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The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of participation in high school choral music classes and aesthetic experiences on a group of high school students' postsecondary aspirations. Twenty students were selected to participate in the study. Ten of those had aspirations of attending a four-year college and ten had limited postsecondary aspirations. Ten of the students selected participated in choral music classes in high school, while the other ten did not.

Students participated in two interview sessions lasting between 45 minutes and one hour each. Once the interviews were complete, the data from the audio recordings were analyzed using open coding. Themes and commonalities between responses were examined.

The students in the study indicated a need to make their parents proud, indicating the strong influence of their parents on their postsecondary plans. Students discussed their need to feel connected to the school through relationships with teachers and coaches. Connectedness to peers was achieved through participation

in sports and other extracurricular activities, such as choral music. Choral music students had developed a broader social understanding through their performance travels to places such as New York City. All of the participants in the study spoke of their experiences with aesthetics, with the choral music students having the greatest ease and facility discussing their experiences. Their feedback indicated they had a stronger understanding of the aesthetic experiences than students without choral music experience. Through their choral music experiences and their shared aesthetic experiences, students developed connections to their director and each other.

RURAL STUDENTS, ASPIRATION, MOTIVATION, AND
MUSIC EDUCATION: WHY DON'T MORE RURAL
STUDNETS MAKE IT TO COLLEGE?

by

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APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Rural areas constitute a large portion of the United States. While there has been much focus on the needs of those in urban areas, the body of research on issues faced by those in rural areas lags behind. For those of us who work with rural students in schools and their families, there is a great need to have an improved understanding of students' educational needs. With the limited employment and educational opportunities that are synonymous with rural locations, it is important to have an understanding of rural students' educational aspirations. This need has grown significantly since the economic uncertainty that began at the beginning of this century and the migration of many manufacturing jobs outside of the United States.

I conducted a study of rural students' postsecondary aspirations in Northwest North Carolina. The focus was on the low number of academically able students who attend college after high school and possible factors that

influence their postsecondary educational and career decisions. I define postsecondary aspirations as four-year college attendance plans, and limited aspirations as community college, military, or work plans. Primarily, I want to investigate the influence of students' participation in choral music in high schools and its effect on their decisions to attend college. I chose these indicators because I have read research that indicates the important educational benefits that come from a study in music. What I needed to more about was the intrinsic benefits of the study of music, rather than how music affects other areas.

This study is important because I am a product of this environment, and I currently work with school-age students in this rural setting. The concern from the local board of education as well as from the school administration and teachers is both educational and economic. We have a pragmatic need to better understand how and why high school students make career and postsecondary educational decisions. Likewise, we need to become better informed about the factors that influence their decisions.

In the current environment of educational standardized testing and school accountability, there are increasing

demands for schools to improve state accountability test scores as well as Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, which in turn has implications for students' college enrollment. Likewise, there are concerns about the loss of manufacturing jobs, which constituted the majority of jobs in this rural setting. Since there are fewer lower-wage, low-skill jobs available, students graduating from high school are having difficulty finding jobs in this rural setting.

Since there are many students who have the grades and access to financial assistance that would enable them to attend college, there is a need to focus more closely on possible influences on students' decisions about college. An area that has not been examined closely is students' participation in arts classes and the effect this might have on their postsecondary and career aspirations.

I wanted to know more about the possible connections between study in music in secondary education and its influence on postsecondary educational enrollment and motivation. Through this study I gained insight into the problem of too few students in this rural setting attending college by examining what students perceive as influences on their postsecondary aspirations and motivations.

Background

The Rural Setting

I studied students who live in a rural area of North Carolina, which I will call Smith County. In North Carolina 49.6% of the population is rural. The National Rural Development Institute (Conroy, 1997) defines a rural setting as one that contains fewer than 150 residents per square mile or one where 60% of the population lives in communities of less than 5,000 citizens. In the state, 19% of school-age children live in poverty (Smith, 2002). In Smith County, 7.1% of families and 10.9% of children live below the poverty level. The median family income in 1999 was \$43,758 (United States Census Bureau, 2000).

Of the working population (n=24,916), 14% are in construction, 30.3% are in manufacturing, and 2.2% are in agriculture. The working population is comprised of 11.7% who have less than a 9th grade education, 16.3% who have completed some high school but have no diploma, and 36.9% who graduated or received their General Equivalency Diploma (GED). For those who attended college, 18% have no degree, 6.9% have an associate's degree, 7.3% have a bachelor's degree, and 2.9% have graduate or professional degrees (United States Census Bureau, 2000).

The median age for males and females in this rural county is 37.5 years, with a population of 36,348. 8,680 are under the age of 18, 2,752 are between 18 and 24. 11,013 are between 25 and 44, 8,725 are between 45 and 64. 5,178 are over the age of 65 (United States Census Bureau, 2000).

Of the entire population, 95.6% were born in the United States and 4.4% were born outside of the country. The majority of those born outside of the U. S., 94%, were born in Latin America. Likewise, 92.5% are white/Caucasian, while 6.5% are Hispanic/Latino. 92.7% speak only English, while 6.9% speak Spanish. Of the Spanish-speaking population, 57.7% speak English well (United States Census Bureau, 2000). These data indicate the diversity of this rural county. The diversity is most prevalent in the county seat but is spreading to other parts of the county.

The Rural County

The economic changes over the past few years have had a negative effect on many local budgets, with many citizens seeing an increase in their property tax rates at the county level. In turn, this has had a negative impact on the budgets of local school systems. Many school systems,

even the larger and wealthier, have had to examine spending and reprioritize their needs in order to balance their budgets and stretch every dollar possible. The rural school system being examined is ranked near 50 out of 100 of adjusted property valuations per student, meaning the county is ranked near the middle of all 100 counties in the valuation of property. Contrary to this, the actual effort of the county to support education is quite different. The county spends \$800 and \$900 per student in the school system, which gives the school a rank near of 75 out 100 in the actual effort of supporting education. In theory, the actual effort of a county and the valuation of property in the county should be similar. Based on these reported data, the county is able to spend more on education and is not, based on the valuation of property (North Carolina School Finance Study, 2003).

Schools

The Smith County school system is comprised of two high schools at the east and west ends of the county, eight PK-8 schools (5 that feed the high school on the eastern end of the county and 3 that feed the high school on the western end of the county), and one alternative school centrally located. The system-wide rate of seniors

graduating from high school who plan to attend college has ranged from 29.23% to 37.83% over the last five years. The college attendance rates for the individual high schools has reflected a fluctuation as well with the eastern high school ranging from 33.6% to 44.06% over the past five years. The western high school has seen more consistency in college attendance rates, ranging from 24.4% to 28.24% over the past five years (Appendix A).

Graduating seniors were asked about their degree of satisfaction with their high school education experience, including: guidance services, career exploration experiences, work based/field experiences, math instruction, science instruction, social studies instruction, English instruction, and high school preparation for the workplace. The survey results indicated that students at both high schools were satisfied with their preparation for postsecondary experiences (almost all areas were 80% or high in agreement) (Appendix A).

Although the current economic dilemmas have created challenges for all school districts, smaller rural systems such as the one in consideration also have to contend with: shrinking/non-existent tax bases, recruiting new teachers

to a rural location and retaining them, lower salary supplements than their urban/suburban neighbors, lack of funding for new construction, influx of non-English speaking students and the rapid change in culture of schools and small communities, and the increasing pressure of state and federal accountability standards (Smith, 2002).

The rapid changes in the culture of this rural area and schools within it are a dilemma that is difficult for those who live in the community. Many times rural areas are slow to change because of rural mores, folkways, and the general distrust of "outsiders" and their ideas. Exploding populations such as the Hispanic/Latino has caused a great deal of change to take place in a very short amount of time. For rural people, this is change that has happened almost too quickly for them to adjust - especially for some who no electricity or indoor bathroom facilities before the mid 1960's. Tensions have mounted on the part of longtime rural residents as well as those non-English-speaking residents who are new to schools and the community.

Schools work to address the needs of the community, especially as they apply to differences in cultures and

languages. This is a gap that will take a great deal of understanding and time to begin to bridge.

There are indications that students in rural schools exhibit an aspiration gap between those of their urban and suburban counterparts. Rural youth have an affinity for family and proximity. Some rural parents also fear that students who leave home to attend college will not return home to live and raise their families. Rural parents are more likely to encourage their children to stay close to home after high school for fear that the out-migration to college will mean that they will not return to the rural area to live. This may help us understand why some students choose not to move away from home to attend college (Smith, 2002).

Economic Issues in the Rural Settings

The loss of jobs and economic opportunities has and is taking its toll on rural communities such as the one under examination. With the loss of one of the county's largest employers and job cutbacks from the largest employer in the county, the unemployment rate for the last quarter for the county is now 4.74%, which is up from 3.63% at the same time during the prior year (North Carolina Employment Security Commissions, 2005).

The loss of unskilled factory jobs is not a new phenomenon. Since the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) by then President Clinton in 1994, many companies have moved many unskilled jobs to other countries such as Mexico, where the labor cost is a fraction of what was being paid in the United States. Since the signing of NAFTA, an estimated 879,280 unskilled factory jobs have left the U. S. (United Steel Workers Association, 2004).

Union organizations such as the American Federation of Labor - Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) have little positive to say about NAFTA. Most of the jobs that have left the country were unskilled manufacturing jobs, which have negatively affected union workers. It indicates that a ballooning trade deficit with Canada and Mexico has caused the trade deficit to increase from \$9 billion in 1993 to \$83 billion in 2001 (American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrialized Organizations, 2007).

The migration of jobs can be counted as individual job losses at the local level, especially in rural locations. In North Carolina, 32,000 jobs and job opportunities were lost since the signing of NAFTA, with 3,000 jobs from this county having been moved outside of the U. S. Most of

those jobs were in the areas of textile manufacturing, with others in the furniture manufacturing, household appliance manufacturing, and poultry industries (Jobs with Justice, 2005).

Others see NAFTA as beneficial to the nation's foreign and economic policies. The Center for Trade Policy Studies indicates that NAFTA was concerned more with foreign policy than economic policy, citing that the U. S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was just under 20 times than that of Mexico's. U. S. levied tariffs on Mexican goods were around 2%. Since 1993 the Mexican economy has boomed because of the relocation of industry to Mexico. NAFTA has meant that many jobs were relocated to Mexico, but they cite that this has allowed the U. S. job market to shift to other sectors where American producers are more efficient. Although manufacturing has been sluggish in the last two years, as has been the economy in general, there is no indication that this is due to NAFTA (Center for Trade Policy Studies, 2002).

U. S. trade between Canada and Mexico has exceeded the U. S.'s trade performance with the rest of the world. Trade with Mexico and Canada has grown over \$200 billion since 1993. Before NAFTA (1989 - 1993) manufacturing

industry employment declined by 6.8%, which is over 1.3 million jobs. Almost every income measure for manufacturing workers, from production to supervisory, has increased since NAFTA was enacted. The efficiency and productivity of the manufacturing industry has increased since the enactment of NAFTA (Kampitis, 1996).

Brustein & Mahler (1994) indicated that by 2000, 15 percent of all jobs will be unskilled, 20 percent will require a bachelor's degree or higher. Sixty-five percent of jobs will require specific skills - more than high school and less than a four-year degree. Since we have seen the migration of unskilled labor jobs to other countries where the cost is significantly lower than here in the U. S., there is a need to train young people preparing to enter the labor force for jobs that will be available for them.

The economic issues in Smith County mirror what has happened nationally. With the passage of free trade agreements, many unskilled labor jobs that were once plentiful are being transferred overseas where costs are cheaper. There have not been enough jobs to fill this void. This environment of limited career possibilities has generated focus on issues such as graduation rates and

postsecondary aspirations. Educators state and nationwide are working to improve the rate at which high school students graduate, as well as their postsecondary attainment. Studying factors that influence high school students' postsecondary aspirations in order to improve the rate of graduation, as well as their level of education after high school, is now more important than ever.

Gamoran (United Steel Workers Association, 2004) found that for students who did not attend college, a rigorous high school experience led to a higher rate of employment, higher wages, and higher job status. Since there is a low college attendance rate in Smith County and many of the students leaving high school are academically prepared to college, what are the factors and influences of study in choral music and aesthetics and postsecondary aspirations?

Summary

The evidence suggests that factors such as low career/postsecondary expectations and aspirations, low self-image and self-efficacy, self-deprecation, perhaps fear and feelings of hopelessness and helplessness have combined to create a dismal outlook for students in this rural setting. For some reason, this combination of factors in some way influences students with the academic

ability not to pursue a postsecondary education. They remain in this rural location, choosing not to pursue postsecondary goals that they are academically able to attain. Many cultural changes have taken place in recent years. Unfortunately, there has been a much slower rate of change in the views of rural citizens and the need for postsecondary education. Before now the economy could handle the low level of educated citizens. The relocation of jobs has left many unemployed and seeking ways to learn new job skills in order to find work.

With the change in job prospects for citizens and a growing minority population, there is a need to reexamine how new high school graduates can be better prepared for a changing job force.

Dissertation Format

In Chapter II, I will review the literature involving student motivation, postsecondary aspirations, and aesthetics. This chapter will examine the current research and set the stage for the methodology I employed in the study. Chapter III will describe the methodology I employed in the study, as well as how participants were selected, and the questions I asked participants during the interviews. Chapter IV will focus on the results and

feedback I gained from participants from the interviews. I will discuss the results of participants as a part of their individual groups as well as the entire group of participants. As a conclusion, Chapter V will focus on the themes I found as I analyzed the feedback from participants. I will focus on those issues that are important to my supposition and provide feedback as to why I believe this to be the case.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of literature focuses on three main issues: study of music and the manifestation of aesthetics, career and postsecondary aspirations, and motivation. Because these issues have few points in common and no research was available that considered them together, the review is divided into subheadings. Each of the three issues is discussed independently, with a concluding summary as to how the three converge in this study. The study I conducted involves the investigation of high school students' postsecondary aspirations in context of their choral music education experiences and the influence of aesthetic experiences. The review of literature highlights the body of research about the discrete factors that exist. Since there is no evidence of research that combines the individual areas of research, I will make those connections through this study.

Study in Music and Aesthetics

There are a number of reasons why arts education is an important means of encouraging students to pursue postsecondary education. First, participation in choral music classes allows students to develop one of their core intelligences, their musical intelligence (Gardner, 1983).

Gardner, in his research, indicates that there are eight areas of intelligence: Linguistic, Logical-Mathematical, Spatial, Bodily-Kinesthetic, Musical, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, and Naturalist. He indicates that everyone has all of these intelligences. They are developed as we explore and learn in each area of intelligence. Gardner's theory was well received by many in the arts education community, to the point that several schools adopted his ideas as a way to provide instruction to students. Teachers in *A+ Schools* provide instruction to students using Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1993). Math lessons might be taught through dance and music in cooperation with the dance and music teachers, reading might be taught through drama in cooperation with the theatre arts teacher. Many of these

schools have shown high academic growth because of the implementation of Gardner's theory (Gardner, 1993).

Gardner elaborated more in depth on his theory of Multiple Intelligences in an interview with Brandt (1988). Gardner speaks specifically of assessment in the arts and aesthetics. Three factors should be considered: production, perception, and reflection. There are those who think that too much time is spent producing art in schools, as opposed to teaching the arts in the same way other academic areas are taught. He indicates that we must be cautious not to get caught in the verbal-analytical and logical-mathematical ways of thinking - the traditional ways of knowing. Creating art should be intrinsically linked with perception and reflection. One should ask questions like: what am I doing, why am I doing it, what am I trying to achieve, what am I learning, am I successful at this? Reflection should always be linked to production. There is an important need for students in this country to become more involved with wanting to know. They need to spend more time working with hands-on projects that they find interesting and motivating. They need to want to find out things on their own.

Gardner's work is important to this study because of the focus on perception and reflection in the production of art. When one attends to the task of creating art and the aesthetic potential therein, one is better able to become more "wide awake" to the world around (Greene, 1978). This is the essence and importance of the art form. Its ability to stir the soul and open one's eyes, literally and figuratively, is what makes it vital to us as humans. If we fail to teach children to look and comprehend what is around them, we have failed to prepare them for life in our modern society. The arts have been ignored in education because historically they have been seen as dealing with the affective, rather than the cognitive, they cannot be measured, and they are not viewed as essential or an important part of students' educations. Many arts programs are perceived as lacking substance, holding no benefit to being included in the vital curriculum (Williams, 1991). Nelson (1985) in his study of violin students found that age is the primary factor in the development of the aesthetic judgment and experiences of the population of children studied. Bygrade (1994) indicates that long-term exposure to a music programs has a positive impact on

students' receptive vocabulary, when measured by standardized receptive language assessments.

An initiative by former President Clinton, *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning* (Fiske, 2003) is a compilation of seven major studies that seeks to help our understanding of why participation in the arts creates positive changes in the lives of young people and improves learning. A collection of both quantitative and qualitative studies, the following summarizes the findings that were included in the final document.

- James Catterall's analysis of the Department of Education's NELS: 88 database indicates that learners achieve at higher levels as a result of their arts activities. It also levels the playing field for students who came from disadvantaged circumstances.
- Students who receive high quality arts instruction experience authentic learning that engages hearts, minds, and bodies.
- The arts reach students in ways that they are not otherwise being reached.
- The arts connect students to themselves and each others.

- The arts transform the environment for learning.
- The arts provide new challenges for those who are already successful.
- The arts connect learning experiences to the real world.

Richard Deasy (2002), Executive Director of the Arts Education Partnership - a coalition partner that collaborated in the compilation of *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning*, compiled the compendium study, *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development*. In an effort to recommend areas of study to those in the academic research community and those funding their research through new and innovative areas of inquiry in the arts, the study aims to affect and inform those writing and updating arts curricula with the most recent data in the particular areas of study. Studies selected for inclusion focused on academic and social effects of learning in the arts or on arts learning itself. Five domains of the fine arts were included: visual art, drama, dance, music, and multi-arts. Selected studies were to represent the best research taking place in arts education at that time. Listed are highlights of what

the authors of the Compendium found as most salient to learning in the arts:

- Students who participate in arts classes achieve higher Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores than their peers who do not participate in arts classes. The strongest correlations were among students in acting, music history, and music theory classes and their verbal SAT scores, but all disciplines in the arts were found to have high SAT correlations in reading and math. Data were collected from students taking the SAT via a questionnaire. Their responses were compared to their composite math and verbal scores (Vaughn & Winner, 2000).
- Music and reading attitudes were improved when music was integrated into reading instruction. The fifth grade integrated class received researcher delivered instruction two times per week for eleven weeks which focused on higher-order thinking skills, understanding text organization, and identification of musical form. Activities included reading, discussion, performing, listening, singing, and composition activities. Both classes received 50 minutes of reading instruction

five times per week and attended general music class for 30 minutes per class two times each week. The Music Attitudes Profile, the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, the Silver Burdett Music Competency Tests, Book 5, and the Iowa Basic Tests of Basic Skills were employed for data collection. The results indicate that both groups improved reading pre- and post-test scores, without a significant difference between the groups. Music attitudes did differ by group and by gender. Music attitudes increased for the integrated group and decreased for the non-integrated group. Girls' scores in the integrated group indicated more positive attitudes toward reading than boys in both groups, while boys in the integrated group showed greater music achievement (Andrews, 1997).

- Preschool students who were provided music training made more improvements on visual tests of recall and memory than preschool students who were not provided with music instruction. Seventy-one four and five year old students from varying socioeconomic backgrounds were included in the study. Students participated in

a sequence memory test and pattern representation test. Students were divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group received a 30-week music program of 75 minutes of music instruction per week. Activities included singing, instruments, rhythm notation, composition, and movement. The control group received no music instruction. At the conclusion of the study, the middle and upper socioeconomic students in the experimental group performed better on the sequence memory test than the lower socioeconomic students in the experimental group and all students in the control group (Bilhartz, Bruhn, & Olson, 2000).

- A consistent positive correlation between reading ability and music instruction was found when a meta-analysis of other studies was examined. The studies selected met the following criteria: utilized standardized measures of reading performance, the test followed music instruction, and ample data were supplied to estimate effect size. The study supports a relationship between school music participation and student reading ability across the studies. This

supports studies that indicate that students in school music programs scored higher on the SAT as opposed to their peers not in music programs (Butzlaff, 2000).

- Children with 2 years of piano instruction scored higher on spatial reasoning assessments than their peers who were not provided with piano instruction. Forty-three fourth grade students received piano instruction for three years (30 minutes per week in years one and two, and 45 minutes in year three). Students were pre- and post-tested on measures of verbal, quantitative, spatial, and musical ability and fine motor coordination. The pre-test scores were compared to a group of fourth grade students who were not participating in piano instruction. There was no difference in pre-test scores. Students were post-tested at the end of the first, second, and third years of the study using the same tests. After year one, the piano group scored higher on the spatial test than the control group. Other tests showed no significant differences. Students in the control group showed a significant gain on the spatial test

after the third year. Their scores were similar to those of the experimental group (Costa-Giomi, 1999).

- Musical performance, and musical performance coupled with cognitive strategies improves self-efficacy in students labeled at-risk, although the effect of self-esteem was not significant. At-risk male students from ages eight to nineteen participated in guitar lessons: none had experience with the guitar before. Five groups were created: performance only, performance with cognitive strategy, cognitive strategy, vicarious, and control. Participants in each group received 30 minutes of guitar instruction per week, and 30 additional minutes of instruction depending on the group assigned (e. g., males in the performance with cognitive strategy group received instruction in performance and mental strategies for performing). Participants performed solo concerts for their peers. The study indicates that mastery of subject matter in musical performance is therapeutic, allowing the participant to cope with his or her environment more effectively, and acquire social competencies (Kennedy, 1998).

The Arts and Aesthetic Experiences

I have included aesthetics as part of this examination because of the integral part it played in my own school music experience. Aesthetics is an area that is difficult if not impossible to measure. Studies have been undertaken that examine physical, psychological, and cognitive responses to stimuli in an effort to elicit an aesthetic response. Respondents rate their perceptions of the experience on a Likert scale instrument. Other studies employ case study research in an effort to gain richer insight into respondents' perceptions of the aesthetic experience.

Physiologically, some responses can be measured; increased heart rate, increased blood pressure, increased respiration. Metacognitively, one can explore his or her own thinking about the affective response. It is nearly impossible to explore this phenomenon without losing sight and focusing on its effects on the body or mind. Affectively, the aesthetic response is elusive and enigmatic. Exploring that which is at the heart of what is taking place, even though difficult to examine, is critical to creating a new understanding and to better describe what is taking place in this setting.

In the first national study to examine arts education at the school district level, *Gaining the Arts Advantage*, (Longley, 1999) profiled 91 school districts' efforts of sustaining arts education programs. Eight of the schools were chosen for inclusion in the case study. School districts represent a diversity in size and geographic location. Among the indications of why arts programs in some areas are successful, Longley indicates that through quality arts education programs, the arts help develop an individual's imagination and judgment, allowing him or her to see the world from a new perspective.

In *Variation on a Blue Guitar* (2001), Greene writes, anesthetic is the opposite of aesthetic. Aesthetic education is "an intentional undertaking, designed to nurture appreciative, reflective, cultural participatory engagement with the arts by enabling learners to notice what is there to be noticed and to lend works of art to their lives in such a way that they can achieve as variously meaningful (p. 6)." Arts education is an integral part of one's education. It is part of the process of developing the person. Individuals have a need to become aware of what it feels like to live through music. It must be experienced. It is how one makes connections

and meaning from the world and one's experiences. It opens doors to alternate ways of knowing, to becoming "wide-awake". It leads us to imagination and discomfort, to critical thought of what has not yet happened. Through the aesthetic response we enter into a dialogue with a work of art. We find our own voice and vision. Greene (1978) indicates that aesthetics involves investigations that come about when there is self-reflection on and attention to an art form. When we encounter the arts and are truly aware of what we are seeing and hearing, we can become "wide-awake", perceiving on a plane of consciousness where we can see who we are and what is around us. Greene (1995) views an education in the arts that exposes students to aesthetics as critical. She indicates that to introduce students to aesthetics is to begin to understand the balance between seeing and knowing and understanding to understanding the meaning of what they see and know. When one attends to the arts, he or she begins to develop the capacity to see beyond the colors on the canvas, to hear beyond the notes being played, to begin to perceive the harmonies and dissonances that exist in everyday life. Aesthetics offer the opportunity for learners to become emancipated, to know and understand. Developing the

imaginative capacity allows individuals to see and name the obstacles, which stand in their way of knowing and becoming fully conscious (Greene, 1988). The arts in schools provide a means of reflection. Aesthetics can awaken one's "critical consciousness," which can allow him or her to see what is usually veiled (Greene, 1984).

In "Forms of Feeling: the Aesthetic Theory of Susanne Langer," Reese (1977) indicates that a work of art is "an expressive form created for our perception through sense of imagination, and what it expresses is human feeling (p. 45)." These responses are difficult to examine because aesthetic experiences are short-lived and ambiguous. There is a rise and fall with the tensions and resolutions - indicating a direct relationship between aesthetic response and the music being heard. The arts allow individuals to understand their own subjective realities.

The Arts and Aesthetic Experiences Summary

Because of the affective involvement of an education in music, it is an area that is difficult if not impossible to study quantitatively and to a degree qualitatively. Music is a communicative art form that does not require words to relay the intention or meaning. Oftentimes words are inadequate to providing an understanding of a musical

work. Music is a language in and of itself, with the ability to quicken one's pulse, elicit an aesthetic response (both cognitively as well as physiologically), unite people in worship, and influence them to behave in particular manners (the use of Muzak in retail markets and theme music played at amusement parks).

Music provides many cognitive academic benefits, as the array of studies indicate. Pragmatically, there are many benefits to an education in music. Many times, these are the reasons music classes are spared from cuts, and parents enroll students in music classes. Affectively, study in music can increase one's sensitivity to the aesthetic response. The aesthetic response can create a new and increased awareness of the world around us, helping us become "wide-awake" to who we are and what is going on around us. An education in music and the arts is what makes us whole and complete people.

This idea is especially important for those who live in more isolated rural areas and have limited access to opportunities. Exposure to the performing arts and the aesthetic potential provides the opportunity to experience what can be. In my personal experience, this exposure to

the aesthetic opportunity effects one's aspirations to know and understand more.

Motivational Research

While postsecondary aspirations are important in studying what students hope to achieve once they complete high school, it is equally important to examine factors that motivate students to realize their aspirations. Examining the research on motivation will help to focus the examination on the different factors that can influence students to either attend college or not.

Covington (1984) examines student motivation and achievement in terms of teacher practices in the classroom. He indicates that the way in which teachers teach has an effect on students' ability and perception of ability. Of particular interest is his view of competition in the classroom. He indicates that competition is not necessarily a productive practice and can have negative impacts on student motivation. How one learns can be as important as what one learns. This problem seems to be exacerbated by nation-wide emphasis on accountability, which causes many teachers use more controlling strategies and less flexibility in the classroom. Traditional (rote) ways of teaching seem to serve as a complicating factor as

well. Covington's study helps explain why students who have the ability to achieve do not attain their career aspirations.

Flink, Boggiano, and Barrett's (1990) study indicates that students taught via non-pressure teaching performed significantly better in the study than students taught via high-pressure teaching strategies. The study indicated that teachers who felt pressured (because of accountability standards) utilized controlling teaching strategies, which in-turn, had a detrimental effect on student performance. In other words, teachers who felt pressure to perform applied the same pressure to their teaching and to their students, which resulted in an opposite desired effect. The study indicates that classroom strategies affect students' ability and self-perception of ability. The more pressure teachers feel in their teaching, the more they pass those pressures (either overtly or covertly) along to the students, which causes negative effects on student ability, but more importantly, negatively impacts student motivation and perception of his or her ability. Of greatest interest is the degree to which these factors impact rural students' ability, perception of ability, and motivation. It seems that the rural condition is

exacerbated by the high-pressure strategies and "traditional" teaching methods. The issue of state-mandated testing in rural school - in particular - only serves to complicate the situation further.

Blumenfeld (1991) proposes multi-day projects that do more than simply scratch the surface, but rather seek depth of knowledge for understanding. He believes that through projects, students become intrinsically motivated to achieve, and therefore become more engaged in what is taking place in the classroom.

Although he cautions that there must be adequate teacher and student preparation, continual teacher support, an understanding of data gathering techniques, and a knowledge of applicable technology, it seems problem-based learning could provide opportunities to engage in the classroom. It would seem that the nature of what is done in the classroom has a greater impact than simply what is learned. If students are not engaged and motivated and the instruction is not authentic and relevant, it has the potential to do more harm than good - causing students to shutdown cognitively.

The traditional methods of the past are not necessarily adequate to engage students of today. Rural

students in particular are in need of opportunities to engage in the classroom, especially with factors such as fewer opportunities in technology, and few postsecondary role models, and lowered career and educational expectations. Rural students need to find success in the classroom to overcome those disadvantages.

Maehr, Midgley, and Urdan (1992) approach change in motivation in the classroom from an administrative point of view. They indicated that change is most effective with the support of the building-level administrator's backing. They advocated in depth analysis of practices such as recognition, grouping, evaluation practices, resources, and the school day organization as places to begin the discussions of making positive changes in schools. Of primary interest is their discussion of motivation through reexamination of teachers' approaches to classroom instruction. They indicate that individuals are more likely to be motivated if they feel they have a voice. This seems to have implications for both students as well as teachers. It would seem more likely that teachers would have the opportunity to express their opinions and have them considered before those of students'. This could be a confounding factor in schools for teachers, but even more

so for students. "Traditional" forms of teaching can be found in most every school district. With regard to this author's examination, these traditional practices allow rural students opportunities to disengage from the teaching setting with little hope of finding true meaning in classroom learning or in school all together.

Maehr et al (1992) indicated the need for harnessing the knowledge teachers possess. Likewise, students bring with them a wealth of knowledge from their experiences in and out of the classroom. All too often, students enter the classroom and are viewed as blank slates ready for a teacher to write upon them. Students' knowledge and experiences seem to be devalued if not overlooked all together. Classroom structures offer opportunities for students to engage the curriculum, but often it is these same structures that allow students the opportunity to disengage from the curriculum.

Pintrich and De Groot (1990) examine self-regulated learning in relation to motivation in their study. Self-regulated learning involves:

- o One's ability to plan and organize for his or her learning, monitoring learning, and modifying learning when needed

- o One's ability to manage and modify their efforts in the classroom
- o Strategies that are utilized to learn, recall, and comprehend information.

They found that self-regulation was the best predictor of academic performance of all the outcome measures (although they did indicate that comprehension monitoring, goal setting, planning, effort management, and persistence are all important). Pintrich and De Groot also found that student involvement in self-regulated learning is closely related to students' efficacy beliefs about their abilities to perform tasks in class that the student perceives as interesting and worthwhile to learn.

deCharms & Muir (1978) examined social approaches as they apply to motivation in education. Social motivation considers:

- o One's actions, both deliberate and unintended
- o External and internal influences
- o Reasons and for behaviors, as well as one's intentions for his or her actions.

They indicate that motivation is not just a function of perceived ability of success in future tasks and goals. Most important is the issue of learned helplessness: the

lack of control of events. Some students seem to disengage when they perceive that they have no control over a situation or outcome.

Self-handicapping strategies are those strategies that keep one from succeeding at a task or in an endeavor. Self-handicapping strategies include: wasting time, procrastinating, failure to study or complete work, and failure to turn-in assignments (Midgley, Arunkmar, & Urdan, 1996). They indicated a possible relationship between feelings of self-worth and the use of self-handicapping strategies. Through studies conducted in schools, indications of an association between feelings of low self-esteem and the use of self-handicapping strategies are evident. They indicate that self-deprecation might play a role.

Access to opportunity can play an important role in students' perceptions of future success. The perception of limited opportunities beyond school leads to low effort, commitment, and performance academically. This is evident in students who place a high value in their education. Students who place a more negative value on their education tend to perform less well academically. Students who are likely to perform well in school are more likely to place

blame on factors outside themselves, rather than their lack of ability.

Schunk (1991) examines self-efficacy in relation to academic motivation. Self-efficacy is defined as one's perception of his or her own ability. The self-efficacy theory indicates that individuals who have a low sense of self-efficacy tend to avoid difficult tasks, while those who have a higher sense of self-efficacy are drawn to more difficult tasks and to completing them. While Schunk indicates that self-efficacy is a poor predictor of persistence, the use of goal-setting strategies with specific tasks increases the likelihood that the tasks will be complete. Collins (as cited in Schunk) indicates that self-efficacy can be used to predict motivation and achievement across student ability levels.

Ames and Archer (1988) discuss student achievement goal strategies in the classroom and academic motivation. Achievement goal orientation examines one's ability to perform a specific task, while a mastery goal orientation focuses on learning and strategies that help one to learn. They found that a mastery goal orientation might foster a way of thinking necessary to sustain students' involvement

in learning. Likewise, it can increase the likelihood that student will pursue tasks that foster continued learning.

Students' self-perceptions have an effect in such situations, especially with regard to achievement goal orientation. If a student already has a negative view of his or her abilities (and is involved in self-deprecating), using an achievement goal orientation would exacerbate the problem.

Similarly, Anderman and Anderman (1999) examined social predictors as they applied to students' change in goal orientations between fifth and sixth grades. Using longitudinal data, they found that personal task goals declined in the transition from fifth to sixth grade. They indicated that students who are focused on reputations and peer social relationships look to peers for affirmation of their own academic achievement and success. Anderman and Anderman indicate the importance of student social motivation and the use of classroom instructional practices that are developmentally appropriate for students.

Rohrkemper and Corno (1988) indicate that increasing demands placed on teachers because of standardized testing and accountability models have changed classroom environments, making them less supportive and applying more

pressure to students in the classroom. Students need to acquire adaptive learning strategies, which allow students to cope with the stress they experience in the classrooms and modify they stress they feel. Students in a classroom where stress is placed on them to perform who learn adaptive strategies are more likely to perform better academically than students who have not learned to cope and adapt to those stresses in the classroom. They also indicate that a learner's negative view of him or herself can negatively affect strategic thinking development in some students.

Motivational Research Summary

In the current environment of testing, competition and stress placed on students to perform well can have a negative impact on student performance. What takes place in the classroom has an effect on student performance. Students need to be engaged and find meaning from classroom instructions. The degree to which students can plan, organize, perform, and modify their learning can be a strong indication of future success academically. Students who learn helplessness through self-handicapping strategies can be the cause of student disengagement in school. Students' perceptions of their ability to perform and be

successful in school are important components to student success.

In the context of aspirations, research on student motivation provides the background needed to understand why some students achieve and others do not. Motivation can vary because of many factors, which can help explain why students of similar intelligence and ability in the same community and economic settings are motivated to achieve differently. Motivation helps us better understand why one academically able student pursues a college degree, while his or her schoolmate pursues a full time job after high school.

Postsecondary Aspirations Research

Factors that influence students' postsecondary aspiration vary as much as each school setting. Researchers have studied and examined the issue in a variety of settings, yielding a variety of recommendations.

Schneider and Stevenson (1999) utilized the longitudinal study, *A Profile of the American Eighth Grader* for their book *The Ambitious Generation: American's Teenagers, Motivated but Directionless*. Results from this study were compared to results from similar studies conducted in the 1970's and 1980's. Their study included

intensive interviews of several high school students preparing to graduate. These interviews provide a rich source of information to use in their analyses.

Among their discussion in chapter nine entitled "The Ambition Paradox", they speak of the incongruence of career goals and plans to attain those goals. Statistics indicate that the large number of students who attend a two-year college with the intent of transferring to a four-year college have a low probability of actually transferring to a four-year college. Thus, the paradox - students with high ambitions choose a path that will not see them to their original goal.

Schneider and Stevenson discuss the need for parent guidance in choosing career paths. The reasons they cite for students not attending a four-year college include:

- 1) Unrealistic expectations and sketchy knowledge of the nature of college life.
- 2) Students not equipped for the rigors of college work (primarily math and English).
- 3) Cost for the family - lack of financial support.

They recommend more guidance from parents to help students make informed decisions, a knowledge of how to align education plans with career path requirements, and

experience in work programs that better inform students about school and careers.

Conroy (1997) examined the effect of gender enrollment in vocational programs in teens' occupational and educational aspirations. The study included the following variables: student identification of ideal jobs and reasons for choices, educational goals and aspirations, demographic information, a self-esteem inventory (by Rosenberg, 1965), family communications patterns inventory, and an assessment of workplace skills. She found no significant interaction between gender and programs, indicating that many students want professional jobs, but a significant number were on a vocational track that would make it difficult or near impossible for students to reach that goal. She indicated that students have inadequate information to make informed decisions about postsecondary education and occupation, and notes a need for students to have more decision-making power in their career choices, which entails more guidance and better understanding of the working world.

In "Predictors of Occupational Choice Among Rural Youth: Implications for Career and Development Programming", Conroy (1997) utilizes the same data as in

the earlier study. She holds that students have inadequate information to make informed decisions about education, jobs, salary, and the job market. She cites the misalignment of occupation and educational aspirations as one of the root problems.

Conroy indicates that students aspire to jobs that require a four-year college education, but because of the misalignment of educational goals and career aspirations there is little chance that students will reach those career aspirations. This supports the idea that there is a greater need for parent and school support in aligning educational goals and career aspirations such that there is congruence, thus helping provide students with the proper information to attend college and fulfill their career aspirations.

Dropouts From School: Issues, Dilemmas, and Solutions (Weis, Farrar, & Petrie, 1989) provides an interesting look at rural education. The editors indicate that high-stakes testing and restructuring that has come about because of budgetary issues have had negative effects on small rural schools. Of particular interest is rural parents' perception that postsecondary education offers students a means for out-migration from the community. Some rural

parents may perceive postsecondary education as a threat because college education can provide students with a means for leaving home, offering them the opportunity to permanently relocate to another geographic location. Although this text is dated, the patterns discussed in the book are still evident today.

Kampitis (1996) examined rural youth in New England. The study indicates that in proportion, fewer rural students plan to pursue a postsecondary education as opposed to their urban and suburban peers. Likewise, rural youth have lower postsecondary aspirations than urban and suburban students. Low self-esteem levels are a problem for rural high school seniors who are struggling academically. The high school dropout rate in this rural area is more than 50%. It is indicated that the poverty levels in the rural areas of New England exceed that of urban areas.

Similarly, Lawrence (1998) examined the influences of culture on aspiration in rural Maine. She describes the culture of rural Maine as one where hard work, a sense of independence, ties to family and community, tolerance, and pragmatism are common and desirable attributes. She also indicates that the culture is fatalistic, with people

seeing themselves as victims. Citizens feel like second-class citizens when compared to educated individuals who migrate into the area. The rural culture views a high school diploma as a sufficient education for the workforce. There is a fear of student out-migration to pursue postsecondary education.

Lawrence interviewed subjects of varying ages. She indicated that through her investigation she discovered that the gap between students' academic success and the rate at which they pursued postsecondary educational plans was as much of an educational issue as a sociological issue. Students' environment, all that influenced them - past and present - had an influence on their educational plans. Lawrence uses a concept called, "working memory." Lawrence explains that one's memories, as well as the collective memories of the entire community, can project one's future and guides the actions one takes. Observers must study what is taking place from the perspective of the history and culture of the community. Students are a product of and influenced by schools. The culture of a school and community can be as influential, if not more so, on students as their aspirations.

In their study of high school teens in Alberta, Canada, Powlette and Young (1996) examined groups and individuals who exert influence on students. They indicated that parents have the greatest impact in students' career aspirations and educational goals.

Through their investigation they found that knowledge of career pathways are positively related to career choice. They indicated a need for more parental and school guidance in providing adequate information to students. Interestingly, teachers were rated low as to their effect on students' career decisions, with school administrators having a negligible effect.

Funk and Bailey (1999) address the issues of rural education and school size as it relates to student graduation rates and postsecondary school enrollment. The authors indicate that smaller schools yield higher graduation and college enrollment rates. The indication is that there is greater community support than in larger schools. Similarly, there is less student anonymity in a smaller school, increasing the chance of student success beyond high school. In smaller communities and smaller schools there seems to be more dialogue between the school and the home. The authors advocate continued support of

smaller rural schools as a means to better educate students.

Rojewski (1997) sought to gain insight from data from NELS: 88-94 (National Educational Longitudinal Study) in order to examine socioeconomic factors, work experience, and career aspirations. Rojewski examined the interaction of variables including parental income, education level, and occupation on student aspiration and attainment. He found that low socioeconomic status had a significant impact on students' employment outcome. Students in vocational tracks reported the lowest educational aspirations of all students.

Reagor & Rhem (1988) examined the work perspectives of parents from the Appalachian Mountains from three different educational levels (non-high school graduates, high school graduates, and college/trade school graduates) and how these three groups perceive their roles in helping their children choose a career path.

Information was gathered through in-depth interviews of 34 parents of children whose ages ranged from 11 to 17. The parents represented a variety of careers/trades - from factory workers to sheriff's deputy. Parents were asked open-ended survey questions in order to understand parents'

views on work and their roles in guiding their children toward a career choice.

Reagor & Rhem found that parental guidance toward a career path was different for each group. Parents with no high school diploma and those with a diploma, but no college training, focused on work as being something hard that had to be done in order to receive money (with little discussion of enjoyment of work). The group with some college education focused on work as a career - the enjoyment of the work and its meaning to the individual. Both groups wanted their children to find a job/vocation that they liked and one where they could derive some purpose or meaning, even though parent expectations for their children's careers varied between the groups.

The authors indicated that parents' views and perspectives play an important role in their children's formation of career aspirations. They further indicated a need for schools to recognize the diversity of home situations and find ways to educate parents in ways to better guide their children toward the career path of their choice.

Rojewski, Wicklein, and Schell (1995) examined the impact of gender and academic-risk behavior on the career

maturity and competence of rural adolescence. Career maturity describes an individual's ability to deal with vocational development tasks such as investigating, choosing, and implementing career choices that one might encounter in the process of choosing a career. The authors cite research that discusses such topics as:

- 1) Rural students' lack of access to work-related models,
- 2) Lack of economic vitality and few high paying, high-skill oriented job in rural settings, and
- 3) The role of moving from the rural setting to a more urban/metropolitan setting to attend college.

Among their results was the indication of depressed career maturity patterns for students at all levels in comparison to their urban counterparts. Although many students indicated knowing/planning for their career development, the data indicate that the rural students seemed to have difficulty knowing exactly what to do and in taking responsibility for their choices.

Meehan, Cowley, Chadwick, and Whittaker (2001) indicate that while parents play an important role in their child's academic progress, some parents were accepting of the status quo, in reference to their child's education.

Many students seemed confident with their academic ability. Some students were quick to ask for help when they did not understand academic tasks. The main reason they cited not doing well in school was because of a lack of understanding of the topics or the assignments given.

Students understood the benefit of postsecondary education, with many feeling that they had the ability to attend college. One-fourth of the students indicated having limited awareness of colleges, while the remaining three-fourths indicated they were familiar with four-year colleges. Three-fourths of the students in the survey agreed that more education is needed beyond high school. Students who lived in areas where there was little rigor in the school curriculum, limited access to computer technology, and had little parental support for pursuing college plans had a low rate of attending college.

"Toward Resiliency: At-Risk Students Who Make It to College" (Horn & Chen, 1998) examined students who were at risk for dropping out of school. The criteria for student selection included: low socioeconomic status, single-parent home, school grades of C or lower, school retention, relocation to new school beyond the normal progression to

middle school and high school, and having a sibling who dropped out of school.

The report indicated that parents and peers are the most influential people on students' postsecondary plans. Parents' educational expectations are very important. Students whose friends attended postsecondary school were more likely to attend themselves. Participating in college preparation activities had a strong positive effect on students' postsecondary plans.

McCormick (1997) indicated that aspirations may be more a trait than a choice. Students' educational activities and experiences have an impact on their educational attainment. Therefore, students tend to adapt their educational expectations/aspirations to the postsecondary activities in which they engage. McCormick found that students who enroll at the community college with the aim of seeking a four-year degree are less likely to attain a four-year college degree than students who begin their education at a four-year college.

Postsecondary Aspirations Research Summary

There are clear indications that gaps exist between the aspiration levels of rural youth in comparison to their urban and suburban counterparts. The value placed on

education is quite different depending where one lives, parents' educational level, and one's degree of experience and exposure to educational programs. While this is not meant to stereotype rural students, the rural school system's low postsecondary attendance rate supports this. There are many factors that can influence students' postsecondary aspirations. Many are worth considering when examining rural students and their postsecondary educational attendance.

Conclusions from All the Research

There are a variety of questions as to why many of our academically-capable students do not pursue a postsecondary education. Examining the convergence of the study of music and aesthetics, motivation, and career and postsecondary aspirations is a new endeavor. The vast amount of data regarding them individually is impressive, yet they have little in common.

Through this study, I examined connections between the individual bodies of research. It is my conjecture that participation in choral music education in high school has the potential to positively affect one's postsecondary aspirations. Specifically, the interaction of the aesthetic experience, though not easily measured or even

described, is an important contributing factor. It has been my personal experience that participation in the choral music in high school, and the aesthetic experience therein, were critical to my own decision to pursue a postsecondary education. It is my desire to know if others from this same rural location who participate in high school choral music have had similar experiences.

Research Questions

The research that has been presented offers a framework for my research questions: Why are so few high school students in the rural area under consideration attending college and what are the influences of aesthetic experiences through choral music on students' perspectives on postsecondary possibilities? These questions are important to me because they were part of my own experience growing up in this rural environment. Now, as an educator in the same area, I see the pattern continuing. I need to know if there are factors and/or mechanisms that are already in place that have positive effects on student's aspirations. From the research it is obvious that individually, each of the areas area well researched. There is not current study that encompasses the three together or asks the research questions I pose. Therefore,

I want to engage in a study that is both meaningful to me and explores areas that have been given little or no attention.

My Personal Account: An Autobiography

I grew up in a rural area where most people were middle class and everyone knew each other. There was little talk of going to college while we were in grammar school. Because few parents attended college, there was little discussion at home either.

Mine was a musical family. Most were self-taught and could not read music. Still, there was the understanding that music was a worthy and desirable activity in both sacred and secular settings.

At most family gatherings there were a variety of instruments being played with many musical genres represented. From piano to guitar, banjo to violin, folk, bluegrass, country, blues, and gospel music could be heard. Likewise, there were many gifted singers in the family. Most were amateur and untrained musicians, but all were quite talented. I did not participate often with the family. I enjoyed listening but did not have the same musical talent as the rest of the family. The types of music they enjoyed were not what I enjoyed.

My grandmother was a trained singer and loved "classical" music as well. She amassed a record collection of classically trained singers and instrumentalists over the years. We enjoyed many hours of listening to her collection when I was young.

There was little arts instruction in grammar school. It was not until the sixth grade that I had my first music class taught by a certified music teacher. Although classes were held just once a week for 30 minutes, it was a welcome diversion to the rest of the academic day.

At the end of my eighth grade year, the guidance counselor began meeting with the class in preparation for high school registration. For the first time in my memory, someone at school was discussing plans after high school. I had no real idea what I wanted to do when I was older. My parents had high expectations for me academically, but I was never been pressured to pursue a particular line of work or to plan for college. I hoped that high school would help me make some decisions.

The high school experience in itself was a drastic change from what I had been accustomed to in grammar school. For the first time, I was enrolled in classes with students in different grade levels and had the opportunity

to choose the classes. The freedom and independence I experienced was new. I had been lead by a teacher from class to class until that point. High schools offered a variety of classes that had never been offered before. Many classes were required, but there were elective choices - something I never had before. I enrolled in a choral music class on the recommendation of the music teacher.

Chorus class was my favorite. I did well in the rest of my classes, but began to develop a true love for music and singing. Performing, traveling, and rehearsing were motivating to me. I enjoyed the interaction and aesthetic nature of being a musician - without knowing very much about aesthetics. There were very few times when I remember feeling as "wide-awake" as when I sang. Singing offered me more than just opportunities to perform and travel. I was beginning to understand that there was more to music than notes on a page that were sung or played. It was a form of communication that allowed me to speak with more than words. I was becoming aware, "more awake" to who I was. Music for me was a form of enlightenment and self-understanding. It was during this time in high school that I was beginning to realize my potential.

Not all of my friends from grammar school had the same love for music I had. Some took no arts classes - some who were very bright students. I sometimes wondered why they did not want to experience what I was experiencing. I imagined their lives to be dull without the study and pursuit of musical performance. At the end high school, I was one of less than half the class of 200 who had made plans to attend college. My music experience had been one of the most influential factors in my choice to continue my education.

So powerful was music's influence in my life that I decided to become a student of music and eventually a music teacher. I wanted to teach students the great joy I received from music.

After finishing my undergraduate degree, I taught choral and general music for two years and realized that I needed to know more about music and teaching. I enrolled in a graduate program in music education. The coursework was primarily academic with less of an artistic emphasis than what I imagined, but provided me with more knowledge about music and how to teach it.

It was after I finished graduate school and moved back to the rural setting where I grew up that I began to

question why many of the brightest students I had known in grammar school made the decision not to attend college - many of whom were more academically able than I. I was living among these people who had the ability to do more, but had not achieved it. I began to wonder why this was the case. Why was I so different from them, someone with less intellectual ability? I wanted to know why I was motivated to attend college and other able students were not. Why was I motivated to achieve and others were content to follow the same paths as their parents, find a job, marry, and have children.

When I became a school administrator in the rural setting where I grew up, I began to see the same trend continuing with students some twenty years later. The only problem was that the jobs that were available for their parents were not there for them. I was still disturbed by the same question, why were so many able academically able students not attending college? It was after a conversation with the high school supervisor that I learned that students in our system who enrolled in arts classes had a higher propensity of college attendance than those who did not enroll in arts classes. I realized that this was similar to my experience. As I thought about the

situation, I decided that I needed to have these questions answered. I needed to know what I could do to help these students - who were so much like me.

In the Next Chapter

Chapter III will discuss the methodology and procedures I used to plan the study. I will explain why I chose a qualitative study design, as well as how an interview protocol would enhance the research. I will conclude the chapter with the questions I will ask the students I interview, as well as the conditions and setting for the interviews.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

As I planned my study, the method of how the data were collected became an area of focus. Having studied statistics and spent time with large databases such as NELS: 1989, I was interested in the types of feedback that those data would give me. There are many ways to examine numerical data, not to mention the myriad different ways they can be interpreted.

Quantitative research involves collection of data "that can be handled numerically" (Vogt, 1999, p. 230). Data can be counted, measured, and categorized. It is used to determine if a relationship exists between variables (Stake, 1999). The researcher collects data and manipulates variables from a sample in an effort to find numerical relationships and generalize findings to the population. In contrast to qualitative research methods, quantitative studies are conducted in a framework where there is no relationship between the researcher and the

subjects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). After data are collected, statistical analysis programs can analyze data for interactions such as correlation, variance, and regression (to name a few). Researchers can examine the output data to assess the significance of findings and the presence of patterns in the data (Howell, 1999). Such a methodology is chosen when a researcher gathers data, sometimes on a large scale, and attempt to find relationships between variables. Once the researcher rejects the null hypothesis (the results are not random or happen because of chance), then generalizes the findings to a larger population from whom the sample was taken (Howell, 1999).

For me, the strongest disadvantage of incorporating a quantitative methodology is the loss of information that takes place. Talking with someone, listening to his or her story, and asking questions to gain a better understanding of his or her story is compelling. Converting participant responses to numeric values, aggregating them, and analyzing obscures the data gathered from the individual. This form of data gathering and analysis does not allow for the inclusion of questions that address: why something is taking place, what impact it has on a particular

individual, and what significance does that individual's story have to the research. Data-gathering methods such as surveys and questionnaires offer multiple-choice responses, but no means for participant feedback. Questions that address the reason for a subject's responses cannot be asked. Subjects' identities and their particular responses are usually not linked. This limits the depth of the responses that are reported.

For this study I wanted to know more about the stories and viewpoints of specific individuals with regard to a very specific singularity, as opposed to having a great breadth of information with less depth that can be generalized to a larger population.

Qualitative data are used to tell a story. The interpretation of those stories with a holistic view of the data gathered is most meaningful to the qualitative researcher (Stake, 1995). Those who use qualitative data are concerned with why a phenomenon is taking place, how it has influenced those in the study, and the researcher's perception of the phenomenon. The subject's story is the research. Personal accounts of what has taken place are at the heart of qualitative inquiry.

Case study, multiple interview, ethnography, historical study, and biography are but a few examples of how studies can be designed. As with quantitative research, the specific type of qualitative study that is undertaken is critical for the scope of the research and the perspective from which the researcher is writing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). A researcher wishing to make comparisons of several individuals' perspectives might choose a multiple-interview study strategy to examine those differences. Autobiography might be employed if a researcher wanted to make his or her personal experiences part of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1984). This can serve as a point of triangulation and to offer readers a better understanding of the researcher's perspective of the issues under observation (Thurmond, 2001). The subjectivity of the researcher is an important component of the research process. The research does not take place in a vacuum. In all research, the perspective of the researcher can be found, whether overt or covert.

The qualitative method examines the story being told, as well as the teller of the story and his or her background and experience in the particular situations in

order to gain a better understanding of the events or situations being examined (Stake, 1995).

Multiple Interview Research

Because there are a variety of different qualitative mythologies to choose from, each with a distinctive way of reporting and collecting data, I examined how methods fit with the research questions I had.

After examining several options, I chose to employ a multiple-interview approach to data collection and analysis. Multi-interview research involves the examination of several interviews, and subsequent comparison of subjects' feedback. A researcher examines the similarities between responses in each interview to find common themes and connections (Yin, 1984). Interviews are used to gain knowledge of individual, group, institution, or event (Denzin, 1997). Interview studies are individual, descriptive, and require a certain degree of inference-making on the part of the researcher in order to create new knowledge and insight. The end products are data rich with descriptive perspectives. These data provide detailed accounts of the situation being observed. Multiple interview research is well suited for the variety of responses that can be given in interviews. As the

interviewer, I can ask questions and the subject can elaborate on their answers. Interviews are means of "gathering and analyzing data about an individual example as a way of studying a broader phenomenon" (Vogt, 1999, p. 34). These can be used to obtain the perspective of participants in a descriptive fashion (Stake, 1995).

Study Design

This study employed multiple interviews to gather data from study participants. In examining postsecondary aspirations in the rural context, especially in the choral music classroom, a qualitative study offers the most benefit. Because I want to examine what is taking place in this particular rural setting and have little interest in generalizing these findings to a larger population, a qualitative data method seems most appropriate. This allowed open-ended questions and the opportunity to probe participant responses.

The study employed methodological triangulation by including a personal autobiography, data from graduating senior exit surveys, and high school graduation rates with indications of graduates' future plans. Methodological triangulation strengthens the study by examining multiple perspectives and points of view. The use of multiple

perspectives provide strength and validity to findings gleaned from study data (Thurmond, 2001).

Triangulation involves the use of two or more sources of data, approaches, or perspectives in a single study. The use of triangulation can manifest itself in a variety of ways in a study. Multiple methodologies, theories, data sources, investigators, and data analyses are examples of the forms of triangulations that can be used to strengthen the study. Triangulation offers an alternative to validity in research. It uses the strengths of different methods to provide support for that which the researcher observes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). It provides clarification for what is taking place by presenting different perspectives (Stake, 2000).

The use of an autobiography as a part of my perspective provides the reader with a framework for my interest in the subject and serves as a point of triangulation. An understanding of the perspective of the researcher can be helpful to readers of the study. Likewise, this offers me the opportunity to present my perspective of the subject as the researcher. My experience and biases can be examined, helping to provide a better understanding of my purpose and point of view.

Initiating the Study

I sought permission to begin my study in the Smith County School system from the superintendent of schools. We scheduled a meeting to discuss the focus of the study, how participants would be chosen, the limited risk the study posed to participants, and how the data would be used. After a lengthy discussion of research and our different research philosophies, the superintendent gave me approval to proceed with the study, as well as permission to conduct the study in the school system.

With the approval of the superintendent, I met with the principal of East Smith High School. We discussed the study and the participation of students from the high school. The principal agreed to recommend students who did not participate in choral music classes.

I contacted the East Smith High School choral music teacher regarding recommending students for the study. We discussed the criteria for selecting participants. After examining student background data and considering the focus of the study, students were selected for the study.

The senior class of the high school was comprised of 265 students. A total of 20 students were selected to

participate in the study, five from each of the following groups:

- Student who participated in high school choral music and who had postsecondary aspirations, where the total number of students was 115;
- Students who participated in high school choral music and who had limited postsecondary aspirations, where the total number of students was 50;
- Students who did not participate in high school choral music and who had postsecondary aspirations, where the total number of students was 50;
- Students who did not participate in high school choral music and who had limited postsecondary aspirations, where the total number of students was 50.

High School Seniors (N=265)

	Participated in Choral Music in School	No Participation in Choral Music in School
Postsecondary Aspirations	Sample of 5 students (N=115) who have participated in choral music classes in high school who indicate that their postsecondary education plans include attending a four-year college - 4.3%	Sample of 5 students (N=50) who have not participated in choral music education who indicate that their postsecondary education plans include attending a four-year college - 22.2%
Limited Postsecondary Aspirations	Sample of 5 students (N=50) who have participated in choral music classes in high school who indicate that their postsecondary education plans do not include attending a four-year college - 22.2%	Sample of 5 students (N=50) who have not participated in choral music classes in high school who indicate that their postsecondary education plans do not include attending a four-year college - 22.2%

The participant group consisted of eight white males, eleven white females, and one Latina. Students who were selected for the study do not necessarily represent a sampling of the school population but were selected because they met the study criteria and were likely to provide me with the feedback needed to complete the study. Students and their parents were contacted by phone initially regarding participation in the study. I explained to parents and students who I was and the nature

of my study, as well as what I hope to learn from their participation. In most cases, students had been contacted by the school principal or the choral music teacher regarding the study, and were expecting me to contact them. Once parents agreed to allow students to participate and students agreed, informed consent information was sent home with students (Appendix A). The completed consent forms were returned to me prior to the initial interview.

Interviews were scheduled shortly after consent was given. The initial interview was scheduled during the month of June 2006, with follow up interviews scheduled during July 2006. Each interview was scheduled to last for one hour.

I met with student in the school setting to keep them in the school context. Students were interviewed in a common area where there would be minimal interruptions. The second round of interviews took place in the same location as the initial interview. Student interviews were audio recorded. I asked students to expound upon their responses in an attempt to learn more about their backgrounds and experiences.

Interview Questions

The proceeding questions were the basis the interview sessions:

1. Tell me about your high school experience. What classes have you taken?
2. How did you decide to register for those classes?
3. Do you like the classes you have chosen? Why or why not?
4. Do you feel successful in those classes? Why or why not?
5. Do you feel that the content of the class(es) will be beneficial to you after high school?
6. What school career pathway have you chosen, and how did you make that decision?
7. How do the classes you are taking fit into that pathway?
8. Did someone help you make decisions about your high school classes? If so, who?
9. Were there any classes you wanted to take in high school, but were not able to take?
10. How did your family help you make decisions about your school career pathway?
11. Tell me about your family?

12. Often, students have particular experiences in high school that change their outlook on school. What experiences, such as athletics, artistic, academic, have you had?
13. Did any of these experiences help you make decision about college?
14. Was there anything about the experience that really mattered to you?
15. Was there a particular teacher/coach/administrator/counselor who influenced your educational plans? If so, how did they do so?
16. Talk to me about any arts classes you have taken. Did you enjoy them? Did they motivate you in any way?
17. Where do you want to attend college?
18. Why do you want to attend college?
19. What are your career goals?
20. How much education do you need to reach that goal?
21. Do you intend on staying in this area when you finish college? Why or why not?
22. Do you have any fears or reservations about doing so?
23. Where do you see yourself in ten years? What do you see yourself doing?

24. Will these career goals require more education, beyond a four-year degree?

At the conclusion of the first interview, the follow up interview was scheduled.

After an analysis of the recordings and transcripts from the initial interview, a set of follow up questions were developed for the second interview. Because responses varied from participants based on their experiences and their backgrounds, a variety of questions were posed. In most instances, questions were asked that allowed me to probe more deeply into participants' thinking behind their responses. Questions that were generated from the responses included:

1. Tell me about your participation in sports/music/extracurricular activities.
2. When you are participating in sports/music/extracurricular activities, what does it feel like? What are you thinking when you participate in the activity?
3. When you are playing a sport, what does it feel like to win? What are you thinking when you win?
4. When you are performing (in music), what does it feel like when you are on stage in front of an audience?

5. When you are participating in sports/music/extracurricular activities, do you feel more connected to your fellow participant than you did before your participation?
6. Does it matter who your coach/director/teacher is? Do you need to have a connection/relationship with him or her in order for the experience to be meaningful?
7. Without naming names, who are teachers/coaches who have had a meaningful impact on you during high school?
8. Tell me about your teachers/coaches who have helped you have meaningful experiences in sports/music/extracurricular activities?
9. When you have meaningful experience, what does it feel like? What happens to you physically? What are you thinking?
10. Can you have the same type of experience in other activities (if you are an athlete, can it (does it) happen when you listen to music/watch TV/read a book? Why or why not? How does it/can it manifest itself?
11. Is it important to have those experiences? Why or why not?

12. Do you think everyone has those experiences? Do they need to have those experiences? What do they do for us?
13. Now that you are no longer regularly participating in sports/music/extracurricular activities, will you still seek those aesthetic experiences? How so?
14. Do those aesthetic experiences help us create meaning in our lives? How so?
15. What is an experience without those experiences like? Describe what you think it would consist of or be like.

At the conclusion of the final interview, I informed students how their input and feedback would help me in completing the study and reporting the results.

The stories the participants provided me were compelling. They spoke in great detail about their high school experiences. Many of the details they discuss mirror my own story and experiences. Knowing their stories helps me understand my own, and therein will help me as an educator be able to help other students.

Data Analysis

The data gathered through the interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed to illuminate connections

and themes in participant responses. In the coding process, critical instances were highlighted from the responses that the participants gave. Those statements that were most meaningful were highlighted. I sought to find commonalities and threads between participants' responses. Open coding was employed to categorize and group responses (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Participants' responses were grouped with regard to the sampling plan. Commonalities and connections in responses were sought beyond the categories of the sampling plan.

The collection of data was a process that lasted over one month and involved more than 40 hours of interviews. Participants provided me with the needed feedback to examine the effect of aesthetics experiences on postsecondary aspirations.

Summary

The study design I used helped me do more than simply gather data about the participants. I learned their stories and experiences that have affected their lives. Using multiple interviews allowed me the opportunity to ask my initial questions and formulate specific follow up questions for the second interview. More than having my questions answered, I learned about their stories and

experiences. Learning about their perspectives provided me with the knowledge and learning I need through this study.

In the Next Chapter

With the background of the study established, the following chapter will highlight the results from the study. Each of the participants will be introduced and a summary of the responses provided will be examined. The participants' responses will be examined according to the individual groups they represent. At the conclusion of the chapter, a summary of all of the participants' responses will be presented.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study focuses on the lives and experiences of 20 rural high school students. The interviews I conducted gave me the opportunity to know their stories and learn more about their lives. They spoke of both positive and negative experiences from high school, as well as the path they have chosen for their futures. In the course of this chapter, I will introduce each student and provide a synopsis of the stories they told me.

I reviewed their stories by analyzing the audio recordings of the interviews and reading the transcripts. During the coding process, I highlighted the themes that occurred between the 20 students' responses. Open coding was used to find commonalities and themes among responses.

After coding the students' stories, I began to notice themes among their responses. Although there were many differences in the stories and experiences, there were several interesting commonalities in their experiences and language they used to describe them. At the conclusion of

the discussion of each of the individual groups, I will provide an analysis of the similarities between the responses from each of the groups. Students were assigned pseudonyms to maintain anonymity and ensure confidentiality of their responses.

It is important to note that students will be asked about their aesthetic experiences as part of the interview. Through the interview, I explained to students that the aesthetic experience is one of heightened perception and understanding. Physiologically, it can be characterized in different ways: an increased heart rate, goose bumps on the skin, shallow breathing, a sinking feeling in the stomach. It can produce a feeling of euphoria with a rush of adrenaline. But the experience is more than the sum of its varied parts. It is the experience itself and the understanding it elicits that gives it meaning, a necessary part of the human experience.

Group One: Limited Postsecondary Aspirations and No Choral Music Experience

This group of participants was comprised of students who had limited postsecondary aspirations and had not participated in choral music classes while in high school.

One female and four males comprised the group, all of which are Caucasian.

Jeffrey Fox

Jeffrey Fox is a male student who aspires to be an architect. He participated in cross country, golf, and soccer, and has a younger sibling at home. His parents have associates degrees from local community colleges, and plans to attend the same school. Jeffrey indicated that he enjoyed his high school career. He took a few honors level classes, as well as vocational classes such as drafting and health occupations. Although he is involved in a romantic relationship, he indicated that his postsecondary decision had little to do with that relationship.

In our interviews, Jeffrey spent a great deal of time discussing his involvement in athletics in high school and the effect his experiences had on his high school career. It was the most meaningful part of the time he spent in high school. He was positively affected by his coaches and their attitudes and motivational strategies they used with student athletes. In his athletic experiences, he discussed the importance of team sports and activities. For him, his athletic experiences were heightened because of the group experience. Team sports are synergetic, the

energy of competing is shared between members of a team, and to some extent, to those observing. Developing relationships through team practices and team competition created a bond between Jeffrey and his teammates. Working hard and accomplishing a common goal was a consistent theme in his interview.

When asked about aesthetic experiences, Jeffrey indicated that it was hard to discuss. This was not just because he did not know me well, but because the feelings involved with those experiences were very personal. It is a part of his "sensitive side", and hard to share with others. Jeffrey talked about the difficulty verbalizing the experience because of the inadequacy of words to capture the essence of experience. Most of the experiences he identified manifested themselves from athletic experiences. Jeffrey indicated that he thought it possible to have an aesthetic experience outside of athletics, but could not cite specific examples. There are few people with whom Jeffrey feels comfortable sharing those experiences, among them would be his mother.

Laura Smith

Laura Smith is a female who aspires to be a cosmetologist. She has been playing with hair since she

was five year old. She has participated in a dual enrollment program during her junior and senior years of high school, where she spent part of her day on the high school campus and the balance on the community college campus completing the requirements for the cosmetology degree. Laura will complete the program after an additional year of full time study at the community college. She indicated that she had to convince her parents to let her enroll in program while in high school, but they finally relented and allowed her to enroll. After gaining experience as a cosmetologist, Laura wants to open her own salon.

Her mother earned an associate degree and manages a retail business. Her father has a four-year degree and is a school teacher. Laura has an older sister who has a high school education and lives in the Midwest.

Laura indicated that she never liked school; she liked learning but did not enjoy the structure of a school. She selected the four-year college pathway and enrolled in classes that would prepare her to attend college. During her high school experience, Laura participated in cheerleading, the vocational education club, as well as the health occupations club.

After reflecting on her experience in high school, Laura talked about several negative experiences and interactions she had. She focused on teachers she did not like and how those experiences negatively affected her motivation to do well. Words like unfair, rude, and biased, were striking, as she spoke of particular accounts with two different teachers. It was experiences like those that helped motivate Laura to seek a different career pathway.

In our discussion regarding college, Laura indicated that she thought everyone should attend community college before attending a four-year college. Her opinion is that there is too much freedom in college, and that students need to have a safe experience before being introduced to the college environment. They are not ready for the great responsibility that is placed upon them.

While discussing where she wants to be in the future, she indicated that she needed to be close to home. She needs the connection to her family and to be close to them.

When the discussion turned to aesthetics, Laura made many references to religion and life after death. She indicated that her most meaningful aesthetic experiences were in some way associated with the church and her faith.

Closeness to others in the congregation and to God was a recurring theme in the discussion. Although she had experiences not associated with religion, she admitted that those were most meaningful and memorable.

It is important to note that during the last five years, Laura's mother has been battling ovarian cancer. The day after our initial interview session her mother died. Our second session took place almost a month after the death of her mother and was very emotional for her, and in some way cathartic.

Dennis Silverman

Dennis Silverman is a male who aspires to work in construction management. He enrolled in some college prep as well as vocational classes. His older sister is in graduate school at a university in the state. Both his parents have college degrees and work in professional settings. He indicated that his parents helped guide him in making educational and career decisions, but never pushed him. Dennis's only concern about leaving high school is he fears he will not do well. He is not in a romantic relationship but has friends whose career decisions have been affected by those relationships.

He noted that he had a good experience in high school and liked his teachers. The most meaningful class he took was English IV. It was interactive and included many group projects, very hands-on. It is worth noting that he did not like English before this experience, but learned to enjoy it because of the teacher's desire to make English a real and interactive experience. He felt as though his carpentry and masonry classes prepared him for a career after high school. My vocational teachers were the most helpful in guiding me to make career decisions after high school.

A large portion of our conversation centered on athletics. Dennis participated in soccer, track, baseball, and swimming. Soccer was his favorite sport, stating that the coach made it fun and was motivating. He spoke of a negative experience he had with a coach one time, noting that he quit that sport after that. The primary reason for his view was the in-your-face style of coaching used.

With our discussion of aesthetics, Dennis identified several experiences through athletics. He indicated that the experience for him is born from winning. "When you win it's a good feeling: you get really excited." He noted that he felt similar feelings outside of sports. He

detailed his experience on a church youth retreat that was similar.

Dennis views his aesthetic experiences as important to him and who he is. He could not imagine life without them. When asked what a life without those experiences would be like, he indicated that it would be empty. When asked if he talked to others about his experiences, he said that it was hard to put into words. He thinks that we are afraid to express our feelings in some respects because of a fear of being ridiculed and not knowing how others will react. Dennis noted that he had a close friend with whom he could discuss his feeling.

Kevin Morrison

Kevin Morrison is a male student who has not decided what he would like to do after high school. He will be living with his brother, who attends a state university, in a home his parents own, while attending a local community college in another part of the state. Kevin's parents are administrators in education, both having graduate degrees. In deciding what classes to take and choosing a career pathway, Kevin indicated that his parents were very influential and offered guidance without pushing in any direction.

In a discussion of his favorite class in high school, Kevin talked about US History. He enjoys history, but more so enjoyed the style the teacher used. She was interested in students and wanted to share her love and knowledge of history with her students. When asked which was more meaningful to him, the class or the teacher, he indicated it was both were important for him.

He enjoyed his high school career and was successful. Kevin participated in football for two years. He stopped playing when he had a negative experience with a coach during summer training. He indicated that because he was not consumed with football, he clashed with the coach. Kevin participated in sports as a fan and the leader of the cheering section in the stands, primarily during basketball season.

When our discussion turned toward aesthetics, Kevin had difficulty talking about his experiences. He made several references to cycling, a sport about which he is passionate. The phrase "in the zone" was one that he used many times, and he made the association between that and the aesthetic experience. In his explanation, it is less an experience, but rather a state of being. He noting that finding that place can happen without realizing it. Kevin

indicated that having those experiences or getting to that place is important for him. It is fulfilling for him to work hard to get to that place and an experience that he needs.

I asked why it is difficult to discuss aesthetic experiences. Kevin thought for a while and said, he did not know. It is not something we do not talk about very often; we do not know how. He indicated that he had never thought of talking about the experiences before.

Shawn Hemingway

Shawn Hemingway is a male whose goal is to be a firefighter. In school, he enrolled in classes that would prepare him for a college education, but avoided honors level and AP classes, noting that he was afraid of the amount of work and difficulty. He has an older brother who is attending a state university. As a member of the school's shooting team, he enjoys the outdoors. He is not in a romantic relationship and is open to moving away from home to find a job, as long as he can live in the country. Shawn is a member of the volunteer fire department in his community and has been trained as a first responder. His father has a community college degree and owns a service-

related business. His mother is a central office administrator in the local school system.

As we talked about meaningful class experiences in high school, Shawn talked about his US History teacher. Indicating that he was an avid fan of history, he enjoyed the content of her class as well as her approach to teaching. She made the subject matter interesting and important to him. She was fair and had realistic expectation.

Shawn talked about a negative experience he had with a basketball coach his freshman year. He indicated that his coaching style was rude and condescending. It is a coaching style with which he could not be successful. While on the shooting team, he developed close friendships with his teammates. When the team performed well, it gave us all a good feeling.

When our discussion turned to aesthetic experiences, Shawn made connections with the sensation he feels when he is called to respond to a fire. "I get a rush when I do a fire call. I look forward to the next one - the rush not the fire call." He noted that he got a similar feeling when he heard taps played. This was due in part because he had a friend who was killed in Iraq during a tour of duty

with the US Army. He noted that the feelings are very personal for him and difficult to discuss.

Shawn indicated that he had a friend with whom he discusses personal experiences, but there are few others who make him feel comfortable enough to share those feelings. He talked about the impact the experiences had on his life and the degree of meaning the experiences have given him. He thinks people who have not had aesthetic experiences have not found meaning in their lives yet.

Summary

In examining participants' responses, all reported having positive high school experiences, with the exception of one. At some point during high school, all of the students in the group participated in athletics. Two of them noted having negative experiences with coaches, citing the impact that had on their view of the sport as well as athletics. Conversely, they discussed their positive experiences with teachers. Those who were mentioned most often were the US History and English IV teachers. All of the students expressed concerns about leaving the security of high school and their friends, and wanting to do well. None of the students are involved in romantic relationships.

As our conversation turned to aesthetics, all participants had some level of difficulty verbalizing their experiences. Several indicated that language was inadequate to describe the experiences. All participants talked about the limited opportunities they had discussing their experiences. Clear references were made to athletics, all but one indicating that their connection to aesthetics was through athletics. One participant made references to her faith and religion when she spoke of aesthetics.

Group Two: College Aspiration and No Choral Music Experience

This group of participants was comprised of students with postsecondary plans to attend college and who had not participated in choral music classes while in high school. The group was comprised three Caucasian females, one Latino female, and one Caucasian male.

Kim Hill

Kim Hill is a female student who will be attending a large state university in the fall. She has an older and a younger brother. Her older brother has just completed his four-year college degree at another large state university. Having a brother who has attended college has made it

easier for her and was a motivation for her to go to college. Her mother has a four year degree and her father has a high school education; her parents are divorced. When she talked about her high school experience, she indicated that in this rural setting there is a lack of educational funding. She indicated that this is evident by the outdated facilities and equipment in the schools. It is for this reason that she feels as though she is entering college at a disadvantage compared to her discussion with students coming from other school systems.

During her high school career, Kim took many college prep, honors, AP classes, and was a member of the yearbook staff. It has always been her desire to attend the university where she was accepted. She has expressed a desire to go to law school, but is uncertain what she would like to do as a career.

Kim is excited about the prospect of moving away from home. She indicated that she wants more than small town life and is looking forward to other opportunities.

When we began our discussion of aesthetics, she had difficulty verbalizing her thoughts. She indicated that it was hard to put her thoughts and feelings in to words, especially since these experiences cannot be measured.

Kim thinks we need aesthetic experiences, but they are hard to talk about because they deal with emotions. "When you have an experience you get caught up in it and don't realized it's happening." They are very personal and hard to discuss because it is difficult to know how to initiate a conversation about the experiences. She indicated that she has a friend she could discuss them with, but it would still be difficult because the language is not adequate to do them justice. She noted that aesthetic experiences can happen unexpectedly. We never know when we will reach that next peak, but it is out there.

When asked to elaborate on a life without those experiences, she thought that it would be dull and mundane. There would be little fulfillment and joy.

Kathryn Shaw

Kathryn is a female student who will be attending a small private college in the state that is associated with a Christian denomination. She has an older sister who attended a community college and a younger brother who is in high school. She has aspirations of becoming an occupational therapist. The program she will be entering is a five-year masters program. She indicated that her parents did not pressure her to attend college, nor did

they insist upon a specific school. Her mother has a nursing degree from a community college. Her dad is an engineer with a degree from a large university in the state. At the conclusion of her college education, Kathryn wants to work in a hospital setting. Although she is in a romantic relationship currently, she indicated that it did not have an impact on her educational decisions.

Although she enjoyed her high school experience, Kathryn admitting to being scared to go to high school. She said that her fear was the reason she chose not to participate in many extracurricular activities. She has the expectation that college will be tough, and she is not certain that she is prepared to work as hard as she will need to, academically. Her only regret about her class choices was not taking more honors classes.

Kathryn cited her math teachers as some of the best in her experience, and her guidance counselor as being helpful in making good class choices in high school. Some of the most meaningful experiences for her in high school were her occupational therapy internships in the school system. They provided her with real-life and hands-on opportunities in occupational therapy with children.

As we discussed aesthetics, Kathryn admitted that it was a difficult topic to discuss. She could not identify any specific aesthetic experiences she remembered from her high school experiences, but was able to discuss experiences from church.

One memory she recalled was during her confirmation ceremony in her church. From the experience, she recalled a sensation of feeling closer to God. Kathryn recalled having the same sensation when she heard the national anthem sung. She indicated that having those experiences helps us understand the bigger picture and brings us to a different level of understanding. When I asked her to describe a life without those experiences, she indicated, "I think it's a depressing existence."

Randy Anderson

Randy Anderson is a male student who will be attending a small private college in-state on an athletic scholarship and majoring in computer programming. He has a younger brother in high school. Both of his parents have college degrees and work in public sector jobs. He took college prep classes, as well as a few honors and AP classes. Among the most meaningful experiences were his technology classes, particularly those taught over the information

highway and the Blackboard distance learning interface. When asked what influenced him to study computer programming, he indicated it was the financial compensation someone in that field can receive.

The majority of our conversation focused on Randy's experiences with athletics. He discussed playing football and baseball, as well as the closeness and camaraderie he experienced with his teammates. This was an important part of why he continued to play sports in high school.

Randy indicated that participating in sports, particularly over the summer, provided him opportunities to travel. These are experiences that he would not have gotten otherwise. Spending time getting to know teammates, playing ball with them, and traveling to games helped foster those relationships. Randy indicated, "As I got older I became better friends with my teammates. Making connections with the other guys is very important."

As we discussed the relationship he had developed with his coaches, he admitted to being influenced by the negative comments he heard about his high school coach. Although he had a good relationship with him, he indicated that he knew other players who did not. He was glad that

he and the coach had a good relationship, and indicated that if he had not, he would not have wanted to play.

When the discussion focused on aesthetic experiences, Randy spent time making connections to his athletic experiences and winning. He indicated that he experienced an adrenaline rush when he won a ballgame. For him, there are few experiences that compare to it. He made an association to the feeling of winning and to the experience had when his younger brother was born. Those experiences were important and monumental moments in his life.

Caroline Simpson

Caroline Simpson is a female who will be attending a large state university in the fall on a teaching scholarship. She will study math and wants to teach high school calculus when she graduates. One of the stipulations of her scholarship is that she teach for four years after graduation. She indicated that having a sister who had gone through the college process the year before, made it easier for her and her parents. Although her parents never pressured her, Caroline indicated that she knew she was expected to go to college. Her mom and dad have college degrees, and her mother completed graduate studies in nursing.

She noted that she did not feel as though her high school experience did not prepare her for college very well. It is her opinion that she is better prepared for community college more than college. She expressed frustration about the lack of higher level classes offered at the high school level in the school system, particularly in math. She noted that staff needed more training to teach higher level classes. Caroline did note that she thought she would be fine, but after college orientation felt as though she was not as prepared with the needed classes as other students from around the state.

Caroline enrolled in higher level classes in high school and completed her high school math requirements by the end of her sophomore year. The problem she experienced was there were no other advanced math classes for her to take. Her only option was community college classes, but she did not have a driver's license to commute to the classes. She noted an influential math teacher who inspired her to become a math teacher. He made class engaging and real. She wants to be as good a teacher as he is.

A problem she recalled with a math teacher during high school was meaningful to her. In her opinion, she was not

treated fairly by the teacher and sent to detention as well as to the principal's office. While this experience could have been unmotivating to her, it did not diminish her desire to be a math teacher.

During high school, Caroline played soccer. She noted that it was a very positive experience, particularly because of her coach. It was through sports that she made references to aesthetic experiences. Athletics were the catalyst for the aesthetics for her. She noted those experiences were important to her. They are experiences that give life meaning, making the difference between existing and living. Caroline indicated that she experienced aesthetics in different ways, from listening to music to watching a movie. She expressed that she thought different people experienced them in different ways.

I asked her how a life without those experiences might look. She indicated that those who are lacking those experiences are not participating members in life; they are simply going through the motions. They just go to work, go home, go to bed, and start the process over the next day. It seems a very sad existence.

Marisol Aguilar

Marisol Aguilar is a female of Latin American descent. She took honors and college prep classes, and enjoyed her theatre arts class most of all. She indicated that the automotive tech class she took was very helpful, not wanting to be a helpless female on the side of the road if she had car troubles. Her parents are immigrants to the United States, and she is an only child. She says she is a "little bilingual", indicating that she can speak, understand, and read Spanish, but speaks mainly English. Indicating that she did not "mesh" well within the Latino culture, most of her friends are Caucasian. She will study marine biology and at a university in the South Pacific. When asked what her parents thought of her going to school so far from home, she indicated that at first they were shocked, but are adjusting to the idea of her moving so far away.

As we talked about her high school experience, Marisol expressed some dissatisfaction with a biology teacher during her sophomore year. The teacher made the subject so difficult and dry that she did not want to learn. Biology was so much more interesting than what she learned in the class. Her experience in her advanced biology class was

very different. She was challenged, but motivated. It was a much better experience for her.

Marisol was a cheerleader and played soccer during high school. It was through athletics that she was able to identify with aesthetic experiences. As a cheerleader, stunting was an adrenaline rush for her, "you get pumped up." It is more a mental experience than physical for her. Marisol shares the experiences with the other girls, and indicates that the experiences are hard to explain. They are very hard to put into words. She looks forward to the next experience, indicating you never know where you will find it.

Summary

In examining the responses of each of the participants in this group there were similarities between them and among their responses. All of the students enrolled in the necessary classes to attend college, but only three took honor level or AP classes. Each of them have plans to attend a state university in the fall. Although they indicated that they were looking forward to leaving for school, they were unsure if they were ready to leave home. Participants indicated that in some way they did not feel prepared for school, indicating that the lack of honors

classes and teachers lacking the proper knowledge of the subject were a deficit. Each indicated that they thought they were behind academically from other students from across the state.

As we discussed their college aspirations, participants indicated that there was someone in their lives who influenced them to go to college, and most indicated that it was assumed in their family that they would attend college. All participants indicated having a close connection with a teacher or coach at school, citing that the relationship was positive and had an impact on their lives. One participant indicated having a negative encounter with a coach in high school.

As with group one, the students in this group experienced some difficulty discussing their aesthetic experiences. While they state the importance of their aesthetic experiences through activities such as athletics, they had difficulty articulating their thoughts and expressing the meaning they derived from them.

Group Three: Limited College Aspirations and Experience in Choral Music

This group of participants was comprised of students with no plans to attend college after high school and who

participated in choral music classes during high school. The group was comprised of five Caucasian females.

Karen Gorham

Karen is a female who aspires to be a massage therapist. She will be attending a local community college in the fall to study nursing. Her desire is to work in a field where she can help others. She has an older sister who attended a state university for two years on an athletic scholarship. Her mother earned a community college degree in radiology, and her father has a high school education. In her high school experience, she found her internship working in a medical office one of the most meaningful in her high school career.

During high school, Karen played softball. As part of a state championship team, she spoke of playing as a team and the bond teammates shared while playing. She indicated that playing softball was a meaningful and fulfilling experience. When she described the sensation of winning the final game for the championship, she found it difficult to express the experience in words. She indicated that words could not express the exhilaration of what she felt in that moment.

As Karen spoke of her experiences in choral music, it was apparent that they were very meaningful to her. She had little trouble speaking of her aesthetic experiences, though she admitted that finding the proper words was difficult. She noted that words seemed inadequate to capture the essence of the experience. Karen recalled experiences from her choral music classes and concerts, indicating that singing in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine on a chorus trip to New York City was "amazing".

I asked her to tell me why she thought we had those experiences. She admitted that she did not know, but that they are some of the most important experiences we can have. "We have a need to get to that point." They help us open our minds and see things on a different level. They change us. She did note that the experience can be most meaningful when they are shared, especially with chorus members with whom she sings. She found the experiences easier to discuss with others who shared that experience. Indicating that she had similar experiences as an observer, it was most meaningful as a performer. Karen said the experiences can be "sneaky". They happen at times they are least expected. For her, they do not happen every day, but she looks forward to the next.

Karen went on to talk about the impact and influence her chorus teacher had on her. She attributes her love for music and singing in part to her association with her music teacher. When asked about whether she thought her aesthetic experience was influenced because of her relationship with her teachers, Karen indicated that she thought it was. She noted that those experiences bring people closer together and are very powerful.

Kendra Hines

Kendra Hines is a female who aspires to be a nurse. She is enrolled in the RN program at a local community college for the fall. She earned her CNA and has spent time working in a nursing home, noting that the experience had a strong impact on her decision to pursue nursing as a career. Kendra also spent time caring for her elderly grandmother. She derives a great deal of meaning from helping others, especially patients and their families. Her parents have high school educations, and she has a younger sister.

In high school, she pursued the vocational/technical track with the intention of pursuing the RN certification. She took no honors classes in high school, choosing to focus on health occupations classes instead. Kendra feels

as though her health occupations classes prepared her for a career in the medical field. As she talked about her internship at the children's hospital in a nearby city, she admitted that it was difficult to help sick and dying children, but it was a powerful experience. It made her fall in love with nursing, helping her to finalize her decision to pursue nursing as a career.

Throughout her school career, Kendra played volleyball and softball, but her first love is basketball. She spoke of the adrenaline rush she found playing basketball. "Winning feels good." She indicated that those experiences do not happen every day. You can share feeling with teammates without words.

When asked about having a similar feeling outside of sports, she indicated that had experience through her chorus class. Kendra indicated that the experiences were shared within her chorus, and to some extent with the audience. She indicated that the experiences brought her closer together with others. Finding the proper words was difficult for her, noting that they were not adequate to describe the feelings or experiences. She did admit that the experiences were easier to discuss with those who had shared the experiences.

I asked why we had those experiences. She was unsure, but thought that on some level they were important and necessary experiences. "There are people who probably don't have those experiences. That's sad." A most interesting comment she made was, "they help make our dreams come true." She could not elaborate on that idea, but made allusions to the idea of deriving meaning from her life.

Anna Kline

Anna Kline is a female student who aspires to work with children. Both her parents have two-year degrees from a community college, and she has a younger sister who will be starting high school in the fall. She is enrolled in an early childhood education program at a local community college, and would like to work in a daycare or prekindergarten setting. She had positive experiences during her internships in a local elementary school in first and third grades. She noted that before working in third grade, she had aspiration of becoming a teacher, but found the pressure of standardized tests a negative experience.

High school was a positive experience for her. She participated in cheerleading and chorus. Initially, she

began high school on the four-year college path, but transitioned to the community college transfer pathway. In high school she took a career assessment that helped her decide to choose early childhood as an educational pathway to a career. The greatest fear she has as she leaves high school is that she will lose contact with her friends. Her greatest hope is to make her parents proud of her.

When I asked Anna about the most meaningful class she took during her high school career, she talked about her chorus class and teacher. She enrolled in chorus during high school, noting that it was nice having the same teacher all four years of high school. It helped her build a relationship with the teacher. The chorus teacher engaged her and the class in music, making learning fun. She admitted that the work was hard, but fulfilling. She compared the chorus to a family who became close, especially after sharing experiences traveling and singing.

When I asked her about aesthetic experiences specifically, she had an understanding of what I was asking. Anna spoke about the physical sensations she felt during those experiences when she sang. She acknowledged that she felt a nervous sensation during performances, but that the overall feeling was very positive. She indicated

that she had similar experiences as an audience member as well. The association was made between working hard and the aesthetic experience. Anna said, as a performer, it is a product of dedicated work and attention to her singing that brings about the experience. She also noted that the experiences were unexpected, not happening when they were wanted, simply when they happened. Other positive aesthetic moments she remembered were associated with religious services and singing. Singing in church heightened her religious experiences, making them more meaningful.

Cindy Freeman

Cindy Freeman is a female who is interested in working as a medical radiology tech, although she is not enrolled in an educational program in the fall. She admitted that her mother is disappointed that she is not pursuing her education right out of high school. Cindy is an only child, and her mother has a high school education. Her father has not been a part of her life since she was very young. Although she has had no significant male figure in her life, she notes that her mother's current boyfriend is a good guy. Currently, she is dating an older man who is the manager at a grocery store. She has hopes of marrying

him in the near future. Although she knows her mother will not be pleased to see her married before she goes to school, Cindy indicates she just wants to be happy. Cindy will be working fulltime in the fall to save money for tuition.

As a student, she participated in an internship in a radiology practice. She found the experience helpful and rewarding. It helped her decide that the medical field was where she wanted to work someday. When I asked about her school experiences, she indicated that she never felt challenged. She mentioned that chorus and marching band were the most meaningful experiences she had. Her mother pressured her to take more challenging classes in high school.

When I asked her about her experiences with aesthetics, she seemed to have an understanding about what I was asking, but could not articulate her experiences. She indicated that the experiences were difficult to put into words. She did indicate "I just want to be happy."

Charlotte Holloway

Charlotte Holloway is a female student interested in working with young children or nursing. She has no plans to pursue education in the fall, but will consider starting

in the spring. Citing financial needs, Charlotte does want to pursue her education at some point. She has a desire to stay close to the area where she was raised, and lives at home with her mother and older sister. Her sister attended college for one year, but left to come home. She is working as a manager at a fast food restaurant.

Although she is involved in a romantic relationship, he is moving to a neighboring state to live with family and start working. She indicated that she would be willing to move away from home to live under the right circumstances.

As we talked about meaningful classes Charlotte took in high school, chorus and marching band were among her favorites. Her sister was influential in her deciding to become a part of those groups. Although that was her reason for enrolling in the classes initially, her developing love for music and the relationships she developed with the teachers is what kept her in the classes. She talked about the relationships that developed between her and her teachers, comparing them to family. "They cared about me," which made her experiences in music all the more meaningful. She indicated that all of her friends were in chorus and marching band as well. Being a part of both groups provided her with the opportunity to

travel to different parts of the country and perform in venues she would have never experienced otherwise.

When I began to inquire about her aesthetic experiences, she understood the references I was making and was able to make connections to her own experiences. She indicated that her experiences were a product of hard work and being a successful musician. She enjoyed the feeling of joy those moments brought her. Charlotte felt as though the experiences were heightened because she was part of a group. The synergy she experienced between the other singers and the audiences is beyond words. She noted that she found similar experiences in her day to day life, but that they were elusive and happened unexpectedly. She found those moments in activities as mundane as watching TV: she never knew when the next one would happen. I asked her if she had conversations with others about their experiences. She said she had, with other with whom she performed, but not very often. It is not something that people talk about generally. When I asked why, she thought that they were often times very personal experiences and difficult to discuss. I asked if she could envision an existence without those experiences. She said she would not want to image one - it would be a dull existence.

Summary

There are similarities between the stories of these five participants. Each indicated that their high school experiences were positive. All have aspirations of or experience working in the medical field and spoke of the importance and influence of their high school internships on their postsecondary aspirations.

Differences in their stories include romantic relationship in which they are involved. Two of the participants are involved relationships that they describe as serious. Interestingly, those same two participants have not immediate educational plans after high school.

As our conversation focused on aesthetics, the participants talked about the influence of athletics and their choral music classes. Those who spoke of sports talked about working hard and connecting with team members. They also connected their aesthetic experiences in athletics to their aesthetic experiences in choral music. Participants noted difficulty discussing their experiences as well as finding words and language appropriate to describe their experiences. As in sports, participants described feeling more connected to other chorus and audience members during those experiences. While they

indicated that the experiences manifest themselves because of hard work, the experiences happened unexpectedly. Although the experiences are described as elusive, each of the participants viewed the experiences as necessary for them. Participants noted the affect of the experience while they traveled to New York City to sing in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. One student called the experience, "amazing," while another indicated that without her choral experiences, she would not have had the opportunity to travel.

Almost as important as the experiences themselves is the relationship they have developed with their chorus teacher. Participants indicated that the teacher had a lasting impact on their lives, she cared about them and their lives, and developed a closeness compared to that of family.

This group of students was better able to articulate their aesthetic experiences than the students with limited postsecondary aspirations and no choral music experience. They provided examples of their experiences, and were clear in indicating that the experiences had an effect on them and had a level of appreciation for the experiences.

Through their choral music experiences, participants discussed feeling like part of the teacher's family when they sang. Singing brought the group closer together, sharing more than just music, but rather a bond.

Group Four: College Aspirations and Experience in Choral Music

This group of participants was comprised of students who planned to attend college and who had participated in choral music classes during high school. The group was comprised of three males and two females, all of whom are Caucasian.

Jessica Keaton

Jessica Keaton is a female student who will be attending a large state university to study marketing and business. She took several AP, honors, and community college classes during high school. She participated in many extracurricular activities, including: volleyball, softball, Show Choir, student government, and the marketing club. Jessica indicated that she enjoyed her high school experience, but thought that she did not have some of the advanced level and AP class options that other students in the state had. Her fear is that she will be behind other students when she goes to college and will not do well.

She has a younger sister who is in high school with her. Both her parents have four year degrees from large state universities and own a local business. After college, Jessica would like to work in marketing and is not opposed to relocating to any part of the country. Attending college was never a question for her: it was always assumed that she would go. Her only anxiety about going to college is having to study. She indicated that she never really had to before.

Among her favorite classes in high school was English IV, although she admitted that she never liked English before then. She noted that the teachers made it an engaging, hands-on experience. The teacher incorporated group projects, cooking demonstrations, and acting as a means for helping students learn the subject. Another was her chorus class. She loved her chorus teacher, indicating that she cares about her students. She attended the class with many of her friends, noting that they were like a family.

As a member of the Show Choir, she toured with the group to sing for churches and civic organizations. "Show Choir was a good experience. All of us became real close." As we discussed her aesthetic experiences in music, she

talked about singing with the choir in church and connections to the other singers and with God she felt in those moments. She admitted having difficulty finding the right words to describe the experiences. They were highly personal feelings and very meaningful to her. When I asked her why the experiences were difficult to discuss, she mentioned not having the proper language to describe the emotions. We discussed the connection to the chorus class and her teacher. She thought that her experience in chorus was enhanced because of the relationship with her teacher. She was uncertain if one was more influential than the other, but she indicated that she did not care. Her experience was wonderful and one of the most positive she can remember.

Samantha Stone

Samantha Stone is a female with a younger sister and brother. Her mother gave birth to her while she was in high school. She is close with her mom and step dad, who have high school educations. Her grandmother, a retired principal in the local school system, was very influential in her life and encouraged her to go to college. It was her mother and grandmother who helped her make decisions about college, taking her around the state before her

senior year to visit different schools. Samantha will be attending a small state university a few hours away from her home, citing that she liked the close-knit community feeling she got when visiting the school. The sense of community was important for her as she was choosing a school. She feels as though her high school has prepared her for college, but thinks college classes will be harder than high school classes.

In high school, Samantha took several arts classes. Creative expression is very important to her, and her arts classes were critical to her education. She chose the four-year college pathway. While she did not participate in athletics, she was a member of the chorus, show choir, theater, film society, SADD, and the literary society. She jokingly said, as long as I planned things to do I stayed out of trouble.

When I asked her about a class that was most meaningful to her, she spoke of her chorus classes. "My chorus teacher influenced me a lot. She brought out the best in me." She talked a great deal about the influence of her chorus teacher, indicating that she brought out the best in her students. We discussed the importance of the relationship of a teacher as well as the content of the

subject being taught. Samantha talked about having a balance between content that was interesting as well as a teacher who was willing to invest time and energy into relationships with her students.

As our conversation turned toward aesthetics, Samantha made mention of traveling with the choir to sing in churches. Singing in a church gives her a feeling that there is something bigger than herself. For her, when she sings in church, she is singing for a greater cause. The experience is very uplifting. Samantha spoke of a particular church performance when she saw her mother cry while she was singing. She was moved to tears to see that her music touched her mother. The experiences she talked about feeling were shared with those in the audience on some level. It was something that she could feel. She felt good hearing that her music moved others.

I asked if she had experiences like this outside of church. She indicated that she did, "but those in church are much more powerful." In her opinion, you have to have a passion for whatever you're doing in order to have an aesthetic experience.

I asked her why it was sometimes difficult to talk about our aesthetic experiences. Her response surprised

me; maybe there are not words to explain it because we are not supposed to talk about it. In her opinion, the experience was enough in and of itself. Talking about it would be just that, talking and not experiencing.

Bill Pate

Bill Pate is a male who has aspirations of being a history teacher. He will be attending a large state university in the fall to study education, and will be the first person in his family to go to college. His parents divorced when he was young, and he grew up living with his mother. Both his parents have community college educations. He confessed that the relationships he has with his girlfriend influenced his decision of what school to attend.

In high school, Bill participated in track and chorus. He took some honors classes. He noted that his internship working in a local middle school was a beneficial experience, helping him decide that teaching was the course he needed to follow.

Touring with the choir was a meaningful experience for him. He enjoyed singing in churches and spending time performing with his friends. The experience created a bond among them, bringing them closer together. Bill talked

about his experience singing with the choir in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine while in New York City. He talked about the sensations and feelings from the performance. It was one of the most amazing experiences of his life. Bill thinks there are a variety of ways to achieve the aesthetic experience, through athletics, reading a book, or simply viewing a piece of art.

Tony Clark

Tony is a male who will be attending school at a smaller, historically minority state university on an athletic scholarship. He indicated that he had a good experience in high school, but admits that after his orientation he felt as though he was behind academically, based on conversation he had with other students from around the state. In his opinion, this was due to his living in a small, rural community that invests little money in education. In college he plans on studying landscape architecture. Both his parents have college degrees, and his grandmother just completed her graduate degree at the age of 65. He has two cousins who have just completed their undergraduate degrees, noting that their experiences inspired him to want to go to college. He confessed he got lucky with his athletic scholarship, but

is anxious about being the minority. It will be a new experience for him.

Tony chose the four-year college pathway, but did not take any honors or AP classes. Jokingly he said, "I feel prepared him for college, or at least I'll find out soon if I'm not." He enjoyed vocational classes such as drafting, but did not like math. Tony was complementary of his teachers, noting that he had no negative experiences. He spoke of math and science teachers he admired. The advice his guidance counselor provided him was beneficial in helping him prepare for college, although his mother was most beneficial in helping him choose his classes.

He did not participate in any clubs, but spent the majority of his time playing baseball. He enjoyed the experience and became close to his teammates. We spent time discussing his high school baseball coach. There had been a great deal of controversy with the coach, and there were many mixed feelings about his coaching style. Tony called him a good coach and talked about the positive experience he had playing baseball.

As we discussed his experience in chorus, Tony talked about bonding with the other singers. He felt connected to them. The conversation moved to aesthetic experiences.

Tony understood the experiences and talked about the connectedness he felt with the singers in those moments. He called the experiences personal, saying they were hard to talk about because they are emotional.

Wyatt Holcomb

Wyatt Holcomb is a male who will be studying engineering at a large state university in the fall. He indicated that planning to attend college was easier for him because his sister had gone through the process a few years before. Although he admits to being new to engineering, he is interested in the subject because it combines two of his favorite subjects, math and science. Wyatt is anxious about attending a large university, but feels as though he has been well prepared. He had a positive experience in high school, and took as many honors classes as possible. Wyatt described his orientation as overwhelming. There was too much information, and he had to make decisions about classes for the fall. He always pictured himself going to college. They talked about his reservations about leaving home. Both his parents attended college and divorced when he was in elementary school. Wyatt is involved in a romantic relationship and admitted

that it was in the back of his mind, but he made the decision that was best for him.

One of the most meaningful classes for Wyatt was his English IV class. The teacher "made it hands-on and interactive." He admitted that he never enjoyed English that much before.

During his high school career, Wyatt played soccer and ran cross country. He enjoyed a team sport as well as individual sports. "Playing soccer gives me a natural high. That why I play." In the moment, he forgets how much he hurts. Wyatt made a connection the sensation he gets he sings. This was the segue into our discussion of aesthetics.

As we talked, it was hard for Wyatt to separate his love for music and the meaning he derived from the aesthetic experiences from his connection to and admiration for his teacher. "I love working with her." He thought it was more the teacher than it was the music. In speaking of the connection he felt, Wyatt talked about the power of the experiences transcending words. They were not necessary or adequate in order to understand the experience. When I asked him what he thought an existence without aesthetic experiences would be like, he indicated that the

experiences were necessary for everyone. Without them, life would simply pass you by.

Summary

This group of participants indicated that it assumed they would go to college or had someone who had influenced them to attend college. All of the group members will be attending state universities in the fall, and indicated be excited yet apprehensive about leaving for school. They indicated they hoped they were ready, but a few were unsure.

All of the participants in this group indicated taking the needed classes to attend college, but not all enrolled in AP, honors, or high level classes. Students talked about positive experiences with teachers, citing their English IV class as a positive experience because of the innovativeness of the teacher.

Two of the students talked about their experiences with coaches. One talked about disagreeing with a coaching style. The other, acknowledging the negative comments other students and community members have made about the coach. For one participant, it ended her playing career. The other continued playing and received a college athletic scholarship. All participants in the groups discussed

their participation in a variety of extracurricular activities.

As we began our discussion of aesthetics, several made connections to their experiences in athletics and to their experiences in their chorus classes. Though they had difficulty finding the proper words to describe the experiences, they spoke of the meaning they derived from the experiences. Those that were particularly powerful were those experienced in church. Participants talked about traveling to sing for different church groups and congregations. They talked about a connectedness among group members and to God. Several members of the group indicated their aesthetic experiences were heightened because of their experiences in church.

Participants also discussed the importance of the connection that they developed with their chorus teachers. They indicated feeling like a part of her family because of the experiences in her class and sharing music with her. Although not explicitly communicated, participants made allusions to heightened aesthetic experiences because of the relationship with the teacher.

Conclusions

In examining connections and commonalities among the responses of all participants in this study, themes and reoccurrences became evident. Although their stories and experiences were unique, the similarities reinforced things I heard them say and indicates patterns in their experiences.

All participants in the study participated in extracurricular activities, ranging from athletics to clubs and honor societies. Most indicated having positive high school experiences. A few indicated having negative experiences with a coach or a teacher. Several indicated that they enjoyed their English IV and US History classes, particularly because of innovative teaching practices.

Most of the participants indicated having concerns about leaving high school and leaving their friends. Several students indicated that they did not feel prepared for college, primarily because the lack of upper level and advanced classes available to them. All of the participants had enrolled in the necessary courses to attend college, some enrolled in AP and high level classes, while others did not.

Few of the participants indicated that they were involved in romantic relationships. Notably, two of the participants who are have no immediate plans for their educations after high school. A few others indicated that they were also involved in romantic relationships, but they did not have an impact on their decisions to attend college.

As our conversations focused on aesthetics, most of the participants acknowledged a level of difficulty verbalizing their experiences. This was due to the inadequacy of the language to describe them. A complicating factor was that the experiences were very personal and involved emotions were difficult for most participants to discuss.

Many of the students indicated experiences within athletics that they classified as aesthetic experiences, while others indicated that they were not quite the same. Regardless, participants discussed being moved emotionally by the experiences. They indicated that these experiences brought them closer to their teammates.

Those participants who participated in chorus classes talked about the meaning they derived from the experiences. Like the experiences described by those who had aesthetic

experience through athletics, they indicated that they brought their chorus group closer together. Their experiences were shared among the group and to some degree with the audience. All participants indicated that they derived a great deal of meaning from the experiences. Participants, even some who did not participate in choral music, made connections to religions and faith as they referenced their aesthetic experiences. Participants spoke of understanding on a different level and moving a new level of understanding. As they spoke of their new perspective, participants had difficulty explaining the statements, but it was obvious that their experiences were significant and meaningful.

Participants with a choral music background cited a strong connection to their chorus teacher. Several of the participants indicate that through their singing they became a family, developing a closeness among the group, but also with their teacher. All of the participants who spoke of these experiences indicated that they had positive impacts on their lives. Similarly, some participants noted particular performance experiences that were meaningful to them. In particular, traveling and singing in churches, including a New York City trip that included a performance

at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, were "amazing" experiences. Chorus provided for some the means to travel, which some would not have had otherwise.

In the Final Chapter

The final chapter of this dissertation focuses on findings and conclusions I surmised as I made connections between students' stories and experiences. I will highlight those common threads and talk about why I believe they are important. The research questions I posed will be reexamined and discussed in light of the feedback provided me by the 20 students with whom I spoke. I will conclude the chapter with what I consider limitations of my study, as well as indicate what areas of future study are needed to provide greater knowledge about rural students' postsecondary aspirations and the influences of aesthetics through participation in choral music.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

This study has provided a great deal of insight into the lives of these 20 students. Their stories and experiences offer glimpses into their lives and highlight those issues that are relevant and influential to them in their high school experiences. For me, the data indicate similarities of influences in the experiences between these particular students. This knowledge can provide a better understanding of those factors that influence their postsecondary aspirations. In concluding this study, I will highlight the four themes that I found most striking and interpret the results. I will also indicate why I believe my conjecture about the importance of the themes to be true.

Family Support

Parents are children's first teachers. The desire to please is strong. The bond that children and their parents have cannot be compared to any other relationship. In reviewing the responses the students provided, I noted the consistency with which students talked about the influence

of their parents. This is consistent with the research presented that highlights the importance of parents' influence on their children's postsecondary aspirations. Students tend to choose a career path similar to that of their parents, or to one that they espouse as important. Students indicated the importance of family support as they made educational decisions. Tony Clark indicated, "Mama helped me decide on classes" (to take in high school). "My mom was very influential in my life," indicated Charlotte Holloway. "My mom was most influential in helping me" (in my life), stated Cindy Freeman. Students also sought parental approval, mentioning wanting to make their parents proud. "I want to make my parents proud of me," noted Anna Kline. Cindy Freeman stated, "My mom was disappointed when I didn't go straight into college."

Students also mentioned the influence of other family members on their lives. Samantha Stone stated, "My grandma influenced me to go to college." She went on to talk about the influence her grandmother had on her in all aspects of her life and of her admiration for her. Being the second sibling to attend college, Kendra Hines talked about the help her brother gave her, "My brother was helpful about picking out classes for college."

As the research indicates, parental and family influences are the most important factor in students' postsecondary decision. This is true with the participants in this study. To a certain degree, all of the participants noted the importance of their parents' approval and support in their lives as well as their postsecondary plans.

Students need the approval and guidance of their parents, even if parents lack the postsecondary background to provide a personal account of their own experience.

Connectedness to School

A second theme I noted from students' responses was the need to feel connected to the school and be a part of the school. A big part of that connectedness was involved the relationships students developed with school staff members. Students talked about the importance of how the relationships they developed made them feel connected to the school. The connections were important to the students. Although I did not focus on student connectedness to school in the literature review, it is consistent with my belief that students who have an emotional connection with others in the school, will tend to do well in school. Those connections play an important

role in the lives of students well beyond their high school careers.

Those who participated in athletics spoke of the importance of their relationships with their coach and the positive influences of the experiences. Caroline Simpson indicated, "Soccer was very important to me. It was a great experience and I loved my coach." Likewise, Dennis Silverman stated, "Soccer was my favorite sport. The coach made it fun: he was motivating."

As important as those positive interactions were, students indicated the significance of negative interactions with school staff on their high school experience. "I had a very negative coach one time," stated Dennis Silverman, "I quit that sport: I didn't care for the sport after that experience. He put people down and made fun of them. His style of coaching was not motivating for me." Likewise, Kevin Morrison talked about athletics and classes. "Strength and conditioning class was a waste of time. The teacher singled me out. He was the reason I did not go back to football." For Shawn Hemingway it was a basketball coach. "I had a bad experience with the basketball coach. He didn't think I was working hard in

practice. I don't like being yelled at. I woulda' played basketball if I'd had a different coach."

It was clear from the statements that both positive and negative experiences had lasting effects on these students' outlook and participation in school. The positive experiences provided students feelings of success and connectedness they needed to continue in the activity, making the high school experience a positive one. Making those connections is important in order for students to feel a sense of belonging in the school. The connections they talked about and allude to provide them with an identity in the school. Those connections provide them with purpose in the school, outside of being there to learn and to prepare for further education or the working world. The act of attending school is made more profound by the connections students make during the school experience.

Conversely, students spoke of their negative experiences, primarily with coaches, as unmotivating and deleterious to participating in that sport. Students spoke primarily of coaching styles. They spoke of practices such as public ridicule and no positive feedback as factors that made them feel disconnected from and negatively about the sport and coach. This is not to say that the only negative

experiences were a product of athletics. Students also mentioned teachers that had negative impacts on their high school experiences. Terms such as unfair and rude were used as they discussed those teachers who left negative impressions on students. Students did not speak in terms of resenting the teacher or the experience but indicated the ways in which the experiences negatively affected their motivation in that subject and in school. All of the students who talked about negative experiences discussed how the experiences had deleterious effects on their desire to participate in that sport or class. Their motivation to want to continue suffered because of those experiences.

Participation in Choral Music

All of the students who had participated in choral music in high school talked positively about their experiences. They spoke of their connection with their chorus teacher and the importance of the relationship that had developed.

Jessica Keaton talked about the relationship she had developed with her chorus teacher, stating, "I loved my chorus teacher. She made music real for us." Charlotte Holloway indicated, "I love her. My chorus teacher had a big impact on me." Wyatt Holcomb stated, "Music is

important to me because my relationship with my teacher was good. She made it fun and important. She was always there if we needed her. She is fun to be around and makes learning fun." Anna Kline indicated. "The chorus teacher is fun to be around she engages us, she makes learning fun."

Through participation in choral music, students spoke of their feelings of connectedness and the meaning they derived. "You feel connected to people in those experiences," Tony Clark stated. "The more we have those experiences that closer we become." Charlotte Holloway indicated that, "Having those experiences makes being a part of the group meaningful. When we sing we become part of *her* family." Samantha Stone indicated, "I'm connected with the people I sang with." Wyatt Holcomb compared his experiences in choral music to those in athletics. "I enjoyed team sports and individual sports. You learn to trust people. Nothing is as powerful as singing. We were a family."

It was obvious that through their participation in choral music, students derived a sense of joy and fulfillment. When I asked whether that fulfillment came from the study of music or the personality of the teacher,

student indicated that they were affected by both. It was the teacher who created the environment that allowed students to develop a love for and understanding of music. The conscious decision by the teacher to engage the students through music made it not only enjoyable, but fulfilling for the students.

Connectedness to Peers

Through their different experiences in school, students spoke about the feelings of connectedness and closeness they felt with their peers. It was clear through their statements that creating those bonds was significant as they made connections to school. Randy Anderson stated that through athletics, "Making connections with the other guys is very important. Being a part of a team brings you closer together." Shawn Hemingway indicated, "My teammates try to help me get better. We are like brothers." It is clear through statements like this that participation in athletics facilitates the forging of those important connections between players as well as with their coach.

Students with choral music experience cited examples of traveling and performing as part of a group among the experiences that were most meaningful in connecting them to others. "It (singing) was a bonding experience," stated

Bill Pate. "I am closer with people I sing with." "Going to sing in churches was meaningful," he continued.

"Touring with our chorus brought us closer together."

"It's hard to talk about singing in a church like St. John the Divine in New York. It was incredible." Likewise, Karen Gorham stated, "Singing in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine was an amazing experience." Samantha Stone had a slightly different view of the experience. "When you sing in church you sing for a greater cause. I feel more connected to God when I sing there."

Through both athletics and chorus, students indicated feeling connected to peers. Students who participated in choral music talked about their experiences traveling to perform with their group. They were bonding experiences that created a connectedness between them. Traveling to churches to sing is an experience that is unique to participation in a choral music group. Unlike sports groups that might have the opportunity to travel to different stadiums to play, these choral music students had the opportunity to travel to locations such as New York City and sing in churches such as the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Experiences such as these provided many students who may never have had the opportunity to leave

their rural environment to sing in a great hall. It is experiences like these that provide students socially broadening experiences opportunities.

It is evident that connecting with peers is part of the connection with the school. As I listened to students' feedback and comments, I was impressed by the level of involvement many of them had. Several of the students participated in several extracurricular activities, which increased their level of involvement in the school and their connection to others in the school. Conversely, those with limited involvement talked less about their connection with others in the school. Whether through limited experience or inability to discuss experiences, students who were involved talked more openly about the importance of the connections they had made with others, primarily through extracurricular activities as well as choral music classes.

Aesthetics

All of the students in the study spoke of their perceptions of aesthetic experiences, albeit via different means and levels of detail and understanding. Whether because of a lack of understanding or vocabulary, students without choral music experiences had more difficulty

talking about and describing their experiences than those students who had choral music experience.

In describing the aesthetic experiences in choral music, Wyatt Holcomb indicated that, "the experiences are totally different from sports to singing." "You affect a lot more people when you sing." Kim Hill stated, "I haven't had a feeling like that outside of music, it's a group thing. It brings people closer together." "You can tell when the audience enjoyed it by watching them," stated Wyatt Holcomb. "Everyone needs to experience it." Charlotte Holloway believes that "having those experiences makes being a part of the group meaningful."

It is evident through the feedback from the students, both with choral music experience and without, aesthetic experiences were important to them and to their lives. While students who did not have experiences in choral music talked about their aesthetic experiences in relation to athletics, they were not able to discuss them with the same level of detail as those students with choral music experience. Students without choral music experience noted that they had difficulty talking about their experiences. They lacked a vocabulary to describe their experiences, indicating that they could not find the proper words to

talk about the experiences. Conversely, students with choral music experience had less trouble talking about their aesthetic experiences. They described the experiences through emotions and feelings, in the connections they felt with the other singers, the audience, and their teacher. Whether they were the proper words to describe their feelings, they had the ability to describe and represent those experiences such that I could understand their meaning. They were clear in the profound effect that the experiences had on them and their perceptions, and all choral music students had an appreciation for them. Many of the students expressed a desire to get back to that place, to have another aesthetic experience. They spoke about the need to find those experiences again with a sense of longing, to find that place of joy that could only be fulfilled through singing.

There were definite differences in the stories of students with choral music experiences than those without. I believe this to be due to more limited aesthetic experiences at school compared to those students with choral music experience. Participants with choral music backgrounds indicated a close relationship between their group and their teacher. Comments such as, "she is there

for us," and "we become a part of her family when we sing," were meaningful as I listened to their feedback. Even those students who stated that they were not the "stars" of the chorus, indicated that they felt a strong connection to the teachers. This indicates that the power of the aesthetic experience can be intensified through the interaction of the singers.

Students also spoke of their aesthetic experiences in church. Samantha Stone made references that singing in church brought her closer to God. Bill Pate and Karen Gorham talked about their experiences singing in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine as "amazing." For these students, the aesthetic experiences can be more acutely intense in a worship setting. Students who perform with a touring group have more opportunities to experience the aesthetic experiences. Those experiences were particularly important for them because of the spiritual nature of the setting. Music is a means for communicating with our creator, a direct line to commune with a deity on a level that transcends the spoken word. Regardless of their religious beliefs, students with choral music experience were moved in performances in church because of the music, their connection with each other and their teacher, but

because of the setting and the meaning that music has in that setting.

Conclusions

This study affirmed many of the things that I believed to be true about the effect of music and aesthetic experiences with students. Students with choral music experience had a better understanding of their aesthetic experiences and are more at ease talking about the experiences because of a developed vocabulary that aided in discussion.

Choral music students had broader social experiences because of the opportunities to travel that being a part of a touring singing group provides. While traveling to places like New York City and singing in locations such as the Cathedral of St. John the Divine are powerful and moving experiences, traveling together as a group to sing in a church across town offers its own insights. Students develop social skills that are unique to a church setting. Developing an understanding of denominational differences provides students with the knowledge of how we worship in different ways.

I did not observe a discernable difference in the descriptions of aesthetic experiences between students with

choral music experience and postsecondary college aspirations as compared to students with choral music experience with limited postsecondary aspirations. The factor that I noted that seemed to be more significant was the level of education of the parents in those cases. Many of the students indicated that their parents wanted them to continue their educations, but some seemed to have problems finding the proper directions or knowing how to traverse the process to achieve their end goal. The choral music of those whose parents did not have post-secondary aspirations for them may well have influenced the students to go on, even though they were not expected to.

It was clear through their discussions that students have a need to feel connected to the school, their teachers, and to their peers. Students noted that teachers and coaches had a strong influence on their perception of school, as well as their desires to participate in different classes and activities. Most of the students in this study discussed their participation in a variety of activities in school such as chorus, band, clubs, yearbook, student government, and athletics. It was through activities such as these that students developed the

relationships and connections with their teachers, coaches, and peers that were meaningful to them.

While the positive experiences motivated and fulfilled students, those negative experiences, primary with teachers and coaches, were described as unmotivating and detrimental to their wanting to continue participating in sport or class. Students indicated a need for fairness and justice in their dealings with teachers and coaches in order to have a positive experience in the activity and in high school itself.

The Importance of This Study

This study is important because it provides insights into those issues and factors that are important to these rural students as they make decisions regarding their postsecondary aspirations. We know that there are far fewer students attending college (and even fewer completing college) than we would like. Information such as this helps to provide a framework to answer the question, 'why is this so?' It can help establish a means for addressing what we as educators can do with the information, once we feel confident in our findings.

Because there has been no other research conducted that includes the issues that I chose to examine, it is

important to know and understand factors that influence students' aspirations - especially those we can control. It also provides information about the importance of aesthetics in the lives of students, an issue that has been widely overlooked in discussions about influences on postsecondary aspirations. With the knowledge of how important connections to school and staff are, these data help educators like me know how to make their high school experiences more positive and meaningful.

It is clear from the feedback students provided, the importance of the issues that were examined. Students discussed those issues that were meaningful to them and had affected their decisions and perceptions. Understanding students concerns about issues of justice and fairness with regard to specific individuals offers staff insight into their own practices in their classrooms as well as in the school.

The students provided feedback that was brutally honest. While much of the feedback was constructive, there is a need to examine other issues of concern to them. I was impressed with the honesty and sincerity with which the students spoke. Each of them had a story to tell, and I was glad to hear it.

Study Limitation and the Need for Future Research

As with most research, more questions were generated from this study than are answered. This study is simply an initial step into learning more about the combined issues of postsecondary aspirations, a rural environment, and aesthetic experiences through participation in choral music.

As a follow up to the study, it would be helpful to interview the student participants during their postsecondary experience in order to gather information regarding the completion of their educational plans. With growing focus on the low college graduation rates in our state, further study is needed to examine the rate of attrition with students in the study. Further study is needed to improve our understanding of those factors that influence students complete their postsecondary goals and examine the factors affecting their decisions to dropout of school.

All of the students in the study spoke of the importance of the relationship they had developed with a teacher or a coach during their high school experience. Each indicated that the relationships were significant in their lives and their connection to school. There is a

need for more data regarding the role of teachers, coaches, and mentors on the lives of high school students. It is particularly needed with regard to the postsecondary aspirations of students. The influence of coaching and mentoring by adults on the students' experiences could provide needed information about students' perceptions of and connection to school. It would be helpful for teaching and coaching staff to have an understanding of these mentoring experiences on students' lives.

Further study on a larger scale would help indicate if the feedback from these students is similar to feedback from other students in other geographical regions of the country. A study of this nature with a larger population could be used to make some generalizations to a larger population, if one wanted to determine if these issues are common to the greater population.

With the feedback from participants regarding the connectedness they felt to others as in their choral music class and through the aesthetic experiences, there is a need to have a better understanding of the power of the role of the teacher in the choral music classroom. Since student participants indicated a strong admiration and feelings compared to that of a family member toward their

chorus teacher, a better understanding of the role and influence of a teacher/director to the musicians would provide educators a better understanding of their influence on students.

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APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT

Project Title: Rural Students, Aspirations, and Motivation: Why Don't More Rural Students Make It To College

Project Director: James Sheek

Participant's Name:

DESCRIPTION AND EXPLANATION OF PROCEDURES:

This study will examine factors that motivate students to pursue a college degree. In particular, you will be asked to reflect on those factors from school and home that have influenced your educational and career plans after high school.

You will be interviewed in two separate sessions, which will be scheduled one month apart and will last approximately 60 minutes. The interviews will take place in the school setting. You were selected in consultation with the principal and teachers of the school. You were selected in this manner to examine students who have similar socioeconomic, social, and educational backgrounds.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:

There is a risk that others in the school where the research is taking place may learn your identity. There should be minimal discomfort to you to participating in the study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS:

The study of students' perspectives regarding factors that motivate them to pursue a college degree will be helpful in creating an understanding of their particular stories in the rural context.

COMPENSATION/TREATMENT FOR INJURY: (If the study poses more than minimal risk, the principal investigator(s) must include a statement regarding compensation and/or treatment available for injury and direct participants to contact the Office of

Custodial Parent(s)/Guardian Signature(s)

Date

Custodial Parent(s)/Guardian Signature(s)

Date

APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPLICATION

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

**Instructions for Completing the Application
For the Use of Human Participants in Research**



All research with human participants conducted by students, faculty, or staff at UNCG must be reviewed initially by a member of the University's Institutional Review Board, whether or not requests for outside funding are involved. To initiate this review, the principal investigator must complete this application and submit it to the IRB Departmental Reviewer for his/her college/school/department. The IRB Departmental Reviewer determines the category of review appropriate for the study, reviews the application for completeness and compliance with federal regulations, University policy, and IRB procedures, and forwards it to the Office of Research Compliance. If Full Committee Review is necessary, the University IRB considers the application at a regularly scheduled meeting. Criteria for exempt, expedited, and full committee review are available at:

<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm>

Principal Investigators must submit the **original and two copies** of the IRB application **to the IRB Departmental Reviewer** at least one month prior to the date that data collection is planned. Principal Investigators, and faculty sponsors for student research are advised to keep a copy of the application for their records. **NO DATA CAN BE COLLECTED PRIOR TO RECEIVING AN APPROVAL FORM FROM THE IRB.**

Researchers should use the attached forms to provide information to the Departmental Reviewer about the application. The application is provided in Word format, and researchers should insert their responses to the Application Prompts in the cells provided. Researchers should create additional space for their responses as necessary. Templates for other forms, including Consent Forms, are available on the Office of Research Compliance website:

<http://www.uncg.edu/rsh/orc>

The Office of Research Compliance will inform faculty members regarding the disposition of their applications. Faculty sponsors will be informed of the disposition of applications for students whom they are sponsoring. Students do not receive direct notification of IRB disposition of proposals. Any changes in research protocol that affect human participants must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation, unless the changes are necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the participant. Any unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others must be promptly reported to the Office of Research Compliance.

Recommendations for Facilitating IRB Approval:

1. Attach all materials necessary for your application but submit only those forms that are necessary for your application;
2. Allow for sufficient time for the approval process;
3. Be sure to sign and date your application where required.

Application For the Use of Human Participants in Research

Part I

Date Submitted to Departmental Reviewer: ____/____/____

Project Title: Rural Students, Aspiration, and Motivation: Why Don't More Rural Students Make It to College?

Principal Investigator(s): James Sheek

Email Address(es) of Principal Investigator(s): jamesheek@triad.rr.com, james.sheek@yadkin.k12.nc.us

Phone Number(s) of Principal Investigator(s): (336) 679-8921 home, (336) 679-8921 work, (336) 244-0217 cell

Address(es) of Principal Investigator(s): 3013 Ashton Court, Yadkinville, NC 27055

Relationship to the University (specify): ____ Faculty Student ____ Other

If student, name of faculty sponsor: Dr. Carolyn Riehl

Faculty Sponsor's Campus Address: 242 Curry Building

Faculty Sponsor's email address: cjriehl@uncg.edu, cjriehl@aol.com

School/College: Education and Cultural Foundations Department: Educational Leadership

Funding Agency/Sponsor (if applicable): n/a

Projected data collection dates*: From 1/2/06 To 6/5/06

*The beginning data collection date should be at least one month after review of the IRB application by the departmental reviewer. Data collection cannot begin before IRB approval is received.

Researcher's Signature(s)

Date

Faculty Sponsor's Signature

Date

IRB Initial Reviewer's Signature
Reviewed

Date

IRB Application and Checklist

Please provide responses to the following Application Prompts.

<p style="text-align: center;">Application Prompts <i>The Principal Investigator completes this column.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Check by Faculty Sponsor or Principal Investigator</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Check by IRB Departmental Reviewer</p>
<p>1. At any time, will members of the research team or their immediate family members have financial interest in, receive personal compensation from, or hold a position in an industry sponsoring this study or otherwise have a potential conflict of interest regarding the conduct of this study?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> N/A (no industry sponsors)</p> <p>If YES, the Potential Conflict of Interest in Research must be attached to this application.</p>		
<p>2. As part of this study, will you obtain personally identifiable health information (PHI) from a hospital, health care provider, or other HIPAA-defined Covered Entity?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p>If YES, attach the Application to Use PHI in Research to this application.</p>		
<p>3. Have you attached evidence of training in the protection of human participants in research for all principal investigators?</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>		
<p>4. If the principal investigator is a student, have you attached evidence of training in the protection of human participants in research for the faculty sponsor?</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>		
<p>5. Will persons who are NOT principal investigators have access to research data (e.g., research assistants, transcribers)?</p>		

<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p>If YES, principal investigator(s) must agree to keep Certificates of Confidentiality on file by checking the statement below.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Certificates of Confidentiality will be kept on file with the Principal Investigator's research records.</p>		
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IRB Application and Checklist

**Please provide responses to the following Application Prompts.
Insert additional space for your responses as needed.**

<p align="center">Application Prompts <i>The Principal Investigator completes this column.</i></p>	<p align="center">Check by Faculty Sponsor or Principal Investigator</p>	<p align="center">Check by IRB Departmental Reviewer</p>
<p>6. State the goals for the project clearly and describe the need for human participants' consent.</p> <p>I want to gain feedback from participants regarding their perspectives of those factors that influence them to pursue a college education. The feedback they provide will help me better understand the needs of these students as they prepare for life after high school.</p> <p>Participants in the study will be high school seniors. Half of those interviewed will have plans to attend college and the other half have no plans to attend college. In order to interview subjects, I will need to obtain their consent. Because subjects are under the age of 18, I will need the consent of subjects' parents as well.</p>		
<p>7. How will data be collected? If data collection tools are not well known, attach copies to this application.</p> <p>I will collect data via one-on-one interviews with subjects. A follow-up interview will be incorporated to gather additional information that might be needed. A copy of the interview protocol is attached to this document.</p>		

<p style="text-align: center;">Application Prompts</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Principal Investigator completes this column.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Check by Faculty Sponsor or Principal Investigator</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Check by IRB Departmental Reviewer</p>
<p>8. How will data be recorded? Interviews will be recorded via audio recordings.</p>		
<p>9. How many persons will participate in the study? How did you arrive at that number? Twenty high school seniors will be included in the study. Twenty subjects represents ten percent of the total population of seniors in this rural school. Sampling ten percent of seniors will provide richness to study by including individual perspectives from the different backgrounds represented.</p>		
<p>10. How will participants be selected for the study? Participants will be selected through collaboration with school administration and teachers. With their guidance and recommendation, I will select 20 students for the study. Ten participants will have plans to attend college and ten will have no plans to attend college. Of those ten who have plans to attend college, five will have a choral music education background and the other five will not. Of those who do not have plans to attend college, five will have a choral music background and five will not.</p>		
<p>11. Will you exclude any person from participating in the study on the basis of race, gender, or ethnicity?</p> <p>YES X NO</p>		

<p style="text-align: center;">Application Prompts</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Principal Investigator completes this column.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Check by Faculty Sponsor or Principal Investigator</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Check by IRB Departmental Reviewer</p>
<p>If YES, what is your justification for excluding persons on the basis of race, gender, or ethnicity?</p>		
<p>12. How much time will participating in the study require for participants? Participation in the study should require one hour per interview session.</p>		
<p>13. Is there a relationship between the researcher, participants, and participating institutions/agencies?</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p>If YES, describe the relationship. I am an employee in the school system where I propose to conduct the study and know many of the teachers and administrators. I have no relationship with the students I choose to interview.</p>		
<p>14. Is there any need for deception or less than full disclosure?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p>If YES, describe and justify the deception or need for less than full disclosure.</p>		
<p>15. Will the research be conducted in class?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p>If YES, what will students do if they are not participating?</p>		

<p style="text-align: center;">Application Prompts</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Principal Investigator completes this column.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Check by Faculty Sponsor or Principal Investigator</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Check by IRB Departmental Reviewer</p>
<p>16. Will any agencies be involved with recruitment of participants or data collection?</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p>If YES, attach a copy of a letter of support from each agency.</p>		
<p>17. What are the benefits to individual participants from this research study?</p> <p>Participants will have the opportunity to provide me with feedback regarding their perspectives on factors that have influenced them to pursue a college education. Students will benefit indirectly if the study produces findings that help schools in their efforts to get more students to pursue a college education.</p>		
<p>18. What are the benefits to society from this research study?</p> <p>This study will provide insight into these rural students' perceptions of factors that have influenced their postsecondary aspirations.</p>		
<p>19. What is the level of risk for participants in this study?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NONE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MINIMAL <input type="checkbox"/> MORE THAN MINIMAL</p>		
<p>20. Describe the risks to the participants in this study.</p> <p>There is a risk that the identity of the students might be learned, owing to the small size of the community.</p>		
<p>21. What precautions are being taken to minimize risks to participants?</p>		

<p style="text-align: center;">Application Prompts</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Principal Investigator completes this column.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Check by Faculty Sponsor or Principal Investigator</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Check by IRB Departmental Reviewer</p>
<p>All interviews will be conducted privately. Participants will be assigned pseudonyms in the written study. The name of the local school system will be referenced with a pseudonym.</p>		
<p>22. How will confidentiality for participants be maintained? Participants' identities will be kept confidential by assigning psuedonyms in place of names. Participants will only be referenced by their pesudonyms.</p>		
<p>23. How long will data be kept? Data, audio recordings, and transcripts will be maintained for one year after completion of the dissertation.</p>		
<p>24. What provisions have been made to store data in a secure location? Data, audio recordings, and transcripts will be stored in a secure bank safe deposit box until they are destroyed.</p>		
<p>25. How will data eventually be destroyed? Data, audio recordings, and transcripts will be shredded to ensure they are destroyed.</p>		
<p>26. Will you use materials to recruit participants?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p>If YES, attach copies of all materials to this application.</p>		

Consent Procedures and Forms

Application Prompts	Check by Faculty Sponsor	Check by IRB Reviewer
<p>27. How will consent be obtained from participants? Consent will be obtained through verbal and written permission from participants and parents as well as through an informed consent statement from both.</p>		
<p>28. What procedure will you use to provide a copy of consent documents to participants? I will provide a copy of the informed consent statement to participants in person.</p>		
<p>29. Is a clear explanation of the purpose of the research included on the Consent Form? X Yes No</p>		
<p>30. Is a clear explanation of the procedures to be used included on the Consent Form? X Yes No</p>		
<p>31. Is a description of the benefits of the study to PARTICIPANTS provided on the Consent Form? X Yes No</p>		
<p>32. Is a description of the benefits of the study to SOCIETY provided on the Consent Form? X Yes No</p>		
<p>33. Are the risks of participation described on the Consent Form? <u>X</u> Yes ___ No</p> <p>If the study entails more than minimal risk, the Consent Form must include a statement regarding compensation, availability of treatment, and directions for contacting the Research Compliance Officer.</p>		
<p>34. On the Consent Form, are participants given the opportunity to ask questions about the study? X Yes No</p>		
<p>35. On the Consent Form, are participants given the opportunity to withdraw from the research without penalty?</p>		

Application Prompts	Check by Faculty Sponsor	Check by IRB Reviewer
X Yes No		
36. Is the amount of time required of participants for participation in the study described on the Consent Form? X Yes No		
37. Is a description of how confidentiality will be maintained included on the Consent Form? X Yes No		
38. Is a statement describing how long data will be kept included on the Consent Form? X Yes No		
39. Is a statement describing provisions for storing data in a secure location included on the Consent Form? X Yes No		
40. Is a statement of how data will eventually be destroyed included on the Consent Form? X Yes No		
41. Are the researcher's name and phone number for questions about the study included on the Consent Form? X Yes No		
42. Does the Consent Form include the Research Compliance Officer's name and phone number for questions about the rights of human participants in research? X Yes No		
43. Is a space for the signature of a witness to the oral presentation provided on the Consent Form, when the short form with oral presentation is used? Yes N/A No		
44. Is a script for the oral presentation provided with the application, when the short form with oral presentation is used? Yes N/A No		
45. Is a separate form for the assent of minors provided, if necessary? X Yes No Not Applicable		
46. If research participants are non-English		

Application Prompts	Check by Faculty Sponsor	Check by IRB Reviewer
speakers, have the consent documents been provided in the appropriate language? Yes No X Not Applicable		

INSTRUCTIONS FOR DEVELOPING CONSENT FORMS

DO NOT INCLUDE THESE INSTRUCTIONS WITH YOUR APPLICATION.

1. Consent forms must be written in simple language that is understandable to the participants. A reading level of 4-7th grade is recommended for most populations.
2. Consent forms should NOT be written in the first person (e.g. they should NOT say "I understand the procedures and risks and agree to participate in this study..."). Sections of the consent form may be in the third person (e.g., "Subjects in this study will be interviewed.....") and the actual agreements to participate should be in the second person (e.g., "By signing this consent form, you are agreeing that you understand the procedures and risks..."). (See attached consent form template.)
3. When research involves minors (persons under the age of 18) or those who are not legally competent, informed consent must be obtained from the parent or guardian. Assent must also be obtained from the participant, if s/he is able to understand the research process and/or is able to make a judgment about their willingness to participate.
4. A copy of the consent form must be provided to each participant and a signed copy retained by the principal investigator. EXCEPTION: A letter containing all aspects of informed consent may be used for data collected by mailed survey or with some web-based data collection procedures. Participants may not need to sign a consent form, if they have been fully informed of their rights pertaining to the research study and if returning these data collection tools can be assumed to reflect their informed consent.
5. Informed consent must be acquired in the language of the participant or the household of participants when children or other vulnerable populations are members of the participant pool. Researchers must make provisions for translators and for translation of consent documents into participants' language, including sign language and/or Braille when applicable.
6. Consent may be obtained through **EITHER** the Long Form or the Short Form with Oral Presentation. The Long Form for Informed Consent should be used whenever appropriate. Either format must ensure that participants are apprised of all aspects of informed consent (see list below).

ASPECTS OF INFORMED CONSENT
(required in all studies)

1. Explanation of research purpose and procedures (including participant selection)
2. Benefits of the study to participants AND society
3. Risks of participation in the study (If participating in the study poses more than minimal risk, the Consent Form must include a statement regarding compensation/treatment for injury, and directions to contact the UNCG Office of Research Compliance at (336) 256-1482 about any research-related injuries)
4. The opportunity to ask questions
5. The opportunity to withdraw without penalty
6. The amount of time required of the participants
7. Confidentiality of data and final disposition of data, including provisions for maintaining the security of data and research records
8. Phone number and name for questions on research
9. Phone number and name to ask about the rights of research participants (Eric Allen, Research Compliance Officer, at 336-256-1482)

- A. Long Form: **The long form should be used whenever possible.** The long form must be used when research procedures are complicated or when the researcher will have no direct contact with the participants. Information should be included in the spaces provided on the form. N/A should be inserted for sections not applicable to a specific study. **THE FORM MAY BE REVISED TO FIT THE NEEDS OF THE STUDY, BUT IT MUST INCLUDE ALL ASPECTS OF INFORMED CONSENT.** Some research requires that other information be included in the consent document. Your IRB Departmental Reviewer will inform you, if additional information is needed for your study.
- B. Short Form with Oral Presentation: A short form with an oral presentation may be used when the researcher will have direct contact with the participants. The oral presentation must include the aspects of informed consent. A witness unaffiliated with the study must sign the oral presentation. The witness can be another participant or a family member, but the witness CANNOT be a member of the research team. RESEARCHERS SHOULD USE THE **LONG FORM** IF THEY ARE NOT CONFIDENT THAT A THIRD PARTY WHO IS NOT A MEMBER OF THE RESEARCH TEAM WILL BE AVAILABLE TO WITNESS THE ORAL PRESENTATION.

The Oral Presentation must include:

1. Explanation of research purpose and procedures (including participant selection)
2. Benefits of the study to participants AND society
3. Risks of participation in the study (If participating in

the study poses more than minimal risk, the Consent Form must include a statement regarding compensation/treatment for injury, and directions to contact the UNCG Office of Research Compliance at (336) 256-1482 about any research-related injuries)

4. The opportunity to ask questions
5. The opportunity to withdraw without penalty
6. The amount of time required of the participants
7. Confidentiality of data and final disposition of data, including provisions for maintaining the security of data and research records

The oral presentation does not require the participants' signatures but must include the date on which it was read to participants.

IF AN ORAL PRESENTATION IS PLANNED, THE CONTENT OF THE PRESENTATION MUST BE INCLUDED IN THE APPLICATION AS A SCRIPT ON THE TEMPLATE FORM, WHICH IS ATTACHED.

Templates for consent forms appear on the following pages. **ATTACH ONLY THE FORMS THAT YOU PLAN TO USE.** For special situations in obtaining consent, please see your IRB Departmental Reviewer or call the Office of Research Compliance (336-256-1482).

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions included in the Initial Interview

1. Tell me about your high school experience. What classes have you taken?
2. How did you decide to register for those classes?
3. Do you like the classes you have chosen? Why or why not?
4. Do you feel successful in those classes? Why or why not?
5. Do you feel that the content of the class(es) will be beneficial to you after high school?
6. What school career pathway have you chosen, and how did you make that decision?
7. How do the classes you are taking fit into that pathway?
8. Did someone help you make decisions about your high school classes? If so, who?
9. Were there any classes you wanted to take in high school, but were not able to take?
10. How did your family help you make decisions about your school career pathway?
11. Tell me about your family?
12. Often, students have particular experiences in high school that change their outlook on school. What experiences, such as athletics, artistic, academic, have you had?

13. Did any of these experiences help you make decision about college?
14. Was there anything about the experience that really mattered to you?
15. Was there a particular teacher/coach/administrator/counselor who influenced your educational plans? If so, how did they do so?
16. Talk to me about any arts classes you have taken. Did you enjoy them? Did they motivate you in any way?
17. Where do you want to attend college?
18. Why do you want to attend college?
19. What are your career goals?
20. How much education do you need to reach that goal?
21. Do you intend on staying in this area when you finish college? Why or why not?
22. Do you have any fears or reservations about doing so?
23. Where do you see yourself in ten years? What do you see yourself doing?
24. Will these career goals require more education, beyond a four-year degree?

Interview Questions included in the Second Interview

1. Tell me about your participation in sports/music/extracurricular activities.
2. When you are participating in sports/music/extracurricular activities, what does it feel like? What are you thinking when you participate in the activity?
3. When you are playing a sport, what does it feel like to win? What are you thinking when you win?
4. When you are performing (in music), what does it feel like when you are on stage in front of an audience?
5. When you are participating in sports/music/extracurricular activities, do you feel more connected to your fellow participant than you did before your participation?
6. Does it matter who your coach/director/teacher is? Do you need to have a connection/relationship with him or her in order for the experience to be meaningful?
7. Without naming names, who are teachers/coaches who have had a meaningful impact on you during high school?

8. Tell me about your teachers/coaches who have helped you have meaningful experiences in sports/music/extracurricular activities?
9. When you have meaningful experience, what does it feel like? What happens to you physically? What are you thinking?
10. Can you have the same type of experience in other activities (if you are an athlete, can it (does it) happen when you listen to music/watch TV/read a book? Why or why not? How does it/can it manifest itself?
11. Is it important to have those experiences? Why or why not?
12. Do you think everyone has those experiences? Do they need to have those experiences? What do they do for us?
13. Now that you are no longer regularly participating in sports/music/extracurricular activities, will you still seek those aesthetic experiences? How so?
14. Do those aesthetic experiences help us create meaning in our lives? How so?
15. What is an experience without those experiences like? Describe what you think it would consist of or be like.

APPENDIX D

SMITH COUNTY SCHOOLS SENIOR SURVEY AND GRADUATION REPORT DATA

West High School 2004-2005 Senior Survey

Results

01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09
WHS	Guidance	Careers	Workbased	Math	Science	Social Studies	English	Workplace
	14 NotSat	13 NotSat	13 NotSat	35 NotSat	12 NotSat	14 NotSat	6 NotSat	19 NotSat
	182 Sat	183 Sat	182 Sat	161 Sat	184 Sat	180 Sat	190 Sat	177 Sat
			1 Unanswered			2 unanswered		
%age	93%	94%	93%	82%	94%	93%	97%	90%

East High School 2004-2005 Senior Survey

Results

01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09
EHS	Guidance	Careers	Workbased	Math	Science	Social Studies	English	Workplace
	46 NotSat	34 NotSat	43 NotSat	25 NotSat	19 NotSat	9 NotSat	42 NotSat	35 NotSat
	161 Sat	172 Sat	163 Sat	182 Sat	187 Sat	198 Sat	165 Sat	171 Sat
	1 Unanswered	2 Unanswered	2 Unanswered	1 Unanswered	2 Unanswered	1 Unanswered	1 Unanswered	2 Unanswered
%age Sat	78%	83%	79%	88%	91%	96%	80%	83%

In an effort to stay In touch with the stakeholders Involved in the Smith County School District the attached survey was developed. The questions came from a committee made up of Patricia Jones, Tom Johnson, Linda Blake, and Sam Campbell. The members were selected to represent elementary, secondary and post-secondary education. The Superintendent's Advisory Committee and the Smith County School principals reviewed the questions. Revisions were made based on their input.

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Total of 250 copies of the final survey were distributed to the schools and given to parents and/or volunteers in the schools at the February 25, 2005 conference day or during the weeks of February 25-March 20, 2002. One hundred eighty surveys were returned for a rate of 72%. The expected return rate was 40% based on previous survey distributions.

Two subgroups were identified, graduates of Smith County Schools and Non-graduates of Smith County Schools.

Question	% Graduates <u>not</u> of Smith Co. Schools Agree-Strongly Agree	% Graduates of Smith Co. Schools Agree-Strongly Agree	Difference In Graduates of Smith County and Non-Graduates of Smith County (+ or-)
1. School counselors or advisors were helpful	40	50	+10
2. Elective classes were offered that allowed me to explore the career I wanted to pursue.	40	83	+43
3. I had a positive high school experience.	88	90	+2
4. Overall, I was treated fairly by the adults at my high school.	91	95	+4
5. Teachers generally held high standards and demanded quality work.	88	94	+6
6. My high school prepared me for transition to college.	54	64	+10
7. My high school prepared me for transition to the work place.	69	67	-2
8. I was prepared by my high school in solving math problems.	79	73	-6
9. I was prepared by my high school in thinking/problem solving skills.	79	76	-3

10. I was prepared by my high school in communication skills.	79	80	+1
11. I was prepared by my high school in technical skills.	51	60	+9
12. I took advantage of the learning opportunities at my school.	84	93	+9
13. I experienced harassment from other students while attending high school	24	14	-10

West High School 2004-2005 Senior Survey

01	02	03				07	08	09
WHS	Guidance	Career				Social Studies	English	Workplace
	14 NotSat	13 NotSat	13 NotSat	35 NotSat	12 NotSat	14 NotSat	6 NotSat	19 NotSat
	182 Sat	183 Sat	182 Sat	161 Sat	184 Sat	180 Sat	190 Sat	177 Sat
			1 Unanswered			2 unanswered		
%age	93%	94%	93%	82%	94%	93%	97%	90%

192

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Results

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	161 Sat	172 Sat	163 Sat	182 Sat	187 Sat	198 Sat	165 Sat	171 Sat
	1 Unanswered	2 Unanswered	2 Unanswered	1 Unanswered	2 Unanswered	1 Unanswered	1 Unanswered	2 Unanswered
%age Sat	78%	83%	79%	88%	91%	96%	80%	83%

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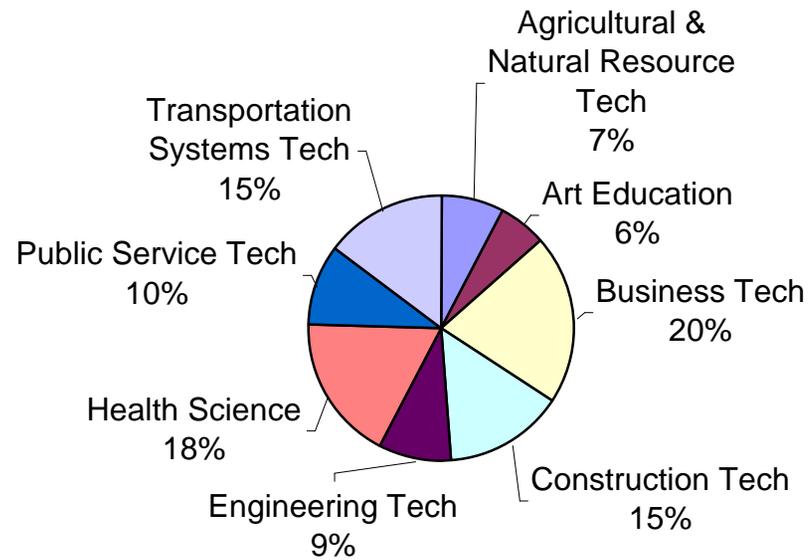
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9. I was prepared by my high school in thinking/problem-solving skills.	79	76	-3

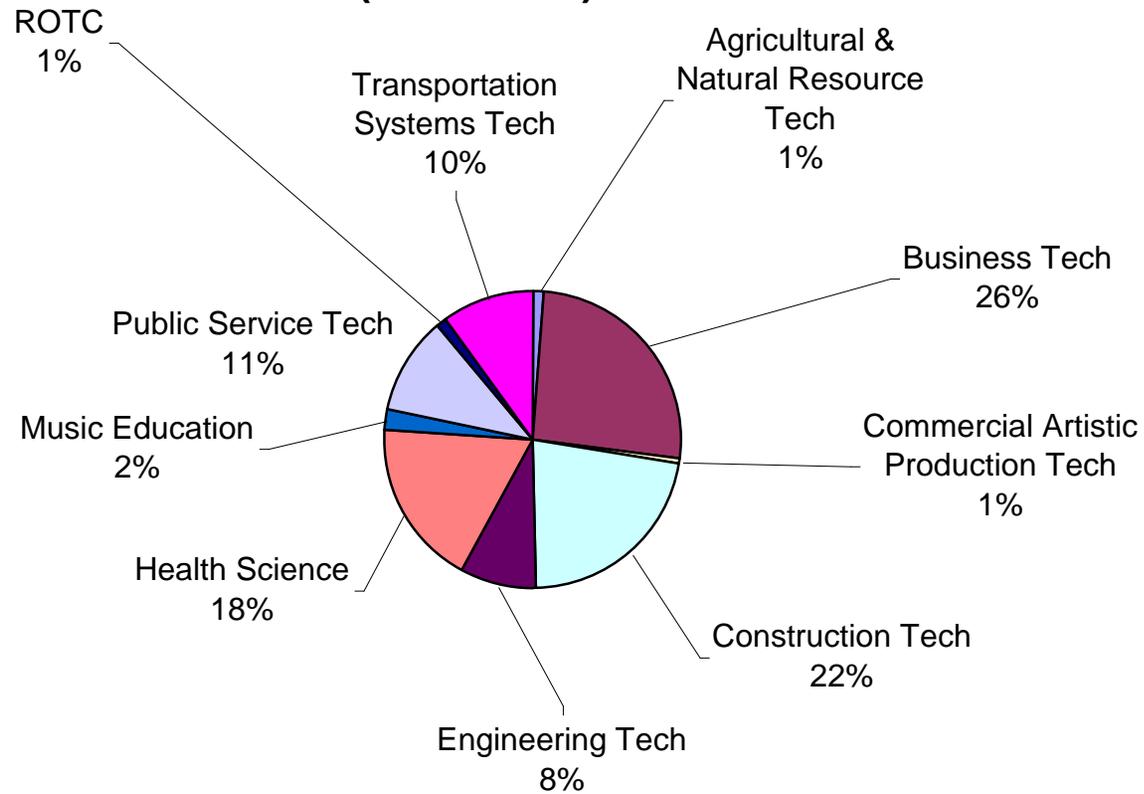
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12. I took advantage of the learning opportunities at my school.	84	93	+9
13. I experienced harassment from other students while attending high school	24	14	-10

West Smith High School Senior Career Plans (2005-2006) n=135



From Smith County Schools NCWISE Report STU229R - Retrieved May 9, 2007

East Smith High School Senior Career Plans (2005-2006) n=179



From Smith County Schools NCWISE Report STU229R - Retrieved May 9, 2007