursue Post-Secondary Education tape recorded. I understand my name, school name, and community name will remain confidential. I also understand all tapes will be destroyed upon completion of the research project.

Kay L. Roach  
Doctoral Student  
The Ohio State University

Brad L. Mitchell, Ph.D., Assistant Professor  
Principal Investigator  
The Ohio State University

**APPENDIX E**

**CONSULTANT GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE**

## CONSULTANT GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### Script - first meeting

Hi, I'm Kay Roach, thank you for meeting me today. Let me just go over the purpose of the research project again.

Remember, I said in the letter I'm a student at Ohio State doing research on students' high school experiences and post high school plans. We'll meet about four times to talk about you and some of your high school experiences and your plans after graduation. Before I ask you questions, do you have any for me?

What you say to me is confidential. Your names, the name of your high school will not be revealed. Periodically, we'll go over what you've said so you'll have a chance to ask about how certain information will be given in the research paper. We can eliminate anything that may make you uncomfortable.

I'm going to take notes and I'd also like to tape record our interview. Is that okay? When I turn on the recorder, I'll ask you again if I have permission to tape, please respond so your consent is heard on the tape.

Let's get started.

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE\*

How would you describe yourselves as students?

How did you arrive at these conclusions?

What kind of courses have you taken in high school?

Tell me about your teachers.

Did teachers show interest in you? How?

\*To be conducted over a minimum of four hours of interview. Student responses may lead to unscheduled inquiry.

Earlier, you described yourselves as a students; at what age did you know what kind of students you were?

How did you know?

Did parents and/or friends know what kind of student you were?

How do you know this?

Did you and your parents talk about your student abilities?

What kind of things did you talk about?

Did you and your friends talk about your student abilities?

Did you and your teachers talk about your student abilities?

Tell me more.

As seniors, how did you decide what you would do after high school?

Who helped you decide?

How did you decide? Was there anyone special who influenced your decision?

Did you ever think about doing anything else after high school?

Did your teacher ever talk to you about college?

What about parents? friends?

What factors influenced your current direction?

How do you see/feel about your futures?

When I solicit other students to take part in this project, what could I say that would encourage participation?

How should contact be initiated? What next?

**APPENDIX F**

**PRIMARY STUDENT SOLICITATION LETTER**

**PRIMARY PARENT SOLICITATION LETTER**



1991

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Congratulations on your recent graduation from \_\_\_\_\_ High School! New experiences are just around the corner. Certainly, completing your studies has been at the center of your attention. As a third year doctoral student at The Ohio State University, I am ready to begin the final phase of my school work. This final phase is called a dissertation. The dissertation is a very lengthy paper detailing a research project. This letter is an invitation for you to participate in my research project.

The purpose of my research project is to explore with recent high school graduates their opinions about their high school experiences and their plans for the future. If you agree to participate, the project will involve three to six meetings with each meeting ranging from one to two hours in length. The total amount of time you will be asked to give will not exceed six hours. Times and places of meetings will accommodate the needs of the participants. During the meeting, notes will be taken. With the participant's permission and signed consent, an audio recording will be made. The information you share with me will be confidential. Neither your name nor the name of your school and community will be identified in the final research report. Following completion of the final written paper, all notes and tapes will be destroyed.

I hope you will be willing to talk with me and help me complete my school work. I will be telephoning you in a few days. This will give you an opportunity to ask questions about me and the project. Please feel free to discuss this with your parents. Thanks for considering this invitation to participate in my doctoral dissertation research. I'll be talking with you soon!

Sincerely,

Kay L. Roach  
Doctoral Candidate  
The Ohio State University

Brad L. Mitchell, Ph.D.  
Principal Investigator  
Assistant Professor  
The Ohio State University

October 1, 1991

Dear

Your \_\_\_\_\_ (son or daughter), \_\_\_\_\_ (name of student), has been invited to participate in an educational research project. As a third year doctoral student, at The Ohio State University, I am conducting this study as the final phase of my school work. The purpose of my research project is to explore with recent high school graduates their opinions about their high school experiences and their plans for the future. \_\_\_\_\_ (name of student) is one of four students selected from the Zanesville area as a potential participant in this study. If \_\_\_\_\_ (she/he) agrees to participate, the project will involve three to six meetings with each meeting ranging from one to two hours in length. \_\_\_\_\_ (name of student) total time involvement will not exceed six hours.

During the first meeting, the study will be fully explained. Your presence is requested for this session. Only one other short interview with you will be necessary. The total amount of time you will be asked to give will not exceed 90 minutes. Times and places of meetings will be at your convenience. During the meetings with you and with \_\_\_\_\_ (name of student), notes will be taken. With your permission and signed consent, audio recordings will be made. The information you and \_\_\_\_\_ (name of student) share with me will be confidential. Your name, the name of your \_\_\_\_\_ (son or daughter), and the name of \_\_\_\_\_ 's (name of student) school will not be identified in the final research report. Following completion of the final written paper, all notes and tapes will be destroyed.

Page 2  
October 1, 1991

I hope you will be willing to talk with me and help me complete my school work. I will be telephoning \_\_\_\_\_ (name of student) in a few days. This will give your \_\_\_\_\_ son or daughter an opportunity to ask questions about me and the project. Please feel free to discuss this with \_\_\_\_\_ (name of student). Thanks for considering this invitation to participate in my doctoral dissertation research. I will be calling you soon!

Sincerely,

Kay L. Roach  
Doctoral Candidate  
The Ohio State University

Brad L. Mitchell, Ph.D.  
Principal Investigator  
Assistant Professor  
The Ohio State University

**APPENDIX G**

**PRIMARY STUDENT TELEPHONE SOLICITATION SCRIPT**

**CASE STUDY: PARTICIPANT TELEPHONE SOLICITATION**

**Script:**

**Hi! This is Kay Roach. I live right here in \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm a student at The Ohio State University. My call is the follow up to the letter about a research project I'm conducting. Have you received my letter? Good! May I ask just a few questions?**

**Interviewer: Will you be staying in the community for the next few months?**

**Interviewee: Yes.**

**Interviewer: Would you consider talking with me about some of your high school experiences?**

**Interviewee: Yes.**

**Interviewer: When would it be convenient for us to meet?**

**Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Interviewer: At your home?**

**Interviewee: Yes**

**Interviewer: Thanks for agreeing to meet me. I'll see you on \_\_\_\_\_.**

**APPENDIX H**

**PRIMARY GROUP PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM**

**PRIMARY GROUP CONSENT FORM FOR  
AUDIO TAPE RECORDING**

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

PRIMARY GROUP FORM

Protocol No. \_\_\_\_\_

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN  
SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH

I consent to participating in (or my child's participation in) research entitled:

Opinions About High School Experiences and Plans for  
the Future

Brad L. Mitchell, Ph.D. or his/her authorized representative has  
(Principal Investigator)

explained the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected duration of my (my child's) participation. Possible benefits of the study have been described as have alternative procedures, if such procedures are applicable and available.

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. Further, I understand that I am (my child is) free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me (my child).

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Participant)Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal Investigator or his/  
her Authorized Representative)Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Person Authorized to Consent for  
Participant - If Required)

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

March , 1991

I \_\_\_\_\_ agree to have my interview participation in the research project titled \_\_\_\_\_ tape recorded. I understand my name, school name, and community name will remain confidential. I also understand all tapes will be destroyed upon completion of the research project.

Kay L. Roach  
Doctoral Student  
The Ohio State University

Brad L. Mitchell, Ph.D., Assistant Professor  
Principal Investigator  
The Ohio State University



**APPENDIX I**

**DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FORM**



**APPENDIX J**

**STUDENT PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**PARENT PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**TEACHER PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**CASE STUDY: PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW GUIDE****Script - first meeting**

Hi, I'm Kay Roach, thank you for meeting me today. Let me just go over the purpose of the research project again.

Remember, I said in the letter I'm a student at Ohio State doing research on students' high school experiences and post high school plans. We'll meet about four times to talk about you and some of your high school experiences and your plans after graduation. Before I ask you questions, do you have any for me?

What you say to me is confidential. Your names, the name of your high school will not be revealed. Periodically, we'll go over what you've said so you'll have a chance to ask about how certain information will be given in the research paper. We can eliminate anything that may make you uncomfortable.

I'm going to take notes and I'd also like to tape record our interview. Is that okay? When I turn on the recorder, I'll ask you again if I have permission to tape, please respond so your consent is heard on the tape.

Let's get started.

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE\***

In a brief summary, describe your high school years.

How would you describe yourself as a student?

How did you arrive at these conclusions?

What kind of courses did you take in high school?

Was there an area of study you favored?

\*To be conducted over a minimum of six hours of interview. Student responses may lead to unscheduled inquiry.

Tell me about your teachers.

Did teachers show interest in you? How?

Earlier, you described yourself as a student; at what age did you know what kind of student you were?

How did you know?

Did parents and/or friends know what kind of student you were?

How do you know this?

Did you and your parents talk about your student abilities?

What kind of things did you talk about?

Did you and your friends talk about your student abilities?

Did you and your teachers talk about your student abilities?

Tell me more.

When you were 14 years old, what did you think you would do after high school?

Did your ideas change much?

In what ways?

As a senior, how did you decide what you would do after high school?

Who helped you decide?

How did you decide? Was there anyone special who influenced your decision?

Did you ever think about doing anything else after high school?

Did your teacher ever talk to you about college?

**What about parents? friends?**

**What factors influenced your current direction?**

**How do you see/feel about your future?**

**CASE STUDY: PARENT INTERVIEW GUIDE****I. Reiterate Nature of Study****II. State Procedures for Confidentiality****III. Obtain Signature on Consent Form****IV. Interview Schedule**

1. How would you describe \_\_\_\_\_ as a student?
2. What kind of actions on \_\_\_\_\_'s part lead you to your conclusions?
3. Did \_\_\_\_\_ ever discuss his/her plans for after high school with you while in high school?
4. What kind of expectations did \_\_\_\_\_ have for him/herself during high school?
5. What do you think most teachers expected of \_\_\_\_\_?
6. How does \_\_\_\_\_ see his/her future?
7. What kind of support systems did the \_\_\_\_\_ have during high school?  
  
Teachers?  
  
Friends?
8. In your opinion, could \_\_\_\_\_ succeed in college?

9. What might be some reasons why \_\_\_\_\_ decided not to go to college?
10. In your opinion what might \_\_\_\_\_ be doing 5 years from now?

V. Validate student's demographic data.



**CASE STUDY: TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE****I. Reiterate Nature of Study****II. State Procedures for Confidentiality****III. Obtain Signature on Consent Form****IV. Interview Schedule**

1. Please tell me under what circumstances you've known \_\_\_\_\_ as a student?
2. How would you describe \_\_\_\_\_ as a student?
3. What kind of actions on \_\_\_\_\_'s part have lead you to your conclusions?
4. Did \_\_\_\_\_ ever discuss his/her plans for after high school with you?
5. What kind of expectations did \_\_\_\_\_ have for him/herself?
6. What do you think most teachers expected from \_\_\_\_\_?
7. How did this student see his/her future?
8. What kind of support systems did the \_\_\_\_\_ have?  
Parents?  
Peers?

9. In your opinion, could this student succeed in college?
10. What might be some reasons why \_\_\_\_\_ chose not to attend college immediately after high school?

V. Teacher Demographic Data

Name \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Subjects Taught: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender \_\_\_\_\_ Race \_\_\_\_\_

Years teaching at this school \_\_\_\_\_

Level of Preparation: Baccalaureate \_\_\_\_\_ Masters \_\_\_\_\_

VI. Closure/Thank You

**APPENDIX K**

**THANK YOU LETTER TO STUDENT PARTICIPANT**

**THANK YOU LETTER TO PARENT PARTICIPANT**

**THANK YOU LETTER TO TEACHER PARTICIPANT**

November 4, 1991

Dear :

Thank you for the time and effort spent in interviews with me as part of my doctoral dissertation research. Without your willingness to meet and talk with me, completion of three long years of course work would have been impossible. Please accept the enclosed money order for \$25 as a very small token of my appreciation.

Best wishes for your future. May the years ahead bring you health and joy.

Sincerely,

Kay L. Roach  
Doctoral Candidate  
The Ohio State University

Enclosure

November 1, 1991

Dear :

Thank you for allowing me into your home in order that I might complete my research work at The Ohio State University. During my interviews with your \_\_\_\_\_, I found \_\_\_\_\_ to be an intelligent, responsible, and likeable young person. I am sure you are quite proud of \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ past accomplishments.

I also appreciate the openness with which questions were addressed during the interview with you as \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s). Again, thank you for allowing me into your home and sharing your time with me.

Best wishes,

Kay L. Roach

November 7, 1991

Dear :

Thank you very much for your willingness to be interviewed on \_\_\_\_\_, 1991, about one of your previous students \_\_\_\_\_. Your time and effort have contributed significantly to the data for my dissertation topic: Academically Able Students and Their Choices Not to Pursue Post-Secondary Education.

As I indicated in our meeting, \_\_\_\_\_ identified you as \_\_\_\_\_ favorite teacher. \_\_\_\_\_ pinpointed your interest, concern and ability to help \_\_\_\_\_ learn as the factors separating you from other teachers. It seems apparent you have made a difference in this young person's life. Thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,

Kay L. Roach  
Doctoral Candidate  
The Ohio State University

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