To my friends and family who have supported me throughout my life and my education
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCS Community College System
GPA Grade Point Average
HBCU Historically Black College or University
IPEDS Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System
NCES National Center for Educational Statistics
PWI Predominantly White Institution
SCQ Stigma Consciousness Questionnaire
This study attempts to add the voices of male African-American community college freshmen to the larger dialogue of ethnicity and persistence in higher education via qualitative research methods. It builds upon previous qualitative research that focuses on successful African-American males in four-year colleges and universities by shifting the gaze from those who have completed a journey through higher education to those who are beginning their journey in higher education.

The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the freshman experiences of male African-American community college students. Findings from their freshman experiences will provide insight into the retention and transition experiences of African-American males in community colleges. This qualitative study is grounded in a postmodern epistemology. Phenomenological hermeneutic analysis is used to determine the meanings within the experiences of the African-American male community college students.

The researcher interviewed six African-American males on two rural community college campuses to gather information about their first year experiences. Implications to established retention theories, including those of Tinto (1975) and Bean and Metzner
(1985), are explored. Implications for higher education research on race related to stereotype threat and stigma consciousness are also explored. Finally, practical implications for community colleges are presented.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

While African-American enrollment in higher education has been increasing since the civil rights movement, African-American males are presently the slowest growing population of minority students in higher education (United States Census Bureau, 2009). Furthermore, African-American females represent two-thirds of the African-Americans in higher education, and their enrollment patterns mask the underrepresentation of African-American males in higher education (United States Census Bureau, 2009). According to the most recent NCES data, for the year 2004, African-American undergraduate males comprise 4.63% (684,700 of 14,780,630) of the undergraduate population in public institutions within the United States. African-American males represent just over 6% of the total population in the United States (17,315,333/281,421,906), as captured by the 2000 census. The discrepancy between total population and collegiate population demonstrates that the higher education system in America is not yet equitable in the representation of African-American males. Due to the fact that African-American males are underrepresented and the representation gap is not closing, the retention of African-American males who are already enrolled in the higher education system is even more important than the retention of other minority student populations.

Confounding an understanding of this specific student population is the lack of research focused on male African-American community college students. Research in college retention and student persistence has often been conducted quantitatively and in connection to precedents that were established based upon the analysis of homogenous Caucasian student bodies at traditional four-year colleges (Pascarella &
Research that focuses on African-American student persistence often focuses on comparisons of institution type, such as comparisons between historically black colleges and universities (HBCU’s) and traditional four-year colleges, but does not analyze specific gender trends in persistence. Educational research that focuses specifically on African-American males involves traditional four-year college students, and not community college students. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), 41.8% (905,800) of African-American students in higher education were enrolled in community colleges in 2004. Based on the community college enrollment numbers and published research on community college students, the research surrounding African-American students, especially male students, in community colleges is insufficient. An interest in researching the persistence of this minority population has fueled a few recent studies (Flowers, 2006; Harper & Quaye, 2007). The present study will build upon recent research to continue the development of a dialogue focused on African-American male community college students and their persistence in higher education.

The mission of community colleges is to provide access to higher education for less traditional populations of students. Community colleges serve minority populations at a higher rate than public four-year institutions; specifically, 15% of community college students identify themselves as Black, compared to 10% of public four-year institutions (United States Department of Education, 2008). Although community colleges are providing access to higher education, they are not succeeding in maintaining the enrollment of African-American male students. This population of students is persisting at lower rates than their peers in public and private four-year colleges and universities.
The image of the community college’s open door is changing into the image of a revolving door.

When researching persistence, many measurements of retention can be used. Since community colleges students have unique enrollment patterns and take longer to complete their programs, community college persistence is often measured in semesters or terms. Capturing enrollment data in these smaller units allows enrollment patterns to emerge. One pattern that has emerged is the first-year enrollment pattern. A study of Texas community college students found that approximately 30% of the freshmen do not persist into a second semester, and over 50% do not persist into the second year of college (Fike, D. & Fike, R., 2008). Given that 6.2 million students are enrolled in the community college system, the number of freshman being lost in the revolving door each year is significant. The phenomenon of the first-year experience for community college freshmen is a crucial year for researchers who are trying to understand persistence patterns in community colleges, as well as persistence in the larger system of higher education in general.

**Purpose of the Study**

African American males are attending college at a lower rate than their female peers, and those who are attending college are persisting in college at lower rates than other student populations (DeSousa, 2001; Cuyjet, 2006). The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the freshman experiences of male African-American community college students. Findings from their freshman experiences will provide insight into the retention and transition experiences of African-American males in community colleges.
This qualitative study is grounded in a postmodern epistemology. Phenomenological hermeneutic analysis will be used to determine the meanings within the experiences of the African-American male community college students. The researcher will interview 5-10 African-American males on two rural community college campuses to gather information about their first year experiences. Two interviews with each participant as well as a follow-up member checking contact will be conducted over a fall term and the subsequent spring term. Rural community colleges have been chosen to fill a research gap. Small, rural community colleges also represent a unique population of students, one that may be significantly different from large urban community college populations that have been studied.

Specifically, the research seeks to answer the questions:

1. What are the experiences of African-American males in their freshman year of community college?

2. How are these experiences related to the persistence of these students in their perspective community college?

**Definition of Terms**

African-American: Students who self-identify with the ethnicity of African-American or Black on official college paperwork and enrollment/application information.

External-Insider: A researcher who is “socialized within another culture and acquires its beliefs, values, behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge. However, because of his or her unique experiences, the individual rejects many of the values, beliefs, and knowledge claims within his or her community and endorses indigenous community and endorses those of the studied community” (Banks, 1998, p. 8).
Freshman Year: The first thirty credit hours of coursework, regardless of the semesters, and regardless of the academic year or calendar year. While this study focuses on a fall and subsequent spring term, students may have completed dual enrollment courses and/or summer courses prior to the initial fall term in college.

Persistence/Retention: For the purpose of this study, these terms are being used interchangeably. While retention can be conceptualized in many ways, for this study, retention is the act of being continuously enrolled over the course of a fall term and the subsequent spring terms. Summer enrollment is not factored into persistence for this study. If students begin in a summer term, their persistence would be determined by enrollment in the consecutive fall and spring terms.

Rural Community College: This study uses the Carnegie Basic Classification of colleges to identify rural Associate degree offering institutions. Community colleges in the Carnegie category “Assoc/Pub-R-S: Associate’s—Public Rural-serving Small” will be considered for the study.

Stereotype Threat: This study relies upon Claude Steele’s (1997) definition of stereotype threat to be “the social-psychological threat that arises when one is in a situation or doing something for which a negative stereotype about one’s group applies. This predicament threatens one with being negatively stereotyped, with being judged or treated stereotypically, or with the prospect of conforming to the stereotype” (p. 614).

Stigma Consciousness: This term is related to stereotype threat in that it is “the extent to which they [targets of stereotypes] expect to be stereotyped” (Pinel, 1999, p. 115). It is a specific construct measured by the stigma consciousness questionnaire (SCQ).
White Privilege: For the purpose of this research, McIntosh’s (2003) use of the term white privilege is accepted:

“I see a pattern running through the matrix of white privilege, a pattern of assumptions which were passed on to me as a white person. There was one main piece of cultural turf; it was my own turf, and I was among those who could control the turf. I could measure up to the cultural standards and take advantage of the many options I saw around me to make what the culture would call a success of my life. My skin color was an asset for any move I was educated to want to make, I could think of myself as ‘belonging’ in major ways, and of making social systems work for me. I could freely disparage, fear, neglect, or be oblivious to anything outside of the dominant cultural forms. Being of the main culture, I could also criticize it fairly freely” (p. 154)

Significance of Study

African-American persistence has been studied predominantly on the campuses of four-year colleges and universities, with little focus on community college environments. This study attempts to add the voice of male African-American community college freshmen to the larger dialogue of ethnicity and persistence in higher education via qualitative research methods. This study builds upon previous qualitative research that focuses on successful African-American males in four-year colleges and universities by shifting the gaze from those who have completed the journey through higher education to those who are beginning the journey in higher education (DeSousa, 2001; Flowers, 2006; Green, 2001; Jones, 2001; McNairy, 1996; Swigart & Murrell, 2001; Rowser, 1997).

Students most frequently withdraw from college during the first year of attendance (Fike & Fike, 2008). Understanding the experiences of students during this time frame may lead to an increase not only in student persistence rates, but also in the number of students attending college. Ignoring the community college “pipeline” for minority students ignores the larger social implications of African-American retention. This study
will illuminate the experiences of an under-researched population in higher education as well as address the larger issues of retention and persistence.

**Limitations to the Study**

Findings from this study will add to the larger understanding of African-American male experiences in the first year of community college attendance, but will not be generalizeable to all African-American male students in the community college system. The postmodern epistemology of the researcher acknowledges the relative nature of this knowledge while valuing the meaning and importance of the experiences of these students. Although the phenomenological interviews will be long and in-depth, there are freshman experiences that will not be captured in this process, yet those experiences that are captured will still provide an understanding of the meaning of the freshman experience to this population of students.

The limitations of this study are related to the limitations of qualitative research. The researcher will be conducting cross-cultural qualitative research and analysis as an “external/insider” of the population that is being researched (Banks, 1998). The researcher’s position is both problematic and beneficial. The researcher’s external lens may elucidate material that could be viewed as unimportant to an internal/insider. This external status can also provide the researcher with the excuse of asking probing questions that would be tolerated and viewed as normal for an outsider, which may reveal aspects of the students’ lives that have not been explored by internal researchers. Conversely, the researcher’s external status and lens may lead to reluctance on the part of the participants or a misinterpretation of the interview content and context.
Additional limitations are connected to the specific cross-cultural and cross-gender aspects in this study. The researcher is a White female who interviewed African-American males within a predominantly White institution in the rural South. Neither the researcher, nor the participants can escape the social history of oppression and discrimination related to race and gender that both the researcher and the interviewee’s have experienced and will likely continue to experience. The position of white privilege that the researcher observes from and analyzes from is a position that the interviewees will be sensitive to. In addition to White privilege, the participants may also be sensitive to other privileges related to economic and educational differences between the researcher and the interviewees. The researcher was a visiting Ph.D. student interviewing community college students. In reaction, overt or covert, the students may adapt their responses and behaviors in ways that can never be known or understood by the researcher.

The researcher will use the Culturally Sensitive Research Practice of Tillman (2002) in an attempt to nullify these limitations and present a picture of the data that is representative of the phenomenon being studied, but the effect of a cross-gender, cross-cultural bias in the interview content may never be known. The researcher only has access to the material that the participants are willing to divulge, and will only be able to analyze that which is divulged in the interview process. Throughout the interview process, the researcher worked to connect to the students as a fellow student to make them more comfortable with the cross-cultural interviews. The complete transcripts demonstrate the interaction between the researcher and the interviewees. Throughout the interview and analysis process, the researcher remained respectful of the
differences between cultures and also the responsibility of researching from a privileged vantage point.

Subjectivity Statement

As part of qualitative research, and specifically Culturally Sensitive Research Practices, it is important for the researcher to divulge personal interest and motivation related to the research topic in a subjectivity statement. This statement introduces the history and background of the research to facilitate transparency in the analysis of the textual data. It also explains the “external/insider” role of the researcher.

The researcher’s interest in African-American male student retention stems from her work as a professor and administrator within the community college system. For the last ten years she has been teaching English, reading, literature, college success, creative writing, and design courses at small rural community colleges. She has seen first-hand the struggles that many students have while making the transition into college. She has also participated in various retention and persistence initiatives within three community colleges in three separate states.

More than any other group of students that the researcher has worked with, African-American male students attend college under a social expectation of failure. This expectation can become an inevitable truth in higher education if the system of higher education allows. Personally, the researcher identifies with this social expectation of failure from her own background as a first-generation college student and as a young woman seeking leadership roles in higher education. Identification with social stereotyping and biases in higher education has prepared the researcher to be an “insider” with the student population that is being studied. The researcher has an interest in making the educational system more equitable and accessible for all
students, regardless of race and gender. These personal details are important in the research because the researcher’s own educational experiences and background situate her as an external/insider of the researched community. Additional personal information about the researcher can be found in the biographical information section located at the end of this document.

In preparation for this research study, multiple courses in qualitative and quantitative research were completed. The courses "Contemporary Research in Higher Education" and "Research Design in Educational Administration" have allowed the researcher to explore various educational research techniques, which has in turn allowed her to make an informed choice to research qualitatively. "Qualitative Foundations of Education Research", "Qualitative Data Collection", and "Qualitative Data Analysis" have given the researcher the opportunity to explore qualitative data collection and analysis techniques.

Throughout the qualitative courses, a pilot study for the present research study was developed, implemented, and analyzed providing a solid foundation for the specific analysis required in the present research study. The qualitative data analysis course, in particular, has helped the researcher develop as a qualitative researcher by allowing her to practice various analysis techniques on qualitative data, and by fostering a theoretical foundation that allows her to more clearly situate herself as a researcher. The researcher also has a long history of courses within her Master’s and Bachelor’s degrees that has provided training in the practice of hermeneutics, which is a foundational method of textual interpretation in English literature and analysis.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

In the first portion of this chapter, a thematic survey of the literature introduces the major theories and research in retention, first-year persistence, and race as they relate to the research questions. A review of the qualitative research on the subject of African-American males in community college is presented as the groundwork for the theoretical framework of the study.

Persistence/Retention in Higher Education

A basic understanding of the breadth of research in the areas of retention, African-American retention, and community college retention is required before focusing on the specific research that is taking place in community colleges regarding African-American male persistence. This portion of the literature review deductively evaluates the literature, beginning with a broader overview of retention/persistence theories. The review then provides an overview of the research focusing on African-American college students in general with sections organized by the following research purposes: comparison of institutions, student engagement, and assessment of institutions. The review concludes with the most recent and most specific research studies related to African-American male persistence in community colleges.

Persistence Models and Research

Tinto’s (1975, 1986) model of student departure is credited as the foundation of economic, organizational, psychological, and sociological retention studies and is often cited in the research of college retention and student persistence (see Appendix A) (Braxton & Hirschy, 2005). Pascarella (1980) later built upon these models to further explore the connections between college environment and student retention. Bean and
Metzer (1988) further adapted the model of student departure to address non-traditional students, specifically students who are not living on college campuses. Bean and Metzer’s model deemphasized the importance of social integration, increased the emphasis of academic performance variables, and introduced environmental variables, such as family, work, etc (see Appendix B). Braxton, Hirschy, and McClendon (2004) further adapt Tinto’s model utilizing Bean and Metzner’s (1988) research to establish the Theory of Student Departure in Commuter Colleges and Universities (see Appendix C). This model describes external variables to have a direct impact on college persistence, and describes academic integration as one of the many institutional factors that lead to institutional commitment, which directly impacts persistence (Braxton & Hirschy, 2005).

While Tinto’s student departure model has been revised and adapted over time, the foundational concepts of academic and social integration as positive factors in retention remain as strong influences in retention and persistence research. In fact, “Tinto’s theory (1975, 1986, 1993) on student departure is the most studied, tested, revised, and critiqued in the literature. Put differently, Tinto’s theory holds the predominate position” in retention research (Braxton & Hirschy, 2005, p. 66).

Recent research that is situated in postmodernist/postcolonial theory has called into question the traditional models of retention when applied to minority student populations (Baird, 2000; Hurtado, 1997; Rendón, Jalomo & Nora, 2000). These critics question Tinto’s emphasis on assimilation/integration in his model, cite various problems with the measurement of the constructs of social integration and academic integration, question the application of the model to minority populations, and claim that
researchers may be coercing data collected for other purposes to suit Tinto’s model (Baird, 2000; Guiffrida, 2003; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000). The studies critiquing Tinto’s model indicate that the current student persistence research environment is struggling with adapting past models to current research in an effort to understand minority persistence.

Hurtado and Carter (1997) credit Tinto (1993) for revising the term “integration” to the term “membership” in an attempt to address criticisms of the Model of Student Departure, but they criticize his model’s focus on student behaviors. Hurtado and Carter (1997) branch off of Tinto’s foundations to develop their Model of Sense of Belonging, which they state allows the researcher to “assess which forms of social interaction (academic and social) further enhance students’ affiliation and identity with their colleges” (p. 328). The Model of Sense of Belonging is based upon the analysis of longitudinal minority student retention data from the National Survey of Hispanic Students (NSHS). The student population consisted solely of high-achieving Hispanic students in four-year colleges, and sheds light onto the differences between majority and minority student interactions with their campuses.

Criticisms of Tinto’s model of student departure highlight a larger theme problematized in the literature. Past research and theory involving predominately White male students is being applied to all categories or types of student populations. New retention theorists may reject the universal application of Tinto’s retention theory, yet they find it difficult to divorce their own retention and persistence research from the foundations in Tinto’s model. Instead, over the past twenty years researchers have been testing and adapting past research, theories, and conclusions to create a fuller
understanding of how differing populations of students vary in behavior. While researchers may disagree with the use of the term integration, the concepts of academic and social integration are ubiquitous in retention research and explain the importance of the relationship between the college student and the college campus (Swail Redd, & Perna, 2003; Flowers, 2006).

**Community College Retention**

There is a specific vein of research and theory that addresses community college students, as briefly mentioned above as non-traditional students in the models of Bean and Metzner (1998) and commuter students in Braxton and Hirchy (2005). Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen, and Person (2006) compare community colleges and occupationally focused two-year private colleges within their text *After Admission: From College Access to College Success*. The underlying premise of this text is the acknowledgment that the open access system of community colleges introduces unique retention challenges. The authors researched seven community colleges and seven occupational colleges, as well as 4,000 students within the colleges, in a large urban setting in Illinois over a three-year period. They identify two retention approaches for community colleges: the individual approach as well as the institutional approach. Their findings indicate that private two-year colleges are more successful in retaining and graduating students, in particular minority students, and should therefore serve as a model for community colleges.

Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen, and Persons (2006) identify seven barriers to persistence that community college students experience: “bureaucratic hurdles, confusing choices, student-initiated guidance, limited counselor availability, poor advice from staff, slow detection of costly mistakes, and poor handling of conflicting demands” (p. 114). Five of
these seven barriers are within the control of the institution, while the final two are intrinsic to students. Their final recommendations are for community colleges to make institutional changes to improve student retention. They recommend “packaging” academic programs in clear ways to eliminate student, advisor, and staff confusion over courses. Additionally, students should have “frequent and mandatory” advising (Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen, & Personas, 2006, p. 230). They also recommend improving student motivation through clear, and even compressed, scheduling that keeps students on the path of expedient graduation. Finally, they recommend focusing on job placement and transfer to facilitate the successful matriculation of students. All of these recommendations are based upon the successful models of private two-year colleges.

**African-American Students**

One of the most researched minority student populations in higher education is African-American college students. The impetus for the heightened interest in African-American student retention comes from the research data itself. According to Astin, Tsui, and Avalos (as cited in DeSousa, 2001), only 19.4% of African-American students are graduating from colleges and universities within four years, compared to a 42.7% graduation rate in the Caucasian student population. The same data set indicates that by the nine-year mark, 33.9% of African-American students graduate while 47.3% of Caucasian students graduate. The data speaks to the enrollment patterns of African-American vs. Caucasian students. African-American students are taking longer to complete degrees, with 42% completing their degrees between four and nine years, compared to the 9% of Caucasian students who complete their degrees between four and nine years. Researchers argue that addressing retention rates in African-American students will not only address educational equity, but also social equity, claiming that
“perhaps no subject during this century will be more important to the socioeconomic plight of African Americans than higher education” (DeSousa, 2001, p. 41). The research focusing on African-American students as a larger group can be organized into three basic categories of interest: institutional impact on students, student engagement, and institutional self-evaluation and improvements. Swail, Redd and Perna (2003) conceptualize the three areas of student persistence as: cognitive factors, social factors, and institutional factors. As these categories indicate, there is a strong interest in understanding how colleges affect students.

African-American Student Retention

The research surrounding African-American student retention produces four basic areas for an institution to consider as retention interventions for a college campus: adapting to academic culture (Jones, 2001), accessing financial aid (Jones, 2001; Swail Redd, & Perna, 2003; McNairy, 2006), setting realistic goals (Jones, 2001; Rowser, 1997), and creating a climate of inclusivity and participation (Caroll, 1988; DeSousa, 2001; Green, 2001; Jones, 2001; LaVant et. al., 1997; McNairy, 1996; Pope, 2006). The climate of inclusivity could be generated from social groups, mentoring programs (LaVant et. al., 1997), athletics, and/or class activities. Research focused on the college campus recommends that the institution proactively engage a student population utilizing various integration and socialization strategies.

While researchers included individual level variables in their research (such as high-school GPA, family history of higher education, and socio-economic status) all of the research clearly identifies the institution and climate as important independent variable constructs for African-American persistence. These climate changes and
institutional initiatives are all targeted to create change in student behavior, most notably in student participation and academic and social integration.

While many researchers are focusing on institutional change and college climate change, there is an assumed student population change that is expected as a result of the institutional changes. The research in African-American persistence that focuses on students over institutions demonstrates a connection to the work of Tinto (1975) and Pascarella (1980) with a research interest in the constructs of social and academic integration (also termed: engagement, effort, or involvement). Tinto’s model is the theoretical base for the causal logic that connects college interventions to student persistence through the variable of student engagement. The underlying premise of this group of research is the concept that the more engaged, involved, or integrated a student is, the more likely that student is to persist in college.

While this causal connection between engagement and persistence appears to be supported by the research, there is an indication that the types of engagement and the activities that students are involved in correlate to persistence differently based upon the student population. Desousa and Kuh (1996) found that Caucasian students benefited from different types of engagement and effort than their African-American counterparts. Their research was supported by Swigart and Murrell (2001) who found that what was “apparent for the African-American group is the dominant role that involvement in coursework [academic integration] played in explaining gains” (p. 307). Tinto’s model of student persistence is helping researchers to frame retention, but disaggregating student populations and analyzing them separately shows that the model applies to students differently.
A final theme of institutional evaluation and data-driven-decision-making emerges from the research of African-American retention. Researchers are hesitant to generalize their results to entire populations of students since the nature of African-American retention research is a critique of the generalization of previous research that excluded minority students. Researchers recommend an institutional specific retention review process that is cyclical in nature. Such a process would directly evaluate the African-American community of students on a campus before any retention interventions are initiated, evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions, and continue to adapt policies and procedure to develop a strong climate of inclusivity (DeSousa, 2001; Flowers, 2006; Green, 2001; Rowser, 1997).

Overall, the audience for African-American retention research appears to be practitioners who focus on improving this population’s retention rates on college campuses. The literature review demonstrates the unique characteristics of minority populations and warns against simple programmatic changes to retain students. Institutions are guided to research their own populations and to adapt proven retention models to the needs of their students. None of the researchers claim to have found the answer to retaining African-American students, and they all agree that continued research is needed.

**African-American Male Retention in Community Colleges**

Building upon the previous research in retention, and then later studies in African-American retention, is the research of African-American male students in community colleges. There are few empirical studies that focus specifically on African-American male persistence in community colleges; therefore, understanding the few studies that focus directly on this population is critical for research. There are two categories of
research when considering African-American male community college student persistence. One category consists of small studies that target specific institutions and interventions. The other category involves a broader national scope to develop trend data for African-American male community college students.

Typical of the smaller institutional focus is Mason’s (1998) study that researched urban African-American male community college students. Mason synthesized the retention models of Spady (1970), Tinto (1975), Pascarella (1980), and Bean and Metzer (1985) to identify three categories of independent variables that affect the persistence of urban community college African-American students. These variables include background variables, academic variables, and environmental variables. The data collection process used a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data from surveys, interviews, and college records to analyze 205 African-American male freshmen at Kennedy-King College. Mason identified four statistically significant variables that affect the retention of this population: educational goals, outside encouragement, utility, and “the Helplessness/ Hopelessness Factor” (Mason, 1998, p. 756). Specific institutional interventions are identified and suggested for this and other community colleges interested in retaining African-American males. The eight recommendations are: “coordinated advising”, “academic skills workshops”, “financial aid workshops”, “job placement and transfer seminars”, “faculty and staff training”, “student activities”, and “educational outreach” (Mason, 1998, p.758).

Mason’s research represents the institutional level research and case studies that have been taking place on community college campuses across the nation (Carrol 1988; Cuyjet, 2006; Hagedorn et.al, 2001-2002; Weis, 1985). The purpose of this sub-
genre of retention research is to study the current population of students to create specific solutions and interventions for that unique population. Unfortunately, much of the institution specific research taking place in community colleges is internally developed and not intended for public dissemination. For these reasons, the research may not follow guidelines for rigor and may only be considered anecdotal knowledge.

The other category of research on African-American male community college persistence involves a broader scope and population (Flowers, 2006; Pope, 2006). These researchers analyze larger national and state data sets to develop a deeper understanding of the African-American male community college student outside of the individual community college environment.

Pope (2006) utilized the data from the Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System (IPEDS) as the foundation for his study in which he designed his own survey instrument that sampled 375 minority students from 15 community colleges around the country. 74 African-American Males from 15 community colleges were part of his final analysis. The focus of Pope’s survey was campus diversity as it relates to the campus experiences of minority students. Pope generated suggestions for community colleges to improve retention and matriculation of African-American men. Pope’s recommendations for retention are: “academic and social integration”; “eliminate racism and promote diversity”; “assist students in overcoming triple consciousness”; “enhance counseling, provide effective orientation programming”; “evaluate program effectiveness”; “hire more African American administrators”; “create ethnic, cultural, and social support groups”; and “create programs that connect with African American males’ communities” (pp. 226-229).
Flowers (2006) utilized the Beginning Postsecondary Student Longitudinal Study to “measure the impact of a wide array of individual-level factors and institutional-level characteristics on academic achievement, social growth, and college experiences and outcomes” (Flowers, 2006, p. 274). The sample of 467 African-American males included both community college students and four-year college students. Based upon Tinto’s (1993) research in persistence, Flowers (2006) measured the two dependent variables of academic integration and social integration. According to Flowers, “African American males at 4-year institutions reported significantly more academic integration experiences than their 2-year counterparts” and “African American males at 4-year institutions also reported significantly more social integration experiences” (2006, p. 280). Flower’s (2006) research indicates that social and academic integration may be an important contextual difference between African-American males’ collegiate experiences in community colleges versus four-year colleges.

The research that has been completed in retention/persistence has influenced the interview protocol of the present study (see Appendix D). The participants will be asked about their experiences in classes, about the time that they spend on campus, and about the social implications of attending college. These questions seek to understand the academic and social integration experiences of the students in a qualitative manner.

**The Freshman Experience**

In addition to researching retention, this study seeks to understand the phenomenon of the freshman experience. Feldman (2005) clearly labels the first year of college as a unique phenomenon when he states that: “students are challenged in unique and demanding ways during their first year” (2005, p. vii). The first year was chosen as the phenomenon of interest for this study based upon the importance that
recent research has placed on this year of education, specifically in the area of student services. Pope, Miklitsch, & Wigand (2005) attributed the interest in the first-year experience to the popularity of the Noel-Levitz instruments and publications related to retention, which is marked with the publication of *Increasing Student Retention* in 1985. First-year experience programs have developed throughout colleges across the country to address this critical retention timeframe.

Research involving the first-year experience is theoretically grounded in retention theory as established by Tinto (1975, 1988). Tinto (1988) connects the social anthropological work of Van Gennep’s *Rights of Passage* to the process of transition into college. Tinto’s use of Van Gennep’s work yields three stages that students undergo during their college career. These stages are separation, transition to college, and incorporation in college (1988).

First year experience research is also grounded in Terenzini et al. (1994) qualitative study that developed a foundation for researching transition. Terenzini et al. utilized seven researchers who conducted focus group interviews of 132 students on four distinctly different college campuses, including one community college. While the community college student focus group responses were not analyzed separately, the research compares traditional and non-traditional students, categorizing the community college students as non-traditional. Terenzini et al. (1994) identified the period of first-year transition as one of adaptation to a new set of academic and social systems which was “far more difficult” for non-traditional students (p. 63). Furthermore, non-traditional students experienced “a major disjunction in their life course” in part due to the “multiple transitions—academic, social, and cultural” (p. 63). Of these three transition areas,
academic transition was deemed to be the more challenging for non-traditional students, while social transition was determined to be of most concern for the traditional students at four-year colleges and universities. Terenzini et al. (1994) presents eight implications of their research related to successful first-year college experiences:

1. promote awareness of the varying character of the transition process for different kinds of students
2. early validation appears to be a central element in students’ successful transition to college
3. involve faculty members in new student orientation programs
4. orient parents as well as students
5. the transition to college involves both in and out-of-class experiences
6. institutional accommodations are required
7. somebody has to care. (pp. 69-72).

Terenzini’s research clearly identifies the college as responsible for creating systems that facilitate the freshman transition process. It also presents clear differences in the freshman experiences of traditional and non-traditional college students.

More recently, qualitative research related to transition has been developed in conjunction with a college’s first-year experience program (Clark, 2005; Tinto, 2003). Clark (2005) qualitatively researched the freshman transition of eight students participating in a first-year experience program with a focus on the strategies that they use and develop while transitioning into college. Clark (2005) describes the freshman experience as an “active process of strategizing” between “desirable” and “undesirable” outcomes and behaviors (p. 302).

Another recent development in college transition research is a more intensive focus on Hispanic and Latino students, which is adding to the understanding of minority student experiences in college. This increased interest is partly due to undergraduate enrollment trends (Hernandez, 2002) and partly due to the foundational research of Padilla, Treviño, Gonzalez, & Treviño, (1997) and Hurtado (1997) that established the
minority lens for the college transition experience as well as minority retention and persistence. Hernandez (2002) responded to the increasing population and lagging graduation rates of Latino students in his qualitative research study that interviewed ten Latino students attending a public research institution. He found that the Latino students felt “that high-school did not prepare them for college work” and that this under-preparation required them to focus more on academics and to forgo social and co-curricular activities on campus (Hernandez, 2002, p. 81). These students also relied heavily on the emotional and financial support of family to attend college. It is important to note that the concept of family within this research consisted of extended family, including grandparents, aunts, uncles etc. Hernandez (2002) recommended future research focused on the interactions of college communities and home communities as they relate to student support and retention. He also recommended that universities actively engage the families of Latino students if they seek to retain the student population.

While the research of Padilla, Treviño, Gonzalez, & Treviño, (1997) did not focus directly on the freshman experience, it did focus on the barriers that successful students overcome during college in order to persist to degree completion. Since the focus of the study was on “successful” students, the sample of twenty-eight minority students consisted of sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Padilla, Treviño, Gonzalez, & Treviño, (1997) proposed that minority students face four categories of barriers that are overcome by successful students; they include discontinuity barriers, lack of nurturing barriers, lack of presence barriers, and resource barriers. Discontinuity barriers
specifically address the freshman transition from high school to college. Successful students overcame discontinuity by:

(a) building a support base by joining or creating clubs to the students’ ethnic backgrounds; (b) promoting independence by making their own decisions, sacrificing, and taking reasonable risks early in their college careers; and (c) acting as informed consumers by researching the profitability of their chosen majors or careers. (Padilla, Treviño, Gonzalez, & Treviño, 1997, p. 130)

Key strategies to overcoming all of the barriers included student support groups and family connections, which could be considered social integration strategies.

Much of the first-year experience research remains to be quantitatively analyzed to generate best practices from the correlations between high retention rates and specific college interventions: e.g. mentoring or learning communities (Upcraft, Gardner, Barefoot, 2005). Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods (2007) appear to be answering the call for quantitative analysis with their research in “the sense of belongingness” of 365 college freshmen at a large public institution. According to their findings, “the positive relationship between parental support and sense of belonging at the beginning of the year was especially strong for African American students” (Hausmann Schofield, & Woods, 2007, p. 833). Additionally, “African American students having more peer support was associated with an increase in sense of belonging over time” (Hausmann Schofield, & Woods, 2007, p. 833). These findings support the qualitative data of Hernandez (2002) that emphasizes family and friends as key factors in the freshman experiences of minorities.

This portion of the literature review, like the retention portion, has influenced the interview protocol for the research (see Appendix D). Specifically, the protocol includes one question related to family relationships and one question related to friendships.
Race and Higher Education

A review of the literature related to race and African-American males on college campuses is required as a Culturally Sensitive Research Practice (Tillman, 2002, 2006) and as a contextual foundation for phenomenological hermeneutic analysis. This review solidifies the researcher’s role as an external insider by developing a level of empathy and a level of familiarity with race related higher education topics that may appear in the research study. Research related to race in higher education is much more recent than the historical studies in retention. While the studies in retention are largely quantitative in nature, studies in race provide more qualitative models, many of which focus on psychological analysis, for understanding the population of community college African-American males.

The majority of the research on African-American students in higher education is a comparison of students at predominantly white institutions, PWI’s, and students at historically black colleges and universities, HBCU’s, as established by the seminal text *College in Black and White* (Allen, 1991). This dichotomous comparison demonstrates that campus climate, and minority status within that climate is an important factor in the educational experience of an African-American student. The research comparing these two environments can be summarized to state that most African-American students fair better socially at HBCU’s and in some studies they also fair better academically.

Another large group of research focuses on minority students attending PWI’s (Allison, 1998; Aronson, 1998; Brown, 2003; Harper, 2007; Jackson, 1991; Pinel, 1999; Pinel, 2005; Smith, 2008; Solórzano, 2001; Steele, 1995; Swim, 2003; Watson et al., 2002). Critical predictors for success of African-American males attending PWI’s were found to be social factors “such as feelings of alienation and sources of social support”
Since the majority of African Americans are enrolled on campuses where their race is a minority, it is clear that race, as it relates to the social climate on a campus, is an important factor in the academic performance of African-American male students. The unique effects of race and gender stereotypes that African-American males experience on college campuses could be the missing link that explains why they are the most at risk population on campus.

College campuses are social environments with their own research in race and race relations, which includes the documentation of racial microaggressions on campus, and academic stereotypes related to race and gender. The environment that African-American males experience while in college is the foundation for understanding their at times negative reaction to the environment, as demonstrated by increased attrition rates. The field of psychology is working to understand the effects of existing in a racially charged environment of higher education with a stereotyped identity. African-American males attending PWI’s find themselves struggling to be identified as individuals separate from their social stereotypes. These students are living in a society that assumes that they are violent offenders; yet other stereotypes also threaten their identity, including athletic stereotypes, affirmative action stereotypes and intelligence stereotypes. The stress of navigating social stereotypes and establishing an individual identity is detrimental to the academic success of African-American male students.

Allison (1998) creates two categories of racism that African-Americans experience on college campuses: chronic everyday racism that may be covert in nature, and major event racism that is less frequent and more overtly racist. These two social
stereotype forces are constantly affecting the student and shaping the individual identity of the student:

Tangible costs to targets of prejudice and discrimination have been demonstrated and proposed to involve direct effects on life outcomes, as well as potential indirect effects (wherein the impact of prejudice operates through a range of mediating variables) on rates and experiences of unemployment and underemployment, income level and social status, infant mortality, physical health and injury, emotional distress, and psychopathology, as well as access to housing, education, and a range of social, and other health services (Allison, 1998).

African-American males attending PWI’s are living in a racially charged environment and experiencing stereotype threat, stigma consciousness, and covert racial microaggressions.

**Stereotype Threat**

Stereotype threat is defined as the effect of “the existence of a negative stereotype about a group to which one belongs . . . in situations where the stereotype is applicable, one is at risk of confirming it as a self-characterization, both to one’s self and to others who know the stereotype” (Steele, 1995). Stereotype threat can be seen as the physical manifestation of individuals struggling between their group and individual academic identity. When students are faced with a group stereotype identity, the individual student identity struggles to appear. Currently, stereotype threat research focuses on minority status or gender, not both. Therefore the literature review covers research comparing African American and Caucasian students.

Aronson and Steele are credited for the creation of the psychological theory of stereotype threat after compiling four research studies involving test performance and racial stereotypes (Steele, 1995). Each of the stereotype threat studies measured the effect of the stereotype on performance by comparing a diagnosed group with a non-
diagnosed group. The diagnosed group would consist of both stereotyped, African Americans, and non stereotyped Caucasians, who were instructed before an intelligence test that the test was a measurement of the students ability intellectually and that feedback from the test would be given to improve the individual intellectually. The non-diagnosed group was a mixture of stereotyped and non-stereotyped students who were instructed before the same intellectual test that the test was not being used as a measurement of their ability and they could have the results of the research at the end of the study if interested. The studies involved an intelligence test and a psychological survey, which was used to determine self-confidence, stereotype activation, and stereotype avoidance. The researchers found that in four separate studies, after controlling for intellectual ability, the stereotyped group of African-Americans performed at lower levels on intelligence tests when they were reminded that their intelligence was being measured for comparative research purposes. This negative reaction is the manifestation of stereotype threat.

Research of stereotype threat has lead to the development of the stereotype threat model that connects negative stereotypes to academic performance (Aronson, 1998). According to Aronson, “the self-threatenning nature of negative stereotypes, the effect of self-threat on intellectual performance, and the tendency to disidentify with chronically threatened domains interact to undermine the performance and motivation of women and minorities” (1998, p. 88). Aronson goes on to document methods to counteract stereotype threat and disidentification with academic success. Further research that goes beyond the academic implications of stereotype threat can explain how stereotypes affect social behavior in addition to academic behavior in test taking.
situations. The fear of proving this stereotype to be correct/accurate can affect African-American males in socially pressured situations.

**Stigma Consciousness**

Stigma consciousness is “the extent in which targets of widespread stereotypes focus on their stereotyped status and believe it pervades their life experiences” (Pinel, 2005). Those who test high in stigma consciousness believe that the stereotypes of their group permeate their lives and cannot be escaped from. The effects of stigma consciousness can be far-reaching and complex. Much of the research seeks to correlate academic performance, as measured by GPA, with stigma consciousness levels, as measured by the stigma consciousness questionnaire, or SCQ (Brown, 2003; Pinel, 1999; Pinel, 2005). Stigma consciousness research is being used to identify gender and race stigmas. For the purposes of this literature review, the stigma consciousness of African-American males is being considered.

Pinel’s research (1999, 2005) establishes the construct of stigma consciousness and connects that construct to student performance in college by correlating multiple variables: change in stigma consciousness, GPA, psychological disengagement, and self-esteem. The stigma consciousness questionnaire (SCQ) was developed to measure the levels of stigma consciousness and can be adapted to any stereotyped group by changing the wording of the question. Pinel discovered that stigmatized males performed poorly in college when they experienced increased stigma consciousness upon their arrival (Pinel, 2005). Additionally, when academic disengagement was correlated with increased stigmatizing and then gender was compared, a gender difference was revealed. Female students responded to increased stigmatization by becoming more engaged in academics while males became less engaged in response
to increased stigmatization. Additionally, the stigma conscious males had higher self-esteem than the stigma conscious females. Pinel interprets the high self-esteem and high disengagement of the males to indicate that academic disengagement is a form of psychological protection against the stigma conscious environment of higher education.

Major (1998) attributes this disengagement reaction to coping mechanisms developed by minorities in reaction to stigmatization. Stigma can paradoxically lead to high self-esteem when the stigmatized members are:

1. attributing negative outcomes to prejudice based on the stigma
2. devaluing outcomes on which their group fares poorly relative to other groups
3. making in-group social comparisons with similarly stigmatized others rather than with members of nonstigmatized or advantaged groups. (Major, 1998 p. 220).

Combing the work of Major and Pinel can shed light on how stigma consciousness leads to lower academic performance. African-American males who are high in stigma consciousness are protecting their self-esteem by disengaging in academic activities and devaluing academic performance measures. In an additional study of racial stigma (Brown, 2003), researchers found that black students were the most stigma conscious racial group and the level of stigma consciousness was negatively correlated to GPA (r=-.30). While their self-esteem is intact despite the stereotype consciousness, the self-protective behavior leads to lower GPA’s and lower graduation rates in African-American men.

While the research of stigma consciousness in higher education is fairly new, the evidence clearly points to a connection between stereotypes and success. If African-American males are carrying a higher stereotype burden and are more stigma conscious than other groups of students, this could be a key factor to understanding the
unique retention dilemma of African American males. Moreover, the connection
between maintaining self-esteem by devaluing the performance outcomes, such as
grades and/or graduation, could lead to further understanding the complex psychology
of African-American male students and success in higher education.

In connection to stereotype threat is the manifestation of the “cool pose.” Majors
and Billson (1992) explain that the cool pose is: “a ritualized form of masculinity that
entails behaviors, scripts, physical posturing, impression management, and carefully
crafted performances that deliver a single, critical message: pride, strength, and control”
(p. 4). In connection to academics and stereotype threat, cool pose allows African-
American males to establish “pride, strength, and control” despite the negative
academic stereotypes related to their race and gender.

Covert Racism and Microaggressions

Microaggressions is a term used to refer to the smaller “mundane” or “everyday”
forms of covert racism that takes place on a college campus (Harper, 2007; Swim,
2003; Smith, 2008; Solórzano, 2001). To study microaggressions, researchers are
taking a qualitative approach using interviews, focus groups, and diaries to document
the variety of race related events that take place on college campuses. The qualitative
data is meant to gather a more complete picture of racial interactions and to combat the
tendency of those who are reporting the data to censor out the more interpretive covert
racial biases that are experienced on a more regular basis. This area of research is the
most recent vein of race based psychological research in students of higher education.

The most extensive qualitative study in everyday racism involves two weeks of
daily diaries from 50 African-American participants at one university (Swim, 2003).
Subjects were given forms to characterize each incident of discrimination, to document
an emotional response to the incident, and to document a behavioral response to the incident. Participants provided additional demographic data and completed two psychological indicators to document self-esteem and race awareness. The data revealed four categories of racial discrimination incidents: staring, verbal expressions of prejudice, bad service in public establishments, and miscellaneous intrapersonal offences (Swim, 2003). Women were more likely to report an incident as prejudicial in the diary and they were more likely, 81%, than men, 31%, to respond to the incident either directly or indirectly. Additionally, women were more likely to seek social support than men were. This research study did not attempt to interpret the effects of racial incidents on students, but to document the number and type of everyday/covert racism that takes place on college campuses that lead to a racially charged environment.

Solórzano borrows the term microaggressions from critical race theory, which has roots in Marxist theory involving the power structures of society. Solórzano relies upon focus groups of African-American students on three elite college campuses, PWI's, to document racial microaggressions and the effect of the microaggressions on the students. In the focus groups, seven areas of inquiry were covered: types of racial discrimination experienced by the students, response to the racial discrimination by the students, effect of the discrimination on the students, advantages of peer group numbers, changes in racial climate on the campus, recommended changes for the campus, and research advice (Solórzano, 2001). The data indicated that microaggressions differ based on the setting. Students stated that classroom microaggressions included “feeling invisible” in the classroom, “low expectations" from instructors, and pressure to represent their racial group (Solórzano, 2001, p. 66-67).
Outside of the classroom, students were seen as a public threat on campus grounds. Particularly, groups of African-American males were targeted by campus police as possible violent threats. The effects of these racial microaggressions were: “the sense of discouragement, frustration, and exhaustion . . . left some African American students in our study despondent and made them feel that they could not perform well academically” (Solórzano, 2001, p. 69). The authors of the study recommended that social support networks such as student organizations and fraternities or sororities can provide a crucial counterbalance to the racial microaggressions on college campus.

Building on the work of Solórzano (2001), Smith reviews the same focus group materials with the lens of “battle fatigue” and focuses solely on the responses of the African-American men in the study (Smith, 2008). Smith coins the terms Black misandry (black male oppression) and the misandric campus (black male oppressing campuses). The research presents two themes related to black misandry: negative black male stereotyping, and hyper-surveillance/control of black males. These students experienced their campuses and surrounding communities in ways that most students seldom experience, as outsiders who appeared to be out of place, and they were constantly reminded of this perceptions by ‘fitting the description’ of an unwanted element. (Smith, 2008, p. 562).

Male students appear to be socially stigmatized as violent and are less likely to respond to prejudice directly for fear of that stigma. The authors present a compelling interpretation of the psychological effects of living on a misandric campus using a metaphor of battle fatigue. The persistent negative stigma results in exhaustion and disengagement in the male students. Understanding battle fatigue and coping mechanisms of African-American male students can be the first step in understanding African-American male retention.
It is important to note that Smith (2007) and Solórzano (2001) are using the same focus group transcripts from upperclassmen at affluent, level-one research universities. The participants were experiencing a negative racial climate, yet most persevered to graduation, using the negative environment as a catalyst for success. There could be class and personality traits in these students that have been left unaccounted for in the research that calls for more research of the same nature in small private colleges and community colleges.

College campuses are racially charged environments involving stereotype threats, stigma consciousness, and racial microaggressions that require African-American males to navigate using complex psychological strategies to maintain self esteem, including academic disengagement. As researchers investigate beyond the rates of attrition into the psychology of being an African-American male student on a predominantly white campus, those in higher education can begin to understand the experiences of these students and attempt to assist them in reaching their academic goals. African-American males carry a harsher stereotype burden that connotes violence and aggression. They also experience and cope with their stereotyped status differently than other minorities and female African-American students. The effects of race on a campus are unique to campuses and to individuals, which leads to the complexity of fully understanding the relationship between race, racism, and academic performance.

**Qualitative Models**

Recent research in higher education is beginning to include qualitative inquiries of race and higher education. However, these studies predominantly focus on a population of high achieving students at research institutions or within HBCU’s (Denzin & Lincoln,
2000; Harper, 2006; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Ross, 1998). These studies rely upon focus groups and interviews with African-American male students to identify the elements in their experiences that lead them to successes in higher education.

Other qualitative studies have explored the interactions between minority and majority populations at four-year colleges (Maddox & Solórzano, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; White, 1998). Solórzano & Yosso’s research study utilized interviews to “draw explicitly on the lived experiences of people of color” (2002, p. 26). The majority of qualitative researchers interested in the experiences of African-American male students in higher education relied predominantly upon interviews to gain insight into the collegiate experiences of this population (Brieschke, 1997; Cohen, 1997; Maddox & Solórzano, 2002; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Stanley & Slattery, 2003; White, 1998).

The design of this qualitative research study is based upon the information in the literature review, the training and experience of the researcher, as well as the research questions: What are the experiences of African American males in their freshman year of college? How are these experiences related to the persistence of these students in college?

**Summary**

An overview of the literature demonstrates that there is a gap in the research at the intersections of retention, the first-year experience, and race within community colleges. Research focusing on African-American males in community colleges will begin to fill that gap. Questions for the interview protocol have been developed from the review of the literature and build upon the developed theories related to retention, the
first-year experience, and race in higher education. The literature review also demonstrates that qualitative research is becoming more valuable to researchers who are searching to understand the complex social construct of race beyond the findings that quantitative research has provided.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

The methods chapter begins with a focused survey of the literature to describe and document the epistemology and theoretical framework of the researcher. It connects the postmodern epistemology and the phenomenological hermeneutic theoretical perspective of the researcher with the theoretical framework of the research design: culturally sensitive research practices. After the foundation of the research framework is explained, the details of the research process are documented and described.

Epistemology

This research is grounded in the epistemology of postmodernism. Two major postmodern principles shape the research and the researcher: the “war on totality” and the acceptance of paradox (Lyotard, 1984, p. 82). The postmodernism of this researcher is not the nihilistic postmodernism of Nietzsche or Baudrillard. The researcher’s use of the term postmodernism builds upon Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition*, which struggles with the conflicting forces of the homogeneity of grand narratives and the chaos of heterogeneity (1984). The researcher’s view of postmodernism is also based upon a literary application of postmodernism seen in Faigley (1992) and Hutcheon (1988) who both focus on the ability of text to express and/or represent meaning in postmodernism.

Lyotard (1984) states that “the grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation” (p. 37). Postmodernism acknowledges the importance of multiple voices in society and in the larger cultural dialogue. This postmodern focus has
led to the development of theories in feminism, neo-Marxism, and post-colonial studies. Postmodernists are “ex-centric” and seek to explore that which is marginalized and de-centralized, thereby challenging status quo assumptions (Hutcheon, 1988). The grand, or master, narrative is not of interest to a postmodern researcher.

The multiple truths, meanings, and realities presented in a text coexist and create what Lyotard labels the “sublime.” For Lyotard, “this contradiction, what some would call neurosis or masochism, develops as a conflict between the faculties of a subject, the faculty to conceive of something and the faculty to ‘present’ something” (1984, p. 77). Through the conflicts and struggles over meaning, knowledge is created. In the simplest of explanations, the postmodern researcher searches for knowledge as opposed to truths and universals. The researcher accepts that there are no universal truths in the data, but that lack of universality does not make the analysis of the data any less meaningful in the construction of knowledge. A postmodern epistemology is a natural partner to phenomenological hermeneutics, the theoretical perspective that governs the analysis of the data being collected.

Postmodernist researchers also accept paradox. The paradoxes created by postmodernism can seem limitless, but the paradoxes of interest to this study involve using text for meaning making, as articulated by the postmodern literary theorist Linda Hutcheon (1998), “representation cannot be avoided, but it can be studied to show how it legitimates certain kinds of knowledge and, therefore certain kinds of power” (p. 230). Postmodern rhetorician Lester Faigley (1992) adds to the paradox of a postmodern interpretation of text: “This power to fold language back on itself makes postmodernism theory at once an extremely powerful means for exposing the political investments of
foundational concepts, but the same power prevents postmodern theorists from making claims of truth or emancipatory value for this activity” (p. 40). The postmodern researcher is aware of the power placed in the hands of the researcher via interpretation, yet is equally aware of the importance of empowering those who have been historically disempowered through research.

Theoretical Perspective

Researcher

Hermeneutics was developed to interpret text whereas phenomenology was developed to understand lived experiences. The merger of hermeneutics and phenomenology allows the researcher to analyze the texts created from interviews and observations to create an interpretation (hermeneutics) of a specific lived event (phenomenology). Ricoeur (2007) presents a merger of these two philosophies stating that “[h]ermeneutics has the means to account for both the insurmountable character of the ideological phenomenon and the possibility of beginning, without being able to finish, a critique of ideology” (p. 35). Ricoeur proposes that phenomenology and hermeneutics are inextricably intertwined due to the required step of exegesis, or interpretation, in phenomenological studies. Ricoeur’s (2007) phenomenological hermeneutics explains the complex interactions between the rhetorical triangle of the author, the text, and the audience, who is in this case the researcher. In phenomenological hermeneutics, the text is not capable of exposing what lies behind the text, what Dilthey suggests is the psychology of the author. The text is only capable of exposing what lies in front of it, “the world of the text” (Ricoeur, 2007, p. 85). Through this world of the text, the phenomenon is interpreted by the researcher. Interpreting the text as a reflection of the world as opposed to a reflection of the author, or interview
participant, distinguishes phenomenological hermeneutics from transcendental phenomenology.

Using phenomenological hermeneutics, a researcher can create meaning and interpret the “matter” of the text. There is a clear “distanciation” that takes place between the creator of the text: the interview subject, and the text itself: the transcript (Ricoeur, 2007). This concept of distanciation, attributed to Heidegger, makes the interpretation of the text “worldly” by “depsychologizing” it (Ricoeur, 2007, p. 66). Separating the text from the creator allows the “matter” of the text to become appropriated by the researcher and applied to the world “at and through distance” (Ricoeur, 2007, p. 87). In plain terms, phenomenological hermeneutics seeks to understand the phenomenon through the matter of the text and does not assume enlightened access to the participants. This is a “shift in the locus” of hermeneutics from psychology to sociology that Ricoeur attributes to the work of Heidegger (2007, p. 66). The value of the text is in the interpretation as it relates to the world, not as it relates to the subject.

The “distanciation” of the researcher from the participant, and the transcript from the participant is a unique attribute of phenomenological hermeneutics that relies upon the foundation of hermeneutics and the influences of postmodernism. Distanciation places the researcher in a key interpretive role in the research process, which can be seen as problematic for studies that involve complex social and power dynamics. Since the researcher is researching a cross-gender and cross-racial population, the theoretical framework chosen for the data collection process is an attempt to genuinely represent the voices of the population being studied from a distanciated research position.
Research Design

In keeping with a postmodern epistemology, the research design is shaped by more than one theoretical framework. The research is shaped by Banks’s (1998) typology of Cross-Cultural Researchers and Tillman’s (2002, 2006) Culturally Sensitive Research Practices. These two frameworks are the foundation for the design of the data collection. They have been chosen to address the limitations of cross-cultural qualitative research.

Banks suggests that educational researchers design, interpret, and present cross-cultural research with a clear epistemology and theoretical perspective. This explicit description of a theory base allows the researcher to discover his/her own lens for interpreting and viewing the world and develops a base for objectivity. Both objectivity and distanciation separate or distance the researcher from the researched and develop the transition of the interpretation from individual experiences to social experiences. Based on Banks’ Typology of Cross-Cultural Researchers, this researcher is positioned as an “external insider” (1998, p. 8). Such a researcher has been “socialized within another culture and acquires its beliefs, values, behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge” establishing the “external” component (Banks, 1998, p. 8). The “external” component is complemented by the “internal” component that comes from “unique experiences, such as personal experiences within an outside culture or community or marginalization within the culture into which he or she was socialized” (Banks, 1998, p. 8). Specific application of Banks’s external/insider research typology is presented in the subjectivity statement of the researcher in Chapter 1.

Banks labels the anti-racism/cross-cultural research of Franz Boas, Otto Klineberg, and Ruth Benedict as prime examples of external/insider research in the
human sciences, clearly establishing the tradition and validity of cross-cultural qualitative research. Cross-cultural research is also in keeping with a postmodern epistemology in that it seeks to empower “marginalized communities,” or the “ex-centric” (Banks, 1998; Hutcheon, 1988). This empowerment comes from an objective research commitment to the complexities of culture that “incorporates the views, concepts, and visions of the community” being studied (Banks, 1998, p. 13).

While Banks provides the researcher’s positionality as the “external insider,” Tillman provides a clear framework for the design of culturally sensitive research. Culturally sensitive research calls for: “culturally congruent research methods,” “culturally specific knowledge,” “cultural resistance to theoretical dominance,” “culturally sensitive data interpretations,” and “culturally informed theory and practice” (Tillman, 2002, p. 6). Each of these five elements influenced the research methods and practices of the present study.

The first two elements of Culturally Sensitive Research practice are related to theory: “culturally informed theory and practice” and “cultural resistance to theoretical dominance,” (Tillman, 2002, p. 6). The Epistemology of the researcher is described in great detail to explain how postmodernism resists theoretical dominance and demonstrate the researcher’s resistance to theoretical dominance. The survey of the literature section demonstrates the effect of postmodernism on both the researcher and the study. Chapter two also demonstrates the researcher’s familiarity with the breadth of research surrounding African-American males in college through various lenses such as retention, freshman transition, as well as race and identity. The literature review has
informed the researcher of the theory and practice surrounding African-American males in the system of higher education.

Tillman’s third element, “culturally specific knowledge,” is established via the literature review and the experiences of the researcher in the field of education, as indicated in the subjectivity statement and the limitations section (Tillman, 2002, p. 6). The researcher has attempted to become informed culturally by studying research focused on the topics of race and gender within higher education. This research establishes a psychological and theoretical foundation for the cultural experiences of African-American men on college campuses. Pilot interviews, and the review of other research interviews have also provided the researcher with a basic foundational knowledge of the African-American male experience on campus.

The final two elements of culturally sensitive research, “culturally congruent research methods” and “culturally sensitive data interpretations,” relate more specifically to the methods and analysis of the data (Tillman, 2002, p. 6). This research is a phenomenological study using interviews to establish the voice of the participant in the research. The interviews took place in neutral locations to help the participants experience a sense of anonymity. The interpretation of the data was developed over a series of interviews, allowing for follow-up clarification of information. Member checking was also arranged after the interviews were analyzed to remain sensitive to the limitations of cross-cultural, cross-gender research.

Both Banks and Tillman focus on the importance of methodology and researcher positionality when conducting cross-cultural research. They also place the research in a larger social community and emphasize the importance of quality cross-cultural
research in a multi-cultural society. Through this theoretical framework, the researcher’s epistemology and theoretical perspective combine with a common purpose to generate socially relevant work that aids in educational theory and practice.

Setting

Two rural community colleges participated in the research study by providing access to the student sample. The two community colleges are similar in size and location. Their FTE (full time equivalent) is under 2,000 students, placing them in the “small” Carnegie designation of colleges. They are also public and rural serving institutions. According to the Carnegie Foundation, there are 142 colleges in the “Assoc/Pb-R-S” (Associate’s—Public Rural-serving Small) category, representing 3.2% of all higher education institutions in the United States. Assoc/Pub-R-S colleges are in thirty-two states, with fifteen in the specific state that is being researched. Overall, public (Pb), rural (R) community colleges represent 13.57% of the institutions of higher learning in the United States (Carnegie, 2005). Both colleges are in rural communities and serve a rural population. The college service areas are geographically adjacent within the same state and are part of the same statewide community college system. The community college system (CCS) has 58 member colleges and has been in existence for over 25 years (Education Catalog, 2010).

Table 3-1. Community college demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Community College A</th>
<th>Community College B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview participants</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree completions (2008-2009) *</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3-1. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Community College A</th>
<th>Community College B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students receiving Pell Grants (2007-2008)*</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total grant aid (2007-2008)*</td>
<td>$ 661,528</td>
<td>$ 3,126,575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of first-time, full-time, students completing program in 150% of “normal” time (2005)*</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dormitories</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercollegiate Athletics</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daycare facility for students</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple student clubs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Upon review of the demographic comparisons of the two community colleges, it is clear that Community College A is significantly more successful in the retention of students, yet it provides significantly less financial aid support to those students. These statistics could be skewed the fact that Community College A has an extensive continuing education and economic development program, which is reflected in the large numbers of certificate completers in the data above.

According to 2007’s County Business Patterns from the United States Census, the top three employers in the both of the counties surrounding each of the institutions are manufacturing, retail trade, and health care. These three industries combined provided for 8,117 of the 12,718 (63.82%) jobs in the Community College A’s county, with manufacturing alone accounting for 3,855 (30.31%) of the total job market. The three industries provided 8,411 of the 13,090 (64.26%) jobs in Community College B’s county, with health care alone accounting for 3,575 (27.31%) of the job market. Traditionally,

* Information within Table 3-1 was obtained via the National Center for Education Statistics College Navigator system that displays IPEDS data for all colleges and universities in the United States. The exact website location for this information is withheld for the sake of confidentiality.
health care would be the only area, out of the three, that would require training and education from the community college, while the other two employment sectors would be more entry level and/or skilled labor areas. The employment patterns of each of the communities could affect the value of a college degree to the members of the community.

While each campus has a unique history and culture, they are both members of a statewide community college system (CCS). The CCS has established a centralized catalogue of courses, articulation agreements with four-year colleges, and a common set of general education requirements. All of the students in the study have taken placement tests and are taking one or more of the developmental courses that are offered by the CCS as standard preparation for college coursework. Unique in the requirements for the CCS is keyboarding proficiency. Prior to enrollment, students test in math, reading, English, and keyboarding (*Education Catalog*, 2010).

All of the students in the study were degree seeking, so in addition to the developmental education course requirements, they were also taking courses in the core curriculum of an Associate of Arts (A.A.) or an Associate of Science (A.S.) degree within their first year. The standard Associate of Arts degree from the state CCS, and hence both colleges, requires the following coursework: six hours in composition; twelve hours in humanities/fine arts; twelve hours in social sciences; eight hours in natural sciences; six hours in mathematics, three of which can be computer science hours; and twenty hours in electives (*Education Catalog*, 2010). The standard Associate of Science degree from the system requires the following coursework: six hours of composition, nine hours of humanities/fine arts, nine hours of social sciences, eight hours of natural
sciences, twelve hours of mathematics (three of which can be computer science hours), and fourteen hours in electives. The state CCS also offers a degree known as the Associate of General Studies (A.G.S) degree that is not designed for transfer, but for “students who wish to broaden their education, with emphasis on personal interest, growth and development” (Education Catalog, 2010, p. 14). This degree requires six hours in composition, three hours in humanities/fine arts, three hours in social/behavioral sciences, and three hours in math and science.

The state community college system also offers Applied Associate of Arts (A.A.A.) degrees within 10 program areas (Education Catalog, 2010). The program areas for the A.A.A. are: “agricultural and natural resources technologies”; “biological and chemical technologies”; “business technologies, commercial and artistic production technologies”; “construction technologies”; “engineering technologies”; “health sciences”; “industrial technologies”; “public service technologies”; and “transport systems technologies” (Education Catalog, 2010, p.12). In addition to the A.A.A., there are over 200 career and technical education certificates available to students in the state.

Access

The researcher contacted six rural community colleges to participate by emailing key administrators on the campus, including college presidents and/or vice presidents, and requesting access to the student population being studied as well as campus facilities for the research. Two colleges responded to the email and agreed to participate in the research study after a follow-up phone conversation with the researcher detailed the college’s responsibility. The researcher collaborated with the appropriate college departments, including student services and advising, and identified a gatekeeper who would work with the researcher to generate a list of potential
research participants and facilitate the interview process. The gatekeepers then notified the potential participants of an informational meeting related to the research using the invitation to participate letter created by the researcher (see Appendix E). The gatekeepers mailed these letters on behalf of the researcher to all potential students who were identified by the gatekeepers. The researcher then arranged a lunch meeting with interested participants at each campus. The gatekeepers arranged for the lunch location, but were not part of the luncheon to aid in the confidentiality of the students who decided to participate in the research study. During the lunch, the researcher explained the research study as well as the IRB form to the students. Students who completed the IRB form then worked with the researcher to establish the time and place for the first interview. Students also provided the researcher with email and phone contact information with the promise of a reminder email and phone call the day prior to the scheduled interview. A total of eight students, four from each college, committed to an interview after the initial orientation meeting.

Participants

Participants were chosen using homogeneous purposeful sampling to “focus, reduce variation, and simplify analysis” in the phenomenological study (Patton, 2002, p. 247). Criteria for the sample included age, gender, race, credit hours, degree seeking status, and willingness to participate. All participants were at least eighteen years old to facilitate in the data collection process as it relates to consent. They were all self-identified African-American males who were willing to take part in the series of interviews over the academic year. All participants had less than 15 hours of coursework completed prior to participation in the study to qualify them as freshman during the study. The sample only included degree-seeking students, including A.A. and
A.S degrees. The associate’s degree requires a larger commitment in time from students, which facilitates the longitudinal nature of the data collection over the course of the year. The final criterion for the sample was the willingness to participate. Research participants self-selected into the research and were able to remove themselves at any point in the research study, which several students chose to do over the course of the study.

While eight participants scheduled interviews with the researcher during the lunch meeting, six of the students appeared at the scheduled interview times that took place approximately one month after the initial recruiting session late in the month of October. Late October was chosen since it was after the first eight weeks of class, which is the traditional mid-term. Students would still be transitioning into college, but they would have had time to settle into their fall schedule of courses and they would have some knowledge of their academic standing in those courses. Each of the participants is summarized below. The names of the participants have been changed to protect the confidential nature of the interviews.

Table 3-2. Interview participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Working</th>
<th>Parent attended college</th>
<th>Completed education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leonard</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marlon</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Computer Engineering</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>GED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>GED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviewee 1

Leonard was an eighteen-year-old student who was studying business at the time of the first interview. He intended to transfer to a state college before he completed an A.A. in Business. Ultimately, he would like to own a barbershop or a club in a larger town outside of his home community. He is the third of four children. He was living at home with his parents, and younger brother. His father has had some college education, but his mother has not. He was not working, and was attending college full-time, taking twelve hours: intro to business, math, reading, and student success. In reference to his peers, he did not have a girlfriend, but did have friends in his community and friends from high school who had gone off to other colleges. He chose to go to the community college to remain close to family, particularly a grandmother who has had some health concerns in the past. Prior to his freshman year of college, Leonard participated in a dual enrollment business course at the college. At the time of the second interview, Leonard was enrolled in one course, three credit hours, in his spring semester. According to the college gatekeeper, he had been enrolled full-time during the spring semester, but had dropped his other courses and only kept one night course. He was not available for a second interview.

Interviewee 2

Marlon was an eighteen-year-old student who was an engineering major at the time of the first interview. Marlon was working approximately thirty hours a week at a local fast-food restaurant and taking four courses at the college: reading, keyboarding, math, and student success. His goal was to work on engines, particularly diesel engines, but he also wanted to go to school beyond that. He was living with his family
who was staying with his aunt until they got a trailer “fixed up” for themselves. At the
time of the first interview, there were seven children and four adults living in the aunt’s
house. Marlon is the oldest of four children. His parents both dropped out of high
school after they found out that the mother was pregnant with Marlon. Since then, they
have both gone back to school to take classes. His mother does accounting work on
the side, and works retail. His father has spent time in prison in the past, but has been
driving an eighteen-wheeler truck for a living for many years. Marlon attributes his
connection to mechanics with his father. Marlon was dating a girl from high school who
was still in high school during the time of the first interview. According to the
gatekeeper at the college, Marlon did not sign up for a second semester at the college
and he was not available for a second interview.

Interviewee 3

Andrew was an eighteen-year-old computer engineering major. At the time of the
first interview, he was enrolled in four courses including: developmental math,
keyboarding, student success, and English. He was also working twenty to thirty hours
a week at a fast-food restaurant. His parents had divorced and have since separately
remarried. He had lived with his grandparents as a child, and later moved in with his
father. He was living with his mother, stepfather, and younger brother at the time of the
interview. The family was planning to relocate to another town at some point in the
immediate future. This move would secure work for the stepfather, and would relocate
the two sons closer to several four-year colleges. Andrew was the first in his immediate
family to go to college, but he anticipated that his younger brother would go to college
as well. His mother worked at the local middle school as a cook in the cafeteria, and his
stepfather worked two jobs, one at a food production factory and the other at Wal-Mart.
Andrew was dating a girl from his high school who was also taking classes at the college as a dual enrollment student. His girlfriend is the sister of another participant in the study, Marlon. Marlon revealed in his interview that Andrew and his sister were expecting a child in the spring, but this was not a fact that Andrew shared in his interview with the researcher. He did indicate that he hoped to move in with his girlfriend when the family relocated up north. According to the gatekeeper, Andrew did not sign up for a second semester of college. He was not available for a second interview.

**Interviewee 4**

Charles was an eighteen-year-old business major at the time of the first interview. He was enrolled in five courses: math, reading, English, business law, and intro to business. He had dropped one course, keyboarding, after struggling to attend it. His goal was to own his own business which would include both a music studio and a barbershop; both businesses have been successful in his extended family. His parents separated when he was child. He was living at home with his mother, who recently completed an RN program at Community College B. He was expelled from high school when he was sixteen due to a disciplinary action connected to a school fight that revealed Charles was in possession of drugs. He completed a GED in lieu of a high school diploma. Prior to enrolling in the community college, he attempted a barber program at a local cosmetology school, but he dropped out before completing the training. He attributed his difficulty in cosmetology school to a bad instructor. According to the gatekeeper at the college, Charles did not sign up for a second semester of college. He was not available for a second interview.
Interviewee 5

John was a thirty-four-year-old student pursuing an A.A. degree in criminal justice at the time of the first interview. His ultimate goal was to become a lawyer. He has a wife and five children whom he supported by working as a part-time home health assistant, working as a pastor, and by utilizing financial aid. When he decided to go to college, he discovered that he had not graduated from high school, which he attributed to confusion over dual enrollment credits as a high school student. He completed his GED in the summer prior to the interview and was able to begin college coursework in the subsequent fall semester. He is the only son in a family of five children, and he was the only child to go to college. He had been working in the food service industry for 14 years before some major changes in his life and his career led him to consider attending college. During his first semester of college, he drove to college with his nephew, whom he was supporting in his home. His nephew did not continue with him into the second semester of college. John anticipated his seventeen-year-old daughter would begin college the following year. John signed up for a second semester of college and was taking twelve hours of courses in the spring term. He participated in the second round of interviews.

Interviewee 6

Lewis was a twenty-one-year-old student pursuing a business degree at the time of the first interview. He began attending classes at the college when his younger sister started taking classes in the fall. He was living at home with his mother, grandmother, and sister. He was born with a physical disability that limits his hand strength and flexibility. His mother and grandmother were serving as his caretakers. Neither the grandmother, nor the mother, were employed. The family income was generated by the
mother and grandmother’s social security checks and the younger sister’s paycheck. Lewis did not, and has never worked beyond “odd” jobs such as lawn mowing. His goal was to become a traveling salesman, and his greatest motivation to attend college was related to independence from his family. Lewis signed up for a second semester of courses and was attending full time. He participated in the second round of interviews.

Instrumentation

Textual data in the form of transcripts was generated through intensive interviews, lasting a minimum of one hour, with the participants. The long or intensive interview is recognized as a standard method of data collection in phenomenological studies: “Typically in the phenomenological investigation the long interview is the method through which data is collected on the topic and question” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 114). The interview is a key method of data collection in phenomenology, and the transcript generated by the interview is the required text for analysis using phenomenological hermeneutics. Van Manen (1990) states that:

In hermeneutic phenomenological human science, the interview serves very specific purposes: (1) it may be used as a means for exploring and gathering experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon (p. 66).

The interview is also consistent with Culturally Sensitive Research Practices (Tillman, 2002, 2006) since the interview documents culturally specific knowledge of those being researched. Within this research study, interviewing was utilized to “draw explicitly on the lived experiences of people of color” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26). The use of interviews in the research of African-American males can be found in multiple studies establishing it as a culturally congruent research method (Brieschke,
The interview protocol was developed using the knowledge gained from the literature review. The questions were pilot tested. The results of the pilot interviews were rich and complex which allowed for a pilot analysis using phenomenological hermeneutic analysis; therefore, there were no major revisions in the content of the interview questions. The questions were open-ended to allow for follow-up probing questions that could elicit a more complex experience (see Appendix D). The questions began as a description of the courses and the major of the student to prepare them for the more complex questions about motivation, friends, family, obstacles, and aids in their first year of college. The research question format was “carefully designed” based on the literature review to capture a “number of perspectives on particular topics” (Hath, 2002, p. 102). Those perspectives include the student, family, and friends.

Data Collection

Following the orientation luncheon with the students at the beginning of the term, in August 2009, students participated in the first long interview. The first interview was scheduled after the first eight weeks of classes, the traditional mid-term designation, in late October of 2009. This timeframe allowed the student to experience a few months of college prior to reflecting upon their experiences. Interviews were scheduled to take place in a private and neutral location on campus. The study rooms within the colleges’ libraries provided the ideal neutral location and quiet setting for the recording of the interviews. Interviews were recorded digitally and transcribed by the researcher as soon as possible to retain non-verbals and sense memory from the interviews. The researcher’s notes were recorded using memos on the transcript. The memos were not
analyzed, but they did assist in the analysis of the transcripts. The complete transcripts of all six interviews, with researcher memos, are included in Appendix F.

The second set of long interviews was scheduled to take place in February of 2010. The second round of interviews proved to be challenging for multiple reasons. Many of the participants were unable to be reached using the contact information that they had provided prior to the first interview session. Students originally provided the researcher with a phone number and an email address for contact. Between the time of the first interview and the second interview, email addresses and phone numbers had changed for many of the participants, so additional research into their location and desire to participate was required. Two students were successfully contacted using the original phone numbers that they provided. Two interviews were scheduled via telephone during the month of February. The shift from physical to phone interviews for these two participants was made to facilitate a wider data collection time frame and allow the researcher more time to contact the remaining students in the study.

Due to the fact that the four remaining students to be contacted for the second round of interviews were from the same college, Community College B, the researcher contacted the gatekeeper at the college to establish a second luncheon, modeled after the initial recruiting luncheon to entice students back in for the second round of interviews. Upon contacting the gatekeeper at Community College B for the second luncheon, the gatekeeper indicated that three of the four student participants from that institution had not returned to Community College B for the spring term.

Since there are few resources on the practical difficulties of longitudinal qualitative data collection, the researcher consulted resources for survey design and adapted the
suggestions for face-to-face and telephone surveys to the second round of interviews (Czaja & Blair, 2005). The researcher also consulted peer qualitative researchers at the University of Florida for techniques and suggestions on garnering the second round of interviews after the students had withdrawn from the college and were no longer directly accessible to the gatekeeper or the researcher. The researcher utilized all resources to reestablish contact, including continued calling, emailing, and the addition of a “mailer” to the participants via the gatekeeper based on the recommendations of both the consultant group and survey design literature.

The gatekeeper sent out a letter “mailer” to the last known address of the four remaining participants, and the researcher sent an additional copy of the letter out to the participants based on the participant’s last name and addresses in the local phone book. The researcher also continued calling and leaving messages for the participants using their last known phone number. Through the various different letters and phone messages, all of the participants were made aware of the second luncheon and the researcher’s desire to interview them regardless of enrollment status. None of the four remaining participants attended the luncheon, and they were not available to be interviewed face-to-face. This could be primarily due to the fact that three of the four participants no longer attended the community college. The researcher consulted with peer qualitative researchers and determined that the students’ right to withdraw from the research study should be observed after the repeated attempts to establish a second round of interviews with the final four participants had failed.

After no additional interviews were garnered, the researcher decided to focus on the transcripts from the first complete set of interviews. Based upon the amount and the
richness of the data that had been collected in the initial round of interviews, the researcher made the decision to move forward with the data analysis focusing on the 138 pages of transcripts from the first interview and forgoing analysis of the data from the second round of interviews. The two interviews from the second round of data collection did result in two additional interview transcripts from students at Community College A, but those transcripts are not part of the data analysis of this research. They served to inform the interpretations of the first round of interviews.

As part of the member checking, in the summer of 2010, all of the students who participated in the research received an email with an attachment that contained Chapter 4: Results. All of the interviewees received the member checking email, even though it was not a successful method of contact for the second round of interviews.

The intent of the research was to involve all of the participants, even those who may have opted out of the study in the second round by lack of contact, in the final analysis of the data. None of the students responded with feedback to the member checking email. The lack of continued interest in participating in the research study could be connected to the cross-cultural, cross-gender nature of the research study and a rejection of the researcher as an outsider to those being researched.

**Data Analysis**

The method of data analysis used is phenomenological hermeneutics based upon the theoretical work of Ricoeur (2007) as well as the practical model of Lindseth & Norberg (2004). Phenomenological hermeneutics merges the four stages of analysis found in traditional phenomenological studies: the epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis (Moustakas 1994) to the three stages of
Naïve Understanding

The merger of the epoche with pre-methodological/pre-hermeneutical meaning leads to the “naïve” understanding of the text (Ricoeur, 2007). It is the first stage of analysis that establishes a general understanding and overview of the interviews and their content. Naïve understanding is key in the analysis process since it is used as a comparison point for future, more in-depth analysis. The researcher at this stage is “guessing” the meaning of the text and testing that guess against itself throughout the naïve reading. The product of naïve understanding is the “meaning of the text as a whole” (Klemm, 1983, p. 93). This stage of analysis is grounded in the concept of the hermeneutical circle, which is a process of analysis that tests parts of texts and
meaning to wholes of texts and meanings. The naïve understanding is the first iteration of the understanding of the text as a whole.

**Structural Analysis**

The bulk of the textual analysis takes place in the second stage of phenomenological hermeneutics, the structural analysis stage. This stage merges phenomenological reduction and imaginative variation from phenomenology with the analysis of parts and wholes from hermeneutics. In this stage, themes are generated, tested against one another, compared to the naïve understanding, and compared to the master transcript to begin to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. For Ricoeur, “Interpretation involves a dialectic between the pre-hermeneutical meaning and the results of structural analysis” (Klemm, 1983, p.95). The structural analysis of the text develops the parts of understanding of the text and begins to test the two (both parts and wholes) against one another. Ricoeur elaborates that researchers in phenomenological hermeneutics “situate explanation and interpretation along a unique hermeneutical arc . . . to integrate the opposed attitudes of explanation and understanding within an overall conception of reading as the recovery of meaning” (2007, p. 121).

In this stage of analysis, Ricoeur borrows from the literary traditions of structural analysis (Klemm, 1983). In the essay “The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as Text,” Ricoeur identifies areas to focus on to begin generating meaning and organizing the text during structural analysis: action, social fixation, and relevance/importance (Ricoeur, 2007). Action provides access to the meaning, “noema,” of the event and moves beyond the intention, “noesis,” of the event (Ricoeur, 2007, p. 153). The actions of the phenomenon individually and collectively give the
researcher access to the meaning of the phenomenon. The social fixation is the social "imprint," record, reputation of the events and the people being researched.

During structural analysis, the researcher is looking for a textual acknowledgement of the social role or importance of personal acts and experiences within the transcript. Both action and social relevance are the focus in the first cycles of structural analysis. The researcher begins with the master transcript, which is a transcript that contains all of the interviews, and then reduces the transcript using the phenomenological technique of reduction. The actions of the research participants, as well as the actions of people and/or systems around the research participant, are of interest when reducing the text for action. The researcher is also looking for the "social dimension of action" to establish the individual within the social phenomenon (Ricoeur, 2007, p. 155).

In addition to action, the researcher uses the lens of social fixation to focus the structural analysis of the text. Social fixation can be explicitly stated by the text, or can be interpreted by the researcher over a series of texts. The phenomenon of interest, or the participants themselves, may be influencing society or may be influenced by it. Both social fixations are of interest to the researcher. The results of this stage of analysis are transcripts of action and social fixations that are then further reduced to varying types of actions and social fixations. Analysis of social fixation includes moving from the master transcript (the whole) to the social fixation transcripts (the parts). The researcher is working both inductively and deductively searching for additional patterns in the data that fit with a specific social fixation (such as the meaning of college) while also placing that social fixation in the larger interview to determine the meaning and value of the social fixation.
During structural analysis, the researcher is looking for importance and relevance in the action of the phenomenon. Important events are “emancipated” from the situational context and can be applied to the “world.” These events have “durable relevance” and in some cases “omnitemporal relevance” (Ricoeur, 2007, p. 155). This is the stage of structural analysis that comes closest to the “essence” of traditional phenomenology, and it is the scaffolding between the individual meaning of the phenomenon and the social meaning of the phenomenon. The process of “emancipation” of the events takes place while analyzing the action and social fixation transcripts with the master transcript. Through the comparison of parts and wholes, the researcher is searching for the relevance/importance within the transcript, which allows the researcher to move on to the final stage of appropriation. The research process of phenomenological hermeneutics is not one of clear stages that begin and end, but of processes that are taking place simultaneously. A final consideration of structural analysis is more of an internal acknowledgement in transition to the appropriation stage of phenomenological hermeneutics. Ricoeur (2007) clearly states that the researcher must acknowledge that the interpretation of the text is situated in present praxis.

**Appropriation**

The final step of data analysis in phenomenological hermeneutics is the “appropriation” and application of the interpretation of the data (Ricoeur, 2007, p. 124). This step of analysis is the synthesis step of phenomenology and the transition step in hermeneutics. This is the stage where the knowledge that is created from the structural analysis is applied to the world and presented contextually. Phenomenological hermeneutics moves beyond the description capabilities of phenomenology, which focus on the individual and individualized meaning to create a universal essence of the
phenomenon. Instead, the researcher “appropriates” the knowledge and contextualizes it by applying it to the world. The result of situating the text in present praxis and appropriating that text can be found in the results and implications areas of the research study.

The three steps of analysis in phenomenological hermeneutics can be found in Lindseth and Norberg (2004). This study documented the analysis in each of the stages and transparently displayed them to generate an audit trail. This research study will do the same by clearly labeling the results of the analysis steps within the results section of the research.

Experience with Techniques

A pilot study for this research project was conducted within a qualitative data collection course and also a qualitative data analysis course. The project involved interviewing two students from a rural community college. Data from these interviews were transcribed and analyzed using two separate analysis techniques: grounded theory analysis and phenomenological hermeneutics. Phenomenological hermeneutics was chosen for the present study due to the connection to the theoretical frameworks of the study. Phenomenological hermeneutics addresses the phenomenology of the first year experience of African-American males in community colleges; it acknowledges the postmodern contextualized meaning of the experiences and does not attempt to create a grounded theory that essentializes the complex experiences of this population. Phenomenological hermeneutics also calls upon the researcher’s hermeneutical training and experience within a graduate degree in English studies which focused on methods of textual analysis. These characteristics of phenomenological hermeneutics make the
method of analysis suited to the research question, the research design, and the researcher's epistemology and training.

**Rigor**

The rigor of the research is developed via the lens of the researcher, the lens of the participants, and the lens of the external audience (Creswell & Milller, 2000). The lens of the researcher is clearly delineated throughout the research process to demonstrate researcher reflexivity. The epistemology, theoretical perspectives, subjectivity statement, transcript memos, explicit description of analysis, and documented audit trail clearly and transparently identify the lens of the researcher. This reflexivity is particularly important in cross-cultural research, specifically when the researcher is working from a white privilege vantage point in contrast to the subjects of the research. The lens of the participants is developed by following Culturally Sensitive research methods (Tillman, 2002, 2006) that give a voice to the researched, building in a member checking stage in the analysis, and staging in-depth interviews for thick and rich description. The lens of the external audience is addressed by explicitly describing analysis decisions and processes in an audit trail, which allows future researchers to duplicate the analysis.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

The analysis of the transcripts seeks to answer the two research questions presented in the introduction of the study:

1. What are the experiences of African American males in their freshman year of college?

2. How are these experiences related to the persistence of these students in college?

The results of the analysis of the transcripts will be presented in the order of the phenomenological hermeneutics process: Naïve understanding, structural analysis, and appropriation. The first two steps, naive understanding and structural analysis, will appear in this chapter. Early stages of appropriation will be apparent within the structural analysis sections where the researcher is attempting to explain the meaning of the results in the context of the lives and college careers of the students in this study. The appropriation of that meaning to retention theory and educational practice will be completed in Chapter 5: Implications.

As a final note about the transcripts, the verbatim transcripts include the use of bold text to indicate emphasis and periods to indicate the passing of time. An extended amount of time between words would be indicated by multiple periods (e.g. . . . . . . .), while a shorter amount of time would be indicated by fewer periods (e.g. .). When the text from the transcript is presented as evidence in the research study, the bold text and the use of periods is retained from the original transcript. Additionally, the use of brackets in the transcripts indicates an interruption in the response.
researcher interrupts the interviewee, or vice verse, the interruption is placed in
brackets within the primary response.

**Naïve Understanding**

The naïve understanding of the transcripts was established by the researcher after
transcribing the first set of interviews. It is a summary of the researcher’s first
impressions of the text and a starting point for analysis. This is the first attempt at
holistically viewing the patterns within the student interviews. The purpose of the naïve
understanding is to create a cursory text that is part of the comparisons of parts and
wholes in hermeneutics. Documenting the naïve understanding step also speaks to the
rigor of the researcher and the adherence to culturally sensitive research practices. The
naïve understanding in its entirety is below in the next three paragraphs.

The students all presented an optimism about college and their future success in
college. This optimism did not have a substantiated base of historic academic success.
Many answers were rote and at the surface level which may show a lack of complex
understanding of academic success, and/or an acknowledgment of social expectations
related to college attendance. All of the students had grand career goals, from a
traveling salesman to a music producer, and they believed that college was the key to
achieving these goals. It is possible that within the first year of college, these students
will need to reconcile their dreams with the realities of their education and this could be
a factor in withdrawal.

Relationships were very important to the students. All of the students report
strong familial bonds with parents, siblings, children, and grandparents. These bonds
were a source of support, responsibility, and stress, like all families. The family unit
showed itself to be a strong motivating force for all of the students. Some of the
students indicated that friendships have been problematic and can be the source of conflict in their personal lives. One student indicated that there were “real true friends” and there were “acquaintances” who want to get him into trouble. Real friends were life-long, while acquaintances were temporary or recent. Two of the students have faced criminal charges related to drug use while in high school and they attributed going “down the wrong path” to friends who were acquaintances. There was a paranoia about friendships that appears in the interviews which has lead to the young men not trusting new peer groups. They were relying heavily upon friendships that trace back to elementary school. These students may be having trouble connecting with a new social group, which could lead to difficulty in transitioning into college life. At the same time, this paranoia may be warranted and there may be various negative peer social forces that the students were protecting themselves from.

Money was a thematic motivator for the students. They were reacting to the “hard life” that they have experienced with their families and they connected monetary security with education. When pressed about money, they did not have specific monetary goals. Some of the students had lofty financial goals that seemed stereotypical: to be a millionaire, to have a nice house, etc. Several of the students spoke of budgeting and saving money, but only one student, John, the father of four, expressed stress and concern about his financial status. The promise of future earnings that motivated these students will not be seen for many years, and it could run out as a motivator in the short term, specifically with those students who were working during their first year of college and earning money that was more immediate. In the short
term, financial aid was helping these students attend college and not worry as much about lost wages.

**Structural Analysis**

Structural analysis of the interviews involved reducing the interviews using two separate lenses. The first lens was the action lens. The interviews were reduced to include only the text that involved actions taken by the students and actions taken by those around them. The reduced texts were combined into one action text and then further reduced to reveal patterns and themes that run across the interviews. The second lens used for structural analysis is social relevance. The interviews were reduced to references of social structures and values. These social forces range from the larger scope, such as the American work ethic, to the personal scope, such as familial expectations. Social relevance analysis allowed the researcher to bridge the individual responses to the larger group of African-American males. A final lens of analyzing the transcripts in connection to their specific race and gender was applied using the theoretical knowledge from the literature review.

The process of phenomenological hermeneutics is a process of analyzing across transcripts from parts to wholes. The action transcripts influenced the analysis and interpretation of the social transcripts and vice versa. Within each of the structural analysis sections exists the three elements of phenomenological hermeneutic structural analysis: action, social fixation, and relevance/importance. Elements of appropriation will also appear and be continued in the later chapter of implications.
Familial Experiences

Independence and interconnection

During their freshman year, these students were struggling to establish independence while still maintaining and valuing relationships and interconnection with others. Ideally, a student will find the balance of independence and interconnection that maintained motivation throughout the challenges of academia.

All of the participants connected college with the concept of independence. Considering that the majority of the participants were traditional students, this is not surprising since they were transitioning into adulthood. The students made claims of independence such as:

“But right now I’m focusin on gettin, doin what’s best for me. [ok] I’m gettin mine.”
“I am my own man”
“I wanna . . . be something . . . like be somebody”
“I wanna be choosing what I’m doing for the rest of my life.”
“It’s . . . . . about . . . being who I, being who I wanna be. My own person.”

These men viewed college as both the path to independence, as well as an expression of independence. This concept of independence was not as simple as independence from parents in a transition into adulthood. The independence affected familial relationships with grandparents, parents, siblings, cousins, and children, and it affected friendships and work relationships as well. Each of the participants struggled to establish an identity that valued both independence and interconnection.

The merging of independence and interconnection at the family level can be seen clearly in Leonard’s interview. He had chosen to attend the community college to remain close to his grandmother, who was getting older and had been facing health complications. He was clear to establish that he “chose to stay down here for a
semester or two to watch her” and that his decision was a temporary one. His grandmother was “like a mother” to him and she “is ready for me to go.” Leonard was negotiating how he was going to be his “own man.” His grandmother supported him and wanted him to succeed academically, but he felt a familial obligation to stay close to her and forgo an earlier educational plan to attend a four-year college that was several hours away. Leonard remained connected to his first college choice by driving up to meet friends and party on the college campus on weekends. Leonard wanted both to remain connected to his family and to establish his own identity separate from his family.

Other students also struggled to retain their connections and relationships with family while taking steps into greater independence. Andrew had family members who were accustomed to him helping out with various projects and chores, stating that “they can get aggravating like they want you to do this for them, they want you to do that, and you just like aint got time for that really” yet, “I end up doing it anyway.” While these men yearned for the independence that they viewed college provided, they found it difficult to break out of relationship patterns in their families that have existed for many years. Their first year of college was filled with large and small compromises and negotiations with family members as they established a new identity as a college student and family member.

John has a wife and five children, and the feelings of independence that he had were clouded by the father and husband responsibilities that have been a source of pride for him. He stated “I love my wife, and I give her everything I have, everything I got, but all that, that goes in the gas budget stays in the gas budget [yeah] you know
[yeah]. It’s no piece for her.” He has realized that his college attendance is separating himself from his wife due to their budget. While this separation seemed to be of concern to John, he also reveled in the feelings of independence that he experienced while at school stating, “when you’re on campus you’re young, you’re free.” He was free from worries about bills and gas money and can escape into his schoolwork. For John, college was fostering a sense of independence from his family life, which was more stressful due to the strains of his college attendance on the family budget.

All of these students were balancing the benefits of being connected with family and the benefits of intellectual independence. Balanced well, these students can succeed in drawing motivation from each area. If they are not balanced well, then their first year experience could be challenging outside of the classroom as well as inside.

**Family support/guidance**

Parts of the balancing act between independence and interconnection for these students were their familial relationships and the reactions that family members had to their college attendance. All of the students had immediate family members who positively supported their college attendance. These family members included parents, grandparents, siblings, and a spouse. Their support fell into several categories: a hope for a better life/warnings of a bad life, sustenance (in the form of food, lodging, money etc), and partnership.

The younger students had parents and grandparents who wanted them to live a better life than their own. They saw college as a way out of the “hard life.” For example, Leonard’s grandmother wanted him to move on to a larger school and a different community “Cause there aint nothin really down here. [OK] Not too much down here you can do.” She wanted Leonard to have more opportunities for work in another
community. Andrew’s parents also saw college as an escape. When asked about how his parents felt about college he replied, “they say they want me to have a better future.”

Some of the students struggled with the support of their family and the expectations that came with that support. Leonard’s father supported his college attendance, but wanted to help him decide upon where to go to college as a way to prevent him from going to a party school:

He know a little more about colleges and how they is, the environment. And some colleges he be tryin to get me not to go to. He believe all they want to do, to do up there is party [ok] stuff like that, he be trying to get, some colleges like XXXX for instances, he claim don’t, nah you don’t need to go there. You’ll probably flunk out after the first year [ok] cause all they want to do is party and have fun up there.

Leonard’s father supported his son’s college attendance, but that support was tainted by a threat of failure due to partying. Charles also communicated a sense of pressure that he felt was connected to the support that his mother gave him: “I know if I do something that really make, make better out of myself [mmhmm] that’ll make her happy because it’s making better out of myself.” Parental warnings and sense of obligation could be turned into a positive motivation, as John demonstrated. When John shared the news of his GED completion and his plans to go to college for a criminal justice degree with his mother “she was like, don’t let nobody tear you down. [mmhmm]. ‘I’m not mom.’ I’m gonna make, I’m’a make it.” In this case, John’s mother warned him against future struggles and John viewed the warning as encouragement, as opposed to a lack of confidence in him.

Marlon’s parents also wanted him to have a life with fewer struggles. His mother had attended college by taking online classes and working, and he knew that he could depend upon her to get to college if his car ever broke down. His parents were
resources for practical and emotional support. Marlon would “go to my dad if I am having problems with life,” and if he was having a hard time with school work, “I can actually ask my mother [ok] I think she a really good teacher.”

Andrew’s mother did not help him with schoolwork, but she did what she could to support her son when she saw him struggling. He explained: “If I have a rough day or whatever, or come home and do my homework, they’ll try to give me my space to do my homework and she ah, ask me if I want her to cook anything.” He later continued: “she come in there ask me if I’m hungry or whatever . . . or . . I mean most of the time I don’t feel like being bothered, but she’ll come in there and mess with me anyways [ok] so like try to cheer me up or whatever.” Both Marlon and Andrew acknowledged the benefits of having parents who support them physically and emotionally as they progressed through their first semester.

Unique in the family dynamic revealed in this research was the support of the spouse. John was the only research participant who was married, and he saw his wife as a great source of support in his academics. When asked about his confidence in his degree completion, he responded:

Seeing how far my mind has expand . . um my my, and to hear my wife say it, you know the confidence of my wife or, you know, she’s always like, ‘what that guy just did?’ and I tell her ‘Law says this and law says that.’ You know what I’m saying, and so I got a partner who’s helping me [mhm] know what I’m saying.

It is clear in this response to the question that John’s confidence was grounded in his wife’s confidence in him. John and his wife were integrating his academics into their personal lives by having fun and talking about criminal justice procedures while they watched TV crime dramas. His wife supported his academics directly through
complements of his intelligence and indirectly by taking an interest in his course work in their family time.

The importance of family support was communicated best when the students were asked about their peers who were not succeeding in college. Lewis stated, “You know, not caring how, you know some people don’t have no parents you know that don’t talk positive, or have to think positive you know, stuff like that.” The lack of family support, in its many forms, was perceived by the students to be a large risk factor for other students.

**Peer/Friendship Experiences**

These freshmen were also struggling with independence and interconnection within their peer relationships. They have retained relationships with peers who were not attending college while they were also forming new relationships with peers in their classes. Charles had friends “my age that I’m hanging with, that I’m from . . . ah . . . doing good in school, is, isn’t a high priority right now.” Andrew also had friends who were not going to school and felt the pressure of leaving his friends to do homework: “It’s like they look at me and think ‘ah you think you so smart’ or whatever.” The students acknowledged the existence “of friends that support you” who “also want you to fail.” They have had difficulty forming new relationships on campus that focus on academics, or college life. Only one student said that he worked with other students on homework, and that study session was created by an instructor within a math class. Relationships with peers on campus were more social than academic for these students, and they were also shallow compared to the life-long connections from their past.
Friends

These students were all struggling with the reality of life and friendships outside of school. While school was refuge, that refuge only lasted for a limited time. Since these students compartmentalized school, when they left school, they did not have an established academic support network outside of school. While all of the students had familial support for their educational goals, there were academically threatening external influences in peers, extended community, and social stereotypes. While students expressed that they wanted to escape their present social conditions, they were forced to live within those social structures every day. Peers served as a negative motivation to attend college, “I don’t want to be like them,” as well as a motivation to drop out of college, “doing good in school, is, isn’t a high priority right now [mhm] Like, a high priority is making money right about now.” These students were navigating through complex peer relationships.

All of the freshmen connected college attendance to making new friends and discovering new relationships in a positive light. Their decisions to attend college were decisions to meet new people and explore other social realms. At the same time, they entered into these new relationships with the burdens of past relationships. They struggled to have real connections with people whom they barely knew and struggled to base those connections on their academics.

The friendships of their past included deep personal bonds that have existed for many years. These friends were “like family.” They were rare and were very special to the students. Each may have had one or two “real true friends” who “try to support each other” through their life changes which included going to college, becoming a father, and struggling with family. “Real true friends” have proven themselves over time and
were the only friends who were allowed access to the inner thoughts and emotions of these young men.

**Associates**

The students had a numerically larger category of friends known as “associates.” Leonard made the distinction between friends and associates clear in his response about friends reacting to college:

> But you got associates really these days cause you can’t trust everybody, so the people I call friends are real close like brother sister, people I done grown up with since I was young. [mmhmm] But people I just meet, they aint, I really don’t call them friends. I call them people I associate with out here.

A lack of trust was the major distinguishing characteristic of an associate. Associates also created personal conflict or distractions for the students by burdening them with their struggles. Marlon explained that “people get on your nerves when you hang around you hang around too long [ok] . . .and everybody got their little problems, stuff like that . . and I don’t like to deal with that.” He continued with, “some friend will come around you when you get paid . . . Some people . . . only call when they want something.” Associates were not interested in the greater wellbeing of the student, and had their own personal agenda in their interactions with the students.

Associates also made the students feel bad about attending college. John, who was a criminal justice major, got additional insults from associates who judged his major:

> “They’re like, ‘oh you tryin to be the man now.’ [mmhmm] And so, they like, we can’t be hanging with you too much anymore [yeah] We do, we might do something that, you know what I’m saying, that aint by the law and ah, you don’t wanna lock us up and all.”

Andrew also had difficulty with his friends’ views of his college work.
But most times they feel like I be abandoning them and stuff when I told them I got like stuff to do. Like if I got homework of stuff to do, I be like ‘see you later,’ and they be like, ‘man why you leaving so early’ or something like that [ok] I be like ‘Well I gotta go to work,’ or ‘I gotta do homework.’ And they think, you know what I mean you hang around and get used to it.

Andrew later elaborated on how the reactions of his associates made him feel:

I think about it because I feel like . . . it’s, it’s making me seem like I’m better than them. At times I feel like because It’s like they look at me and think ‘ah you think you so smart’ or whatever or he fixing to do that. But it’s not really that. It’s just . . I don’t like to sit around and do nothin.

Andrew demonstrated the subversive power of his associates. He did not want to be like his associates, but he still wanted them to like him and approve of him. John interpreted his associates to have more malice than Andrew’s. He bluntly stated, “You know a lot of friends that support you also want you to fail and to and all that, ‘I knew you wasn’t college material.’” What is important to note is that these associates were still considered to be friends. They were part of the social structure that the students have created over time and they were socially encountered on the daily basis. This history with associates has factored into the creation of new friendships in college.

Part of the difficulty of establishing “real true” friendships in college was the history of friendships that these students have had in high school. High school associates did not discuss school and they were not connected to one another through academics. Within all of the interviews, there was no history of a friendship built upon common academic interests. Lewis remembered that he and his high school friends “talked, but we never talked about school or nothing like that.” Additionally, three of the students connected getting into trouble in high school to interactions with their peers. Marlon shared a story of getting into trouble with his high school friends that exemplified a common history for these students and their associates:
I was like in 11th grade. I had skipped school with some friends, and um... we had got pulled over. ... I had no idea what they had, what they had in their pockets [mmhmm]. So... I’m over there going, what’s going on and stuff like that and they tryin to blame it on me [mmhmm]. So, I kinda actually got in some trouble about that.

He learned “How to pick, pick my friends better. You know like... you can’t trust most people. Just cause they talk to you and they seem like nice people.” This common thread of distrust in associates was apparent throughout the interviews. When probed about his distrust Leonard retorted, “When I say I don’t trust nobody like, I don’t think nobody gonna run up and hit me in the back of the head or nothin’ (laughter) [right, right] like but I don’t. Just like, I don’t believe in nobody.” Leonard’s response clearly labeled the distrust as a psychological and emotional concern, and not a concern about a physical threat.

This underlying distrust of peers was always present in the student interactions with new associates both on and off of the college campus. New friends at the school were automatically associates since they were unknown. Despite all of the positive feelings and excitement connected to meeting new people, these new associates were not trusted. Leonard explained, “You can know a person 3, 4, 5 months and think you know how they is but they’ll change on you.” It was unclear how long it would take an associate to transition into a “real true” friend, but the timeframe presented by Leonard hints that no amount of time can prevent the threat of a friend that will “change on you.”

Another type of associate that was described by the students was the group of peers who “do nothing.” These were associates whom they do not want to model. The freshmen were defining their goals in opposition to this group of associates, yet they maintained relationships with these peers. Andrew described this group of associates as well as his disdain for them:
some of em graduated with me, and they still live with their mom, I mean I stay with my mom, but they just, it’s like they just staying to feed off their parents or whatever [mmhmm] that’s how they do nothing . . . But like . . . I could come home and they’re still doing the same thing they did when I left. [yeah] like you doing nothing all day.

Despite his distaste for these peers, Andrew continued his friendship with this group of peers. Charles and Lewis considered themselves “do nothing” people prior to attending college. For Lewis, “It’s why I decided to go to school, cause I was tired you know of not doing nothing. Tired of staying home . . . ahh . . . not . . . having nobody to talk to besides my sister and what not. So that’s why I decided to come out here.” While the students may want to change and reject their own behavior, they did not reject their friends or associates who displayed “do nothing” behavior.

Having a history of bad friendships, friendships built upon activities other than academics, and friendships from childhood, can make it very difficult to cultivate new friendships that are meaningful and that move beyond associates. This can lead to a peer structure that is primarily composed of associates who cannot be trusted with personal information and therefore cannot provide emotional support throughout the college transition, or any personal conflict for that matter. Unlike students who go off to college and live in dormitories surrounded by new people who are going through the same experiences, these community college students live in the same social communities where they have been for years. College does not replace the social community, but must be integrated into it. These students may not want to be like their peers, yet they continue to socialize with associates and continue to endure negative feedback which can cement the history of distrust in peers.
College Climate/System Experiences

College fantasy meets college fact

While focusing on social relevance within the interviews, the social stereotypes and preconceptions of college became clear. These men believed that college was important due to the promise of future economic benefits. They saw themselves as different from many of their peers or family members and college provided a “hope of somethin better.” When asked what something better was, their answers included:

“I want everything to be stable”
“a good job anyways to support myself and my family in the future”
“for me to have it easy street.”

What college had to offer these students was an abstract future life of prosperity. When the abstract future and the concrete present started to collide in the freshman year, there was dissonance within the students.

The majority of the students bore fiscal responsibility within their households. Three of the students were working to bring in income, and all of them were accepting financial aid to attend college. While their futures may be bright with dreams of being a millionaire, their present is financially challenging. John spent a large portion of the interview discussing the necessity of a budget and the struggles he has had with gas money. He stated, “my money is funny, and it’s not laughable.” Others described difficulty paying their phone bills or for car repairs. College attendance was threatened by lack of gas money and car troubles. The immediate demands placed upon the students often took priority over the distant future, and has caused several students to miss classes and risk their college success.

The fantasy of college is one of future prosperity, but it is also one of hard work. The men in this study expected college to be academically challenging. Charles stated it
best when he explained, “Really to be honest, I didn’t even really think I could get into here.” These students expected academic rigor and challenges unlike those that they had experienced in high school. The fantasy of college disappeared once the students started their coursework, which for all of them included developmental curriculum. Lewis documented this transition: “You know college can be hard, college was hard at first, but as soon as I got deep in it, you know, I found it to be easy.” Andrew also reconciled his expectations of college with his reality: “Well at first, I thought it was gonna be rough. I thought it was gonna be too tough and I wouldn’t be able to handle it. But now that I’m here, it’s alright. I’m just get along with it like high school.” The negative repercussions of low academic expectations were represented in Charles’ interview. When he considered the curriculum to be easy, he got bored, which led to a lack of motivation: “As the year went on, it was like, ahhh she’s talkin’ about the same old stuff [mmhmm] you know I don’t wanna hear it, but I gotta do it [mmhmm] but then I just be like, I’m not gonna do it.” The coursework was so boring for Charles that he chose to skip it altogether. He was able to metacognitively reflect and understand the pattern of failure that he was falling into, but that was not enough for him to break that pattern.

These students were reverting to high school behaviors and attitudes about schoolwork. Leonard sums it up as “basically it felt like high school again, but it was just new classes, a few new people.” What appeared to be happening with these students was a disenchantment with college. They came to college with expectations of something new and different, but it turned into their high school experiences all over again. The fantasy of a new collegiate academic rigor was replaced the reality of the
familiar. Students then replaced their high expectations with lower expectations. These lower expectations could be seen in John’s comment about his course grade:

Which I’m disappointed in that, but then criminal law, criminal justice is so hard [yeah] It’s, its amazing to get a C in there [yeah] You know. It’s amazing to get a D, you know. But you have so many people that’s struggling in it to the high C, where I’m at, I’m satisfied.

John has determined his performance was “amazing”, which he first deemed disappointing, by comparing himself to his peers who struggled to get a C. He has lowered his own expectations of his academic performance based on his freshman experiences with his peers.

Perhaps the most academically problematic conflicts with the students were created by their community college policies and procedures. The students were in an educational system that fostered critical and creative thinking on a path to independence, yet at the same time, they were expected to follow a new set of rules that were unique to college. These rules specifically involved registration dates, attendance policies, and mandatory courses. All of the students experienced difficulties in registering for their first semester of courses and none of them received an ideal schedule that was suited to their pre-college life habits. Several of the students were placed on wait-lists for courses and then moved into newly created sections of courses at the last minute. These schedule changes made it difficult for all of the students to attend all of their classes. Schedule conflicts led to two students dropping classes early in the semester.

The most punitive college policy was an attendance policy that would drop a student who missed two or more days of class in a semester. The researcher could not verify this attendance policy. Regardless of the actual attendance policy stated by the
college, the student felt that there was a college policy that would drop a student from a class if the student missed more than two classes. One student was constantly worried that health related absences would result in his expulsion from college, and this fear was a regular source of stress in the student's life. This strict attendance policy conflicted with the vision of college as a place of “freedom” that many of the students expressed.

Other college requirements such as courses in keyboarding/typing and physical fitness made the students question the value of their college education. John clearly, and comically, displayed the conflict between his independence and his collegiate responsibilities proclaiming “I’m a grown man, gotta do jumping jacks.” Andrew considered dropping out of his keyboarding course when he missed class due to an emergency appendectomy. It was an easy course for him to consider dropping since he was a computer science major and he could build a computer from a kit. The questionable practical use and importance of keyboarding and PE courses make them logical courses to postpone or drop, which could establish a negative pattern for students in their other, more essential, general education courses.

School habits

Each student had their own unique study habits and patterns, but all of these students shared a common practice in their homework. They were all enrolled full time (for at least twelve hours). They were also enrolled in a variety of developmental curriculum, with some in developmental math, reading, English, and keyboarding. They all preferred to complete their homework on campus either during class, or in the times before and after class. The most time that was spent on homework outside of class in a given week was “about three hours.”
It is important to note that all of the students placed into one or more developmental courses and that three of the six students were recent graduates of high school (Marlon, Andrew, and Leonard) while two were recent GED completers (Charles and John). When asked about their performance on the placement tests and their subsequent placement into developmental coursework, the students often based their performance on a lack of focus or discipline, or they felt that they were accurately placed in the classes. Leonard stated, “I aint, I aint tried as hard as I could on the placement test. I should’ve tried a little harder.” These students have accepted the social stereotype that working hard is the key to success. When probed about the times when hard work isn’t enough to create success, many of the students do not have a developed alternative to hard work. Marlon stated that, “I usually know when I want something bad enough, I get it [ok] No matter I do, I get it . . . . I just try hard.” For Marlon, and the other students, people who succeed wanted something bad enough and worked hard to get it. Andrew diagnosed a peer’s lack of success in college to “her heart wasn’t in it.” The students appeared to be a struggling to establish a clear locus of control in their academic life and performance. They wanted to take responsibility for their academic work, yet they were not sure of the specifics of their role in that success or failure. When working hard didn’t work out, then their success wasn’t meant to be. The freshman year might be laying the foundations of academic metacognition, but these men have not moved beyond “working hard” and “wanting it” as techniques for academic success. Not having a clear locus of control in their academic life can lead to patterns of victimization or a pattern of failure that is not clearly diagnosed by the student.
Another school habit that was discussed in great detail was attendance. All of the students brought up attendance, either in connection to their own behavior, or in reaction to family health. As previously mentioned, one of the community colleges has a strict attendance policy that was of great concern to James who has small children: “And that’s when a lot of that stress comes [mmhmm] cause you know if I miss this day here and I got to go to the doctor this day right here. That’s 2 days, so why should I go back to school.” The problematic logic that is presented here is that the student should give up if they fall short of a college expectation. James did go back to school after he missed two days of his class when his children got sick, and he worked with his instructors to keep on top of the work. In his follow-up interview, he stated that he continued to struggle with the attendance policy of the college and lamented the perceived negative affect that it has had on his academics. Andrew, who attended a different community college, missed a week of class when he had his “appendix tooken out.” He also missed class and did not turn in an essay in his English class when his grandmother had a hernia operation. At the time of the interview, he was working on that essay in the library for late credit. He justified not turning in his work on time with the logic that a late paper with grade deductions for being late would still be better than a paper that was poorly written and turned in on time. Both of these students were working hard to stay focused on college when they, or their family members, have had health struggles. The only student who revealed a cognitive, rather than physical, struggle to attend class was Charles. His interview demonstrated an extensive internal dialogue about attending class:

when I first get in here and I start doing my work, good, grades were good, and then like a little of the ways through I started seeing how it started
going down a little bit. Then I started thinking, I need to start picking it up. So now, that’s why I’m down stairs right now [mmhmm] doing my one of my projects cause it’s like, I just had to kick it back in gear.

Charles attributed his disinterest in going to class to boredom and repetition of course materials. Regardless of the motivations or reasoning behind the absences, these students have already encountered academic challenges due to class absences by the eighth week of classes in their freshman year. A pattern of absences could be the most detrimental college habit that the students fall into.

A final pattern of school habits relates to homework. All of the students preferred to complete their homework at school and reported minimal time at home studying. Procrastination did not appear to be an issue with these students who “hate putting stuff off” because “Man, that’s too much to carry on your back. I aint got time for that.” The motivation for finishing school work at school for Leonard was his desire “to get stuff out the way so I can get some time to myself [ok]. I like a lot of personal time.” Marlon echoed Leonard’s comments about homework stating, “really I get done with my homework before I leave so [ok] . . . yeah . . go ahead and get it out of the way. Aint gotta worry about it later.” There was a strong desire to be free of college work when not at college, which indicated that college life/work was not highly integrated into their home life/work. This may be a sign of compartmentalizing responsibilities and identities to simplify their lives, or it may be a sign of not bringing in family and friends as support for college, which could be another facet of the struggle between independence and interconnection stated earlier. The amount of time spent on homework ranged from one and a half hours to three hours a week, with the majority of work completed on campus or not at home. Andrew liked “to finish it in class. And what I don’t, I just. I mean, we get breaks at work. So, I can take it to work with me, and whenever I break I can work on
some of it then.” Charles was trying to spend more time at school working in the lab because “when I spend the time on the lab, it’s like I’m in it, then I’m out of it, then I’m back in. I need to just really take time out of the day to really just be in it.”

Despite the fact that most of the homework is completed on campus in libraries, computer labs, or in class, none of the students have worked with a tutor or a peer outside of class on homework. None of the students have met with their instructors outside of class for additional assistance in their classes, and any interactions with instructors have been limited to class interactions, even for those students who have missed class and who were working to catch up on homework. Despite fears of failure and struggles in class, these students were not prone to ask for help from those who have the most help to offer: instructors, college personnel, and classroom peers. Lewis clearly stated his preference to work alone by explaining, “I study by myself.” Charles doesn’t ask for help even when he is struggling. His strategy is “to sit there and figure it out on my own. [ok] I never, I really never ask.” It is clear that these students are not likely to seek out academic assistance on their own, even when that assistance is physically located right next to them on campus.

**Athletics**

All of the students mentioned athletics in connection to their high school past, their leisure activities, their sibling relationships, and their recommendations to improve the college. When discussing his younger sibling, Andrew compared his connection to sports with his brother:

Cause when I was growing up I focused on it but . . . I used to try to . . . be a little grown, try to get into worldly things early. My father stopped all that but my little brother, he aint really tried to do too much. He been focusing on sports like . . . like nerds do on books [laughter]. You know how you focus on sports, you go out there every day. You catch up on basketball courts you
by yourself or with others, but it don’t matter if anybody else out there or not, he gonna be out there (chuckle) [mmhmm] so he really focused on sports. He love em.

Myron also feels a sense of loss in his own athletic potential, but sees hope in his younger brother:

He’s a real good football player. [mmhmm] I know I would’ve been a very good football player if I would’ve stayed in it. But I started working. I started gettin’ money so I was . . . just quit football. I don’t want him to do the same thing [ok] He’s a very good football player.

The connection that sports have provided between male siblings is a powerful connection that is filled with pride, competition, and even some envy. It is clear that sports brings these families together, both siblings as well as parents and children.

Sports were also presented as a positive influence in the lives of the students as students. Andrew, who was a successful high school basketball player, explained his love of athletics and its positive impact on his life:

I mean, it’s cause I love sports. I always, I grew up with them. My father always when I was like young [mmhmm] you know its like whenever I was 8 or 7, all I was doing was sports. It’s like, being in the gym and people cheering you on is just . . something . . good to me. Sports have always brought good into my life.

Sports were viewed as good training for academics involving “focus” and a way to stay out of trouble. Those students who participated in high school sports were looking for a similar outlet that provided entertainment and a venue to connect with peers on common ground.

**Race and Gender**

Race and gender are a specific focus of the analysis due to the design of the study, a series of interviews with African-American male students, as well as the cross-gender, cross-cultural analysis that was being attempted by the researcher. The
interview transcripts revealed clear signs of stereotype threat, stigma consciousness, and the influence of “cool pose” as described in the literature review. This portion of the analysis is supported with longer segments of the transcripts to transparently reveal the interaction between the researcher and the interviewee when covering “racial” content in the interview.

**Stereotype threat**

The specific stereotype that was addressed in the interviews was the stereotype of the at risk student. The students were asked about the term at risk as a label for them, and about students like themselves who were struggling in college. When confronted with the stereotype of being at risk, the majority of the students responded negatively and rejected the title. Several of them also separated themselves from those students who struggle with college. When probed about the term “at risk” Leonard states:

L: I really . . . I don’t know [ok] Ahhh I know myself. I don’t think that nobody ever. I don’t know, I can’t say, I don’t know what people think but I hope nobody ever labeled me like that, but
H: OK, What, why do you not wanna be labeled like that?
L: Because I’m not no at risk person. [ok]
H: What do you think that means
L: At risk of goin down the wrong path [ok]
H: Does that make you angry at all [yeah] that somebody would think that they would know you?
L: yeah a lot
H: And be able to label you
L: Like a whole lot angry (chuckle)

When the questioning shifts to other students who might be at risk, Leonard diagnoses the other students with “personal problems.” He begins discussing other students who might have personal conflicts with college and who might be required to take care of family: “Or they takin care of old, ahhh, a older person like they grandmother, they grandfather or [could you see that happening to you then] no. [ok] maybe, not really nah
not. I’ve not been at risk, cause my grandmother.” Leonard can see that other students might struggle with college and when he finds himself describing his own personal situation and quickly rejects that he is at risk, by his own definition.

While Leonard reacted in anger to the label of “at risk,” Michael demonstrated a sense of sadness in the label.

H: What do you think about the label at risk? Do you think its something that you would like to be called?
M: nah . . . it's bad
H: yeah, It makes you feel bad?
M: Yeah. Yeah it make me feel bad. It hurts my feelings. That you would
H: So it's important to you to feel like you're not at risk, that you're not that group you're not that kind of person. You're not the stereotype.
M: yeah . . . I'm goin here for a reason, not to get some money.

Like Leonard, Michael was eager to differentiate himself from the at risk group. He identified the distinction between him and the others was his “reason” for college. Lewis also separates himself from his peers who might not make it through college by attributing the problem to a lack of support from family.

L: I think that some people not here because some people got, got low self-esteem. Some people don't feel pretty good about themselves. Some people always negative, talking down, down about themselves. You know, not caring how, you know some people don’t have no parents you know that don’t talk positive, or have to think positive you know, stuff like that.
H: So you think that those are good traits then to get through? To think positive, to have a support system at home.
L: Yeah
H: Ok. Do you think that you will make it to next term, even if you fail your math class?
L: Yeah . . . [you] gotta think positive, yeah.
H: So it's ok, um, when you think positive, is it ok to have some failures in there and to still think positive about yourself?
L: yeah . . .
H: What are you going to tell yourself that’s positive?
L: I can do it if I put my mind to it. You know . . . don't worry . . It can be hard, but I can do it. I just take my time, don’t rush through it.
Lewis, Michael, and Leonard all differentiate themselves from those students who are at risk. They reject the “at risk” stereotype differently and have differing emotions related to the stereotype, but it is important for them to not be considered as part of the stereotype. Michael goes as far as indicating that he doesn’t want the researcher to view him as an at risk student when he says “it hurts my feelings. that you would.” The focus on the researcher specifically as the labeler of Michael as “at risk” calls attention to the researcher’s outsider role in the interview. It also calls attention to the possible acknowledgement of white privilege in the interviewer.

Chris, on the other hand, connected to students who might be struggling with college. When he was asked about the lower rates of retention in African-American males he responded that it was “Probably for the same reason why I started to slack off. [ok] that they felt like it was getting boring, and they forgot about why they was here. [ok] What they was really, what the main goal of coming to college was.” Chris identifies with the group and recommends negative language to motivate them: “Nobody likes a quitter.” In essence, he is calling himself a quitter and stating that nobody likes him. This could indicate that Chris has internalized the stereotype and has accepted an inevitable failure academically and personally.

What could be differentiating these responses are the background variables of the students. Charles, Leonard, Andrew, and Marlon are all students participating in a special advising group for new African American male students. It was this group that was sampled at Community College A. Charles is the only student in this group who has a pattern of academic failure that could be affecting his willingness to accept the label of
at risk. His expulsion from high school and subsequent withdrawal from barber school may have already exposed him to the at-risk stereotype multiple times.

“Cool Pose”

The students mentioned various aspects of being cool, including possessions, money or careers, activities, and academics. Their cool possessions included cars and clothing. Four of the students had recently graduated from a high school that had a dress code, so clothing was a new element of college that they were adjusting to. Two of the students mentioned directly that people judge one another by the clothes that they wear. Marlon was wearing his work uniform during the interview and found himself wearing work clothes to school frequently due to his work and class schedules. He did not seem bothered by his clothes since “I mean I got a girlfriend . . [mmhmm] so . . . I’m not really worried about it . . . but . . . why do they need to dress up to get a girlfriend?”

It is clear that clothing was a concern to these students, especially in the context of their relationships with their peers. Michael also was proud of his car that had specialized rims. He felt that he was working a lot to pay for gas and upkeep on his car, but it was an important possession for him.

The careers that the students chose were connected to successful models that they had observed in the media or in their own families. Two of the students, Larry and Chris, identified a desire to have a barbershop, while Chris wanted to merge the barbershop with a music studio. Both Chris and Larry were pursuing business degrees, and these were the businesses that they viewed likely to succeed in. Both of the careers have a “cool” factor due to the popularity of movies such as “Barber Shop” and the music production success of role models such as Russell Simmons, Sean Combs, Kanye West, and the group Outcast. Music is a proven publicized “cool” career path for
African-American men who are interested in wealth, which these men are. A preoccupation with future wealth is a common factor amongst the men.

The cool activities that the students participated in were athletics, video games, watching TV, clubbing, watching movies, going to other towns, going to house parties, and “chillin” or “doin nothin”. The majority of these activities were with their peers, but some of the students expressed that they did what they wanted when they wanted. Leonard states, “Most of the time I go kick it with a friend of mine, I wouldn’t call her a girlfriend, it’s just a girl I be chillin with, but not . . Go chill with her for a little bit. That’s about all I do during the week. [ok] just sit over there and just chill, watch tv.” In this statement it is clear that Leonard is sensitive to the interpretation that he might have a girlfriend, indicating that it might not be cool with his friends if he had a girlfriend. He later goes on to state: “I’m my own person. If I want to do something I’m gonna do it. Like I might just go home, I might be sleeping, taking a nap and I wake up and I wanna go to the movies.”

Doing nothing was seen as one of the uncool things that these men could be doing. Marlon, Andrew, Charles, and Lewis all commented on people that they knew who did nothing and the possibility of turning into such a person. Marlon sums up the negative response best by stating: “I see a lot of people that’s like 30 and they aint doing nothin but they, nothin but sittin at home. [ok] I don’t think that’s cool at all.” It was the desire to not be such a person that drove Charles back to school after being kicked out of high school and dropping out of a vocational school.

It is important to note that academics were never directly connected to being cool, and in fact, these men learned early on that being smart was not cool. In one instance a
student mentioned cheating and that he had seen other students cheating so he felt justified in the act. Lewis recounted this event:

   Nobody was sitting right beside me. I just had a notebook right there, in the chair open to the words, definitions, so I copied, I copied it down and made a 100 [ok] It was like I was the only one in the class that made a 100. The rest made like a 90, some failed. I was proud of myself for making that 100.

When probed about his pride, he stated “I’m not proud of myself for cheating, I’m just proud of that grade I got.” Many of the students felt that they were smart, but it wasn’t something that they shared with their friends due to the ridicule that they might face.

   Being cool is important to these men and it is something that could be used to develop confidence despite academic challenges. Placing value in coolness over smartness is a lesson that had been learned prior to college, and now that the students have more opportunities to express themselves in their possessions, they are taking advantage of the boost of confidence that “cool” things bring them.

Other Points of Interest

   Many of the students expressed that the completion of the AA/AS degree was not their ultimate goal. Three of the six students expressed a desire to relocate prior to degree completion. Leonard stated that, “I don’t really wanna complete my degree here. I just wanna get it started. [ok] so I can transfer to a university and complete it at a university.” Leonard wanted to stay close to his grandmother for a little longer, but he already had a state university picked out as his transfer college. He even visited friends at that university on the weekends. Michael also had immediate plans beyond his current community college: “I’m gonna get my developmental classes out over here. Then I’m gonna go to [XXXX] and get that.” He was pursuing a specialized mechanics
program that was not offered at Community College B, but he was taking advantage of his current location and the college courses that were available to him.

It is possible that African-American men represent a more transient student population that reflects as more “at risk” in the quantitative data. Documenting student goals and valuing them even when they are contrary to the college goals, such as graduation numbers and FTE, could be a way for colleges to more accurately address the needs of these students and reflect the successes that are not be in the form of graduation.

**Summary**

What are the experiences of African-American males in their freshman year of college? These students were becoming independent while retaining close connections to family and friends. They were negotiating relationships with new peer groups, “associates,” and friends from their past. They were eager to meet new people and explore new surroundings, but that eagerness was influenced by wariness and suspicion of others. As students, they study and complete homework at school, but not with peers or with the help of college resources. These students struggled with class attendance due to personal conflicts and last minute class schedules that interfere with other personal obligations, such as family, personal health, and work. They all had grand dreams and aspirations of the future and speak of the future in an ambitious and positive tone. These students had varied detailed experiences with college in their freshman year while also demonstrating common freshman struggles.

How are these experiences related to the persistence of these students in college? The researcher saw few warning signs of withdrawal in the interviews themselves. For example, Charles’ pattern of withdrawing from previous classes and programs could
have been seen as a pattern that would repeat itself at Community College B. This would be an individual pattern that the other students did not present. At the same time, Charles also demonstrated developed metacognition skills and freely talked about his struggles to attend class and his internal dialogues that would convince himself to attend on any given day. After analyzing the interviews, the connection between student persistence and their individual activities as students is unclear.

None of the students were demonstrating social or academic integration at their community college, yet two of the students persisted as full-time students, one remained at a reduced course load, and three did not return to their community college. The factors that differentiate their persistence patterns are unclear from the interviews and calls to question models of persistence and retention. What factors allowed the two students to persist, even without signs of academic and social integration? Could these factors be unique to African-American males and could they be more significant than integration?
This chapter documents the completion of the appropriation stage of phenomenological hermeneutics, in which the meaning of the textual data from the transcript is applied and appropriated outside of the context of the research study. This chapter is organized by theory and practice. The implications of the research results on the theory presented in Chapter 2: Literature Review will be addressed first, with the research implications to educational practice last.

**Theoretical Implications**

**Retention Theory**

Tinto’s foundations in retention research clearly established the importance of academic and social integration into college for the sake of persistence. Both academic and social integration were further developed as important elements of collegiate integration for African-American men by Flowers (2006). Flowers discovered that the two-year college students experienced fewer academic and social integration experiences than their four-year counterparts. While college type, two-year vs. four-year, was identified as the variable of interest in Flowers’ comparison, the students in this research study indicated other factors that influenced their social integration (2006). The largest factor that appeared to affect social integration was a group of friends called “associates.” These “associates” were beginning to be identified while the students were in high school and may be the result of getting into trouble with peers in their adolescence. The threat of associates appears to prevent students from making meaningful connections with new peer groups in the first year of college. Their peer support groups are in their personal lives and many are not attending college. There is
no evidence in the literature of a detrimental peer group of “associates,” and the existence of associates complicates the process of social integration for students.

Academic integration was also lacking for students in this study. They frequently compartmentalized their school and home lives. Student study habits reflected that they do very little homework at home and attempted to complete their work while on campus around their class meeting times. None of the students have worked with tutors, despite their concern about their performance in classes. Some students did indicate that they spoke with their instructors about class, but those interactions were connected to student absences and related missed work and those conversations took place in the classroom and not in the faculty offices. Furthermore, these students were not involved in academic study groups with their peers. The academic interaction with the campus is limited to scheduled class sessions and their academic assistance comes from their professors within class.

The lack of social and academic integration on the college campus and the subsequent withdrawal from college for three of the students implies a connection to the underlying theory that academic and social integration positively influence college persistence, which supports the work of Tinto and his fellow retention researchers (Tinto, 1975; Flowers, 2006; Pope, 2006.) Despite the apparent support of Tinto’s model, there is no clear cause of student withdrawal documented in the interviews, and the connection between student withdrawal and lack of social integration could be coincidental. What is clear in the data is the lack of emphasis on social integration in the lives of the students. These students are not driven to connect with other students as traditional freshmen who live on college campuses may be. This calls to question the
level of impact that social integration has with African-American males in rural community colleges.

The lack of social integration can also be interpreted as support for Bean and Metzger's (1988) model of student departure, which deemphasizes social integration, and instead emphasizes “academic variables” and “environmental variables” as two major factors in retention (see Appendix B). The findings strongly support the details within Bean and Metzger’s (1988) model of student departure. The academic variables of study habits, advising, major certainty, and course availability all appear within the interviews as possible factors that impede the students’ progress. The environmental variables of finances, hours of employment, outside encouragement, family responsibilities, and opportunity to transfer also appear within the interviews, but not all of these variables have a negative effect on the persistence of the student. In fact, some of these environmental variables, such as outside encouragement, are presented as powerful factors that contributed to the persistence of the students. The students in this study revealed that family support could be seen as an overarching positive influence for all of the students, regardless of their matriculation.

While the findings from the research appear to support academic and social integration as key factors in retention, the interviews also demonstrate a more complex picture of academic and social integration than previously understood. The question must be asked, is academic and social integration possible or even necessary for certain populations of students and is it the appropriate pursuit for garnering retention in minority populations, or even community college populations? This is a question that has been asked and not yet answered by many researching community college

**Race and Gender in Higher Education**

The existence of stereotype threat can be seen in a few of the responses from the students when probed about at-risk students. The lowering of academic expectations that was found in the participants can also be connected to stereotype threat. Steele and Aronson (1995) state that lower expectations may have also been involved, especially in real-life occurrences of stereotype threat. As performance falters under stereotype threat, and as the stereotype frames that faltering as a sign of group-based inferiority, the individual’s expectations about his or her ability and performance may drop—presumably faster than they would if the stereotype were not there to credit the inability interpretation (p. 809).

It is possible that this study created a stereotype threat reaction in the students that lead to the disengagement in academics and eventual withdrawal of three of the six students. This disengagement in specific academic performance can be seen interpreted as both negative and positive “lowering the psychological stakes of an outcome through disengagement, one can make one’s academic environment feel less hostile, helping to maintain motivation and identification” (Nussbaum & Steele, 2005, p. 134). This is perhaps the survival strategy of Charles, who is at first disappointed in his C grade, but then lowers his expectation of a grade by comparing himself to his peers.

It is also possible that the participation in a special advising/mentoring group for African-American males might be introducing the stereotype threat to the students. If they feel that they are in a group that was created for students who are at risk, they may struggle with that label and with the implications of the stereotype.
The men demonstrated the desire to be seen as “cool” as means to demonstrate their pride, strength, and control (Majors & Billson, 1992). This posturing in response to stereotype threat is interfering with the academic progress or integration of the students. They are seeking other sources of self-confidence and a method of controlling social impressions through the act of appearing cool or unaffected by the social stereotypes of academic failure and the occasional real acts of academic failure.

Without the results of a stigma consciousness survey, the level of stigma consciousness in these students is not clear, but the effects of stigma consciousness can be seen in the results of the interviews and support the findings of Pinel (2005) and Major (1998). The students demonstrated a high self-esteem and high disengagement in their academics, which can be interpreted as a side effect of stigma consciousness. They have grand aspirations about their future and have low performance expectations in terms of grades. Their lack of academic integration can also be seen as a possible byproduct of stigma consciousness as a protective response to the stereotype of failure.

**Freshman Transition Theory**

Tinto (1988) poses three stages of first year transition: separation, transition to college, and incorporation in college. The African-American students in this study were not completing the separation stage of the first year experience, which could be preventing the transition into the next two stages, and an eventual successful first year experience. The process of separation is described as:

parting from past habits and patterns of affiliation. The process leading to the adoption of the behaviors and norms appropriate to the college almost always require some degree of transformation and perhaps rejection of those of the past communities. However close, the life of families and high schools and the demands they impose upon their members are by necessity qualitatively different from those that characterizes most colleges (Tinto, 1988, p. 443).
For those students who do not separate from their past communities and affiliations, Tinto anticipates an easier initial transition into college, but a more difficult long-term incorporation into college. Students who do not separate, but do persist are less likely to fully experience the benefits of the academic and social culture of college (Tinto, 1988). The lack of student retention demonstrated in the present study could be viewed as support for the importance of separation in the process of transitioning into college, but the analysis of the textual data supports an alternative to these three stages of transition. Hurtado and Carter (1997) “found that the ease of separation and maintaining family relationships are essential aspects of the transition to college for Latino students” (p. 339). The African-American men in this study also retained strong connections to family emotionally and physically through living arrangements, which calls to question the patterns of transition for minority students as well as community college students. This strong family connection was documented in other transition research as well:

> The results suggest that ethnic minority students attempt to incorporate their cultural community into the campus community as a means for achieving success in college, rather than experiencing the separation from their home community as a step in becoming integrated with the academic campus community (Padilla, Treviño, Gonzalez, & Treviño, 1997, p.134).

Additional research on an alternative model of the first year experience that researches the patterns of students who do not separate from their communities, would be an important addition to understanding the majority of community college students and it would build upon Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon’s (2004) model of student departure for commuter colleges and universities.

> The results of the present study on African-American males in community college supports the findings, as well as one implication, of Terenzini’s (1994) study in college
transition. Terenzini’s (1994) focus groups revealed that high school friends and family are both “assets and liabilities.” The majority of the familial relationships in this study were positive and supportive, and ironically, that made the prospect of separation from the family a more difficult one to consider in the future. Leonard, for example, struggled to reconcile his connection with his aging grandmother and his desire/need to attend college elsewhere and relocate to another community with more job opportunities. Similarly, students expressed challenges with their high school friends who gave them a hard time, as in the case of Andrew, but also deep supportive emotions from those “real friends” from their past. Negotiating these relationships is key to the first year college transition experiences and appears to be a universal college transition experience for students.

The importance of family in the lives of these students also supports Terenzini’s (1994) recommendation that orientation is important for both students and parents. This researcher recommends going beyond orientation, to a more proactive integration of the college into the community. Since students are not separating from their communities, and their communities may have limited knowledge and connection to the college, orienting the entire community would benefit not just African-American males, but the entire community, which in turn fulfills the community college mission to serve the community.

Practical Implications/Recommendations

Study Habits

The study habits of the students shows that they preferred to do homework on campus and struggle working off campus. Once the student left campus for the day, homework was generally put to the side to make room for family, friends, and work.
Colleges may find ways to help students compartmentalize their school and home lives by supporting the desire to complete work on the campus. College computer labs, libraries, and study centers may be the key to academic success for some of these students. Colleges may consider scheduled times in these academic support areas or they may consider strategic scheduling to create gaps between classes for students to work on the homework for their classes. They may also consider integrating the academic support services into classes more by using techniques such as supplemental instruction that would connect the students to additional human resources for academic support. Since these students are highly unlikely to ask for help academically, finding ways to embed peer tutoring and professional tutoring within classes could be a method of instruction that teaches students how to ask for help academically. Teaching students how to work together and how to ask for help could also be the reason that academic programs that focus on creating supportive groups and teams in classes are successful for students.

**College Preconceptions**

It is possible that the benefits of education are too abstract and too distant to serve as motivation when the reality of college interrupts the fantasy. These students, like the majority of Americans, have bought into the economic argument for a college education, and that argument has brought them into the doors of their respective community colleges. It is possible that this preconception backfires on students when they face the immediate realities and hardships related to college attendance. Colleges should consider marketing the short-term benefits of higher education as well as the long-term benefits as motivators.
High expectancy models of motivation demonstrate that increased expectations lead to increased performance. In fact, “Research consistently shows that people who expect to perform at higher levels set higher personal goals and outperform those with lower performance expectations” (Gellatly, 1996, p. 475). The inverse is also true; low expectations lead to decreased performance. Once the students trade in their high expectations for lower ones, they could be starting a low expectancy vortex that leads to underperformance, lack of motivation, and eventual withdrawal from college. Finding a curricular balance that both remediates students in subject areas and challenges them to excel could be key in the prevention of low academic expectations and the cycle of lower performance.

**College Policies**

Many of the students indicated that they entered into college less than a week before classes started. This late enrollment placed them on waitlists for courses and when new sections opened up, their schedules were changed at the last minute. One student found out that he was in an 8:00 am keyboarding course that he was never able to attend, and eventually dropped. Managing enrollment effectively and finding ways to work with students who register late is an important practice for community colleges that want to retain their new students. Community open enrollment drives can be a way to enroll students into classes earlier and to allow for testing preparation. Revising registration practices, and even scheduling practices, to suit the students could be a way to address student needs and insure scheduling that works for the lives of all students.

Since the students are struggling with attendance early into their first year of college, college’s may consider a program that assists students in making decisions
about attendance and then recovering from absences once they occur. Strict attendance policies, such as the one at Community College A, may not be as effective in long term retention as programs that set up mandatory tutoring assistance or make-up time in a learning lab. With that said, Community College A retained both of their students in the study, while Community College B retained only one of the four students in the study.

Remedial Courses

All of the students were enrolled in remedial education courses that appear to lack an academic challenge, which Chris demonstrates most clearly in his evaluation of courses. Steele (1997) recommends focusing curriculum on challenge over remediation to address stereotype threat effects on performance. He states that “giving challenging work to students conveys respect for their potential and thus shows them that they are not regarded through the lens of an ability-demeaning stereotype” (p. 625). Ensuring that the curriculum is academically relevant, engaging, and challenging should be the goal of all curriculum advisory groups. While the intent of remedial coursework is to prepare students for college-level work and make them more successful once they matriculate into college level work, remedial coursework has been established as an academic variable with a clear negative correlation to academic persistence.

The academic preparation of the six men in this research study was an underlying factor affecting the students in this research. Rosenbaum et. al (2006) found that the number of remedial courses that students take also affects their retention:

“students who need remediation in three or more areas are at significantly higher risk of dropping out. Even after controlling for a host of other variables, including degree expectations, students taking remedial classes in three of more than double the odds of dropping out compared to students taking no remedial courses” (pp. 87-88).
Academic preparation, as indicated by the need for remedial coursework, is a student variable on all of the retention models. Community colleges are required to address academic preparation due to their open door/open access policies. Determining successful models for collegiate remediation that do not compromise persistence is an area for future research that will help colleges balance the open access with academic success.

**Curriculum Alignment: K-16**

Curriculum alignment is just one of the many concerns related to the high school-college transition that students are making. High school curriculum, and even the GED test, must be reviewed with the understanding that a Bachelor's degree is the minimum requirement for entry-level positions in the workforce. John clearly labels the social shift in degree requirements that he has seen since he was in high school:

> it’s no longer a high school diploma, or as I say it’s no longer a middle school diploma [mmhmm] It’s a college diploma. When we was coming up, tobacco fields was everywhere [mmm] and you could go out and work in the tobacco fields and make just as much money you know . . .it, it wasn’t really harder at the McDonalds. You could go to the Burger King and all that [mmhmm]. Now . . the farmers they are going away.

The south appears to be slower in educational inflation than other sectors of the country due to the historical reliance on agriculture and industry that did not require academic training and preparation. As those jobs go elsewhere, or as they evolve into more complex operations, additional skills are required which shifts the role of K-12 education to a model of K-16 education. Preparation for college level curriculum within the public school system will lead to fewer developmental/remedial courses, which will both expedite completion of the Bachelor’s degree and facilitate collegiate academic rigor and expectations (Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003). The GED test should also consider
revision since the GED is no longer an educational end goal, but a stepping-stone to a
greater path of lifelong education.

**Curriculum Alignment: College-College**

College curriculum should be continuously revisited and compared to institutions
within the same state, but also across the nation. College courses such as keyboarding
and PE are relics in some states, yet they are requirements for the students in this
research study. Evolving the curriculum and keeping it relevant is important for retention
of students who have adapted to current workplace expectations. Our present
workforce demands familiarity with social networking and texting more than typing
speed and proficiency. A lack of relevance in curriculum can negatively affect student
persistence.

**Student Activities**

Participation in student clubs, fraternities, and social mentoring programs has
been shown to develop social integration in majority and minority populations attending
four-year colleges and universities (Guiffrida, 2003; LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs 1997;
Pope, 2006). The findings of this research study challenge the effectiveness of these
social programs as a retention strategy for African-American males in community
colleges. Extra-curricular activities pose a challenge for community college students in
particular, due to their external commitments to family and work. None of the students in
this research study relocated to attend college, so their lives outside of college have not
changed. Instead, it is their college life that must make the adjustments. The effect of
‘associates’ also limits the effect of social clubs and groups due to the lack of trust that
these students have in one another. Community college programs should take into
account the inherent distrust of peers, even within the students’ own race and gender.
Building programs that support academics and that are integrated into the curriculum could be a more successful model for this sub-population of students who distrust others socially and who are less prone to ask for academic assistance. Such a program could address both academic and social integration factors for students. Peer mentoring programs that are focused on academic tasks or performance have been successful at major colleges and universities, but not at commuter community colleges (LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs 1997). Developing a peer mentoring model that takes into consideration the commuter identity of the majority of community college students could prove successful for these students as well.

**Athletics**

A social activity that has positive peer history and has built the foundation for many relationships in the students' lives is athletic activity. The students recount bonding to fathers, brothers, and peers through sport. Sports also provide the students with fringe benefits of physical health, and stress relief. The positive connections to athletics and the benefits of participating in them are clear to John: “a better relieve of stress [yeah] If you around a lot of people that laugh and have a good time, [mmhmm] you relieve a lot of stress and don't have to worry about the world basically.” Four of the students spoke in favor of extra-curricular activities in the form of sports. One of the community colleges that the students attended competes in two intercollegiate sports, while the other does not compete in any intercollegiate sports. Neither of the campuses offers intramurals as a social/athletic option for students.

While organized athletic programs are expensive, intramurals are affordable for colleges and can provide students with structured stress relief as well as outlets for connecting with peers on a deeper level in a more familiar setting. This supports the
findings of a recent study by Brown (2006), which was conducted in a Southern four-year research institution. Brown (2006) recommended that:

Student affairs educators must continue to provide opportunities for African American males to participate in intramural athletic programs and should understand how this activity creates comfort and enhances retention for the student population by providing social and personal outlets (57).

Intramural athletics are an affordable alternative to intercollegiate athletics and can serve to bridge students into a new social atmosphere on their campus.

**Relationships**

Family relationships were extremely strong for these students, yet the students compartmentalize their academic and personal lives, which in turn limits their social integration. Finding ways to bring family and college together could be both a powerful retention effort for this population and an alternative way to socially integrate students.

Moxley, Najor-Durack, and Dumbrigue (2001) acknowledge the power that families can have in retention efforts by stating: “If students have these resources then it may be possible to mobilize them in the name of retention. If students recognize the importance of their families, why not involve them?” (p. 62). This strategy of “involving the student’s biological family (especially his or her parents) in the collegiate experience” has been documented as a successful strategy for minority student persistence (Padilla, Treviño, Gonzalez, & Treviño, 1997). Creating and facilitating family events on campuses may be an excellent way for families to work together on college goals.

**Areas for Future Research**

Retention research is an ever-evolving field, and continued research studies focused on minority sub-populations will help add to the understanding of retention through various lenses. This research study problematizes social and academic
integration as factors of retention in community college students, specifically African-American male community college students. Understanding integration as it relates to retention and persistence within commuter colleges could positively affect retention efforts for non-traditional students.

Additional research focused on college transition would also benefit in a fuller understanding of college attendance. As college attendance patterns are changing and growing to include less and less interaction with college campuses, transition models that account not only for commuter students, but also virtual students, are needed to address transition and retention in a digital age.

Further psychological research related to identity development during the freshman year for African-American males will shed light on the creation of African-American “maleness” in college students. Focusing on the rural south and community colleges could elucidate social trends that are unique to these populations or subcultures of students. Such insight into identity development could be combined with the knowledge on the external behaviors of students during their freshman year and allow practitioners to craft retention strategies that facilitate the integration of academic identities into African-American maleness.

Finally, the scope of this research was the freshman experiences of African-American males in rural community colleges. Experiences that relate to retention were the focus of the phenomenological hermeneutical analysis of the transcripts. Future analysis of the transcripts with the lens of critical race theory and the use of other techniques of analysis, such as discourse analysis, could reveal the strengths and weaknesses of this cross-cultural, cross-gender study.
Figure A-1. Tinto’s model of student departure (Tinto, 1975, p. 95)
Figure B-1. Bean and Metzner's model of student departure (Bean & Metzner, 1985, p. 491)
Figure C-1. Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon’s (2004) Theory of student departure in commuter colleges and universities (Braxton & Hirschy, 2005, p.75)
APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW GUIDE

I would like to hear about your experiences as a freshman at XXXX. I am interested in your academic and non-academic experiences that are related to your attendance at XXXX.

1. What classes are you taking this term?
2. What is motivating you to attend college?
3. What was your first day of classes at XXXX like?
4. Describe to me your feelings about college.
5. Have any of your family members gone to college?
6. Describe to me how your family has responded to your college attendance.
7. Describe to me how your friends have responded to your college attendance.
8. Tell me about any obstacles that you have faced.
9. Tell me about anything that is helping you to succeed.
10. How confident are you in the completion of your degree?
11. What would you tell other students like yourself to help them prepare for college?
12. What changes or transitions have you gone through this term?
13. African American males have been labeled as an “at risk” population of college students. What does “at risk” mean to you?
14. Is there anything that you would like to add?

Thank you for your time. I will contact you for a brief follow-up interview to discuss the preliminary findings from this project.
Good Morning,

My name is Holly Smith, and I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Florida in the College of Education. I am emailing you to solicit your participation in a research study focused on male African American students during their first year in the community college system. The catalysts for this study are my own experiences and observations of students while teaching developmental education and English within community colleges across the nation.

Your college has been chosen due to its location, size, student population, and student demographics. The goal of this study is not only to give voice to African American males in the community college system, but also to study small rural community college populations, another under-represented population in published research. This study will add to our understanding of African American male students and allow us to craft more effective and pertinent retention solutions to our unique populations of students.

I have attached a copy of the IRB for the research study which explains the study and includes the types of questions that I would be asking of your students. Your participation in the research project would consist of providing a location for the recruiting of students and the interviewing of students. I would also like to work with the student advising office to identify the sample population and to facilitate meeting with students on your campus.

As a future administrator, I thank you for your time and your consideration of this project. Please contact me via email (smithho@ufl.edu) if you are interested in participating in this research project. If you have questions or would like to learn more about the project, I am also available by phone at 386-754-4369.

Sincerely,

Holly Smith
<p>| Name: Holly Smith | October 28, 2009 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview 1 (L)</th>
<th>Community College B Library (1:15-2:15)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>H: OK . . . so the first few questions just sorta get you warmed up thinking about this semester thinking about going to school stuff like that. So . . what are you taking this semester?</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>L: Business administration</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>H: Business administration? Just one class?</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>L: Oh, the whole class</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>H: Yeah. What are . .</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>L: Well my major’s business administration, but I’m takin Intro to Business, a ACA class which was just out last class was just it so that’s over with, so I aint takin that class no more I completed that class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>H: OK</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>L: And I got, Math 080 and um . . advanced reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>H: OK</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>L: That’s all my classes</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>H: That’s it. Four classes?</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>L: Yeah it was four classes, but now it is three since I completed the ACA class.</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>H: That was a shorter class, like a minimester</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>L: yeah like a 8, 8 week class---um it’s college student success class</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>H:OK, alright, and what’s motivating you . . to go to school?</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>L: The money afterwards. The job opportunities, cause I know if I don’t It’d be harder to find a job, a good job anyways to support myself and my family in the future, so basically that’s what I’m workin towards. [ok] having a good career.</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>H: So what do you want to do then? You wanna business administration degree. What do you do next with that?</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>L: well, um, hopefully I’m gonna try to find a job. [ok] Like, it really don’t matter which field it is in at right off hand, but afterwards, I hope to um start my own business. [ok] Like own my own club or barbershop, cause I can bar. .I can do a little cutting, hair cutting [ok] So basically that’s what I’m gonna try and get my degree for.</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>H: So you wanna open a club or a barbershop?</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>L: Mmmmm</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>H: So . . do they have a cosmetology program here where you would learn to be a barber too? Get a certificate for that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>L: I don’t, I don’t know. I aint looked into it yet, but I probably will check it out, but I’m planning on transferin hopefully to a university.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
H: OK, and to get what degree once you are there? . . What do you wanna
L: The same degree. I’m saying I don’t really wanna complete my degree here. I just wanna get it started. [ok] so I can transfer to a university and complete it at a university.
H: So you ultimately want a Bachelor’s degree for business?
L: Mmhmm
H: And . . hopefully that will translate into a local business? Do you want to move back here [no] and open
L: Hopefully I will stay up there by the university and try to open something up [ok].
H: and what university are you interested in?
L: XXXX
H: XXXX
L: XXXX
H: XXXX. I think we mentioned that in the earlier discussion we had. OK. What about Greensboro?
L: What about it? [yeah] I don’t know. I just like the environment. My cousin started school up there this semester and I been goin there on the weekends. And I like what’s up there. [ok] so I wanna go up there.
H: So ultimately you want to transfer out, get a business degree, a bachelor’s degree, and then open a business there that would be sorta more connected to what you like to do . . . clubs, haircutting and that sort of stuff. [mhm]. Feels like a social [yeah basically] kind of desire.
L: yeah that’s what I been thinking about. Taking a social class too. Social degree, human services.
H: OK. Alright. So tell me a little bit about your first day of classes. So you . . mentioned earlier that you went to high school in this town, right? [mhm] and a lot of the people in your class are from your high school, so when you came here for your first . . you . . maybe for the first week of classes, what was that like for you?
L: I’m sayin, basically it felt like high school again, but it was just new classes, a few new people [ok]. And like, the attendance policy was a little different. And I could dress was a little different. It was a little better already. But like I could wear what I wanted to. You didn’t, they didn’t press you about goin to class or doin your work. I could do it on my own time. There’s really no certain date to do it.
H: OK, so how did you feel about that then? Was that good or bad?
L: I had more privileges, it was real good
H: Are you still enjoying those privileges now? [mhm] Are you used to it?
L: I’m used to it. But I still, I’m still enjoying it. [OK]
H: What about the actual classes? So you are in a math class. How is that class going? Was it . . were you concerned on the first day? Did you feel comfortable in the math. Have you challenged yourself yet

L: Yeah

H: challenged yourself yet

L: Yeah I feel, I feel comfortable right now, the part I’m in. Cause before when I graduated I took kinda a similar math [mmhmm] an advanced math, so basically it’s just a little higher step compared to the same thing that I done did already so most of the stuff I already know how to do.

H: OK. So you felt comfortable because you are ready knew how to do some of the stuff. It wasn’t over your head.

L: I was on the basic. Maybe a couple of things I hadn’t learned, but most of it I already knew.

H: Are you still feelin that way now? [mmhmm] mid-way through?

OK. Alright. How are you doin in your classes?

L: Pretty good, yeah.

H: What is pretty good?

L: I aint had nothing less than a B so far. [ok] I think my lowest grade was like a 89. [ok] Last time I checked on my grades.

H: And how do you feel about that? You like where that is?

L: Yeah

H: You want it better?

L: I want it better. I really want straight As. I know I’m capable of doin it, but. Right now I know straight As is better than what it is. Cause some people they aint making as good as I am right now.

H: OK, so you feel like maybe you are in the middle of the pack [yeah] or higher than your peers?

L: Probably a little higher.

H: A little higher, OK. Alright, so . . . I want you to talk a little bit more generally about college. Cause you talked earlier, like this is going to give you an opportunity to sorta do something different with your life, economic benefits, money, so what else do you feel about college? Why else would you come here? What else is happening? Not just academic, in the future, but like right now.

L: . . . Really . . . that’s all I’m really focused on. . . is the education. Cause I’m sayin they got social benefits too. You meet new people, learn how to associate with peers. But right now I’m focusin on gettin, doin what’s best for me. [ok] I’m gettin mine. I aint even stressin the other part about college.

H: OK. So . . you just come to go to class? Or are there other, you mentioned some social things, are there other things that you do when you’re here?

L: Nah . . nah not really. Talk to some of my peers, get to know them a little bit better. See how they, what they in here for, and what
they are doin as far as when they leave, or why they in college, but
most of the time I’m focused on goin to class and gettin my work
done.
H: OK. How much getting your work done? So how much time do
you spend working on school stuff, outside of school?
L: (exhale) Never been no set time. Whatever I got to do, like if it’s
a set assignment like, a essay, or readin a book, or doin a assignment
in a textbook. Half the time, how much time it take that’s how much
time I use. But if I studyin, like really . . . right now at this point,
classes aint really too hard cause I’m just startin, so I don’t have to
study as much, but I do take time to study, like an hour and a half or
so, to study. [ok]
H: And that doesn’t feel like it is too much, or maybe too little? Are
you studying more or less than when you were in high school?
L: Probably a little less cause the classes are a little harder [in high
school] I was at such a high level, but now I’m back in kindergarten.
You start all over again.
H: How do you think . . . did you have to take a placement test
[mhm] to get into these courses? So what do you think happened
with that? If you were at the
L: I think I coulda [higher level in high school] yeah, I coulda made
a little higher on math.
H: OK. What do you think happened?
L: I aint, I aint tried as hard as I could on the placement test. I
should’ve tried a little harder. But the rest of em I believe I was
placed in the right subject. [ok] Cause all my, the rest of them
besides math, the rest of em are high. {ok} I’m already bout to test
out of some of my classes so.
H: So . . how do they do the testing here then? Is it all on one day
and you take them all?
L: Yeah, [and then you come in] all on one day. It’s like a four part
test. Reading, was it four or five? Reading, two kinds of math. It’s
like ahh . . . a written math and you got numerical math where you
use numbers. And they got
H: so it’s not a scantron test
L: nah
H: You actually write it out and a teacher looks at it
L: Nah, Nah, it’s on a computer.
H: Oh, It’s on . . OK
L: It’s on a computer, but it’s four parts, but it like, it’s written. [ok]
Like the numbers you got math problems [ok]. Yeah [put] There’s a
certain amount of math problems that you pick the right answer, and
then go to the next question. It’s about . . 15-20 questions on each
assessment.
H: Oh, that’s not that many.
L: Then they do on like, then they do um take the paper out, take the
results out. um. they go through a scantron, not a... I don’t know if they go through a scantron, but it’s like a scale. And whatever you made between what numbers they got, then that’s where you stand. Like, like what classes you are put, placed in.

H: Do you get more than one chance to take the test, or is it one shot [one shot] and you go right in.

L: But you get more than one chance if you haven’t started. Like if you come early [mmhmm] like a month or two before the semester is supposed to start [mmhmm] you can keep rescheduling until you make as high as you want. But if you wait like deadline, then whatever you placed in, you just placed in.

H: So what did you do?

L: I took mine, see I took mine a couple weeks earlier [mmhmm]. But then I, they didn’t have enough room for me to go retake it so I just had to keep what I had [ok] I wish I could, cause I probably would’ve been a little higher in math, but might’ve test out that math.

H: OK. So you take a test at the end and then is there a mandatory exit test [I think] to get to the next level?

L: If I’m not mistaken, you take a test, and if it’s high enough for you to be in a higher math, then if you supposed to go to the next math that’s after that one, you can skip to the higher one or the next one after.

H: Oh, so you might be able to skip over?

L: Yes. If it’s high enough [ok] then that class at the end of the semester [ok].

H: Alright. OK. Umm... tell me a little bit about your family and ah... and college. Do you have any family members that went through college? That went to this college?

L: Yeah, um... my cousins. A couple of them, a few of my cousins like two or three all came here [ok]. My father came here too.

H: OK. What degree did your dad go for?

L: Criminal, criminal justice. [ok] mmhmm he currently DOC at Mortenson

H: OK, so that would be a corrections officer?

L: yeah

H: OK, and how were you...how old were you when he went to school?

L: I was young, like 10.

H: OK, do you remember him going?

L: Yeah, I remember it good and well

H: (laughter) What do you remember?

H: You have a smile on your face, so is that...do, do you then have
good impressions of college?
L: mmhmm. I always liked school.
H: When did you [I always] know you wanted to go?
L: I mean since I was little. [ok] I already knew I wanted to go to
college. I wasn’t planning on going to no forces or nothin like that.
[ok] I always had my mind set on college.
H: So you said you didn’t want to go into the forces, so your options
you though were college or military?
L: mmhmm.
H: ok
L: basically, yeah. Cause I wasn’t planning on going straight into no
career. I really didn’t have no career path to go into.
H: Ok. Alright. So, you live at home with your parents, your dad,
your mom?
L: At the moment.
H: ok, what about your mom. Did she go to college?
L: mmnnn
H: No? What does she do?
L: She work at a hotel. [OK] mmhmm
H: So, do you notice then the difference between your parents?
L: mmhmm The opportunities. [yeah]. OK. And is that something
that played into your decision?
L: Yeah. A big role.
H: What about your Dad’s job. Is that the kind of career that you
want.
L:mmmmmm
H: Why or why not?
L: I ... I’m not really inter interested in criminal justice. [ok]. I got
my own, I am my own man. I got my own likes and dislikes. I ain’t
followin nobody. [ok] Just what I like to do. I like to cut hair. I like
to party a little bit, and I know that’s quick fast money. (laugh)
H: (laugh) yeah, ok.
L: You, you own your own club, you aint got to do too much, but sit
back and manage it.
H: OK, and that’s what you want to learn how to do, sorta how to
pull those strings and manage that?
L: mmhmm
H: OK. What about the connection to Greensboro? So you
mentioned you had a cousin that’s going there? So, is that why
you’re choosing that location for your next ... school?
L: Nah. Not necessarily. Cause, I already knew he was going to
Greensboro, but I still hadn’t made up my mind which college I
wanted to go to cause I got a lot of friends at a lot of different other
different colleges [mmhmm] so, if that played a part that I wanted to
go there and stay with him I could have, you feel me, I could’ve
I stayed with a whole bunch of friends. I took wanting to go to college because of them, but no, I like, it’s just the environment. I like the environment, the people, they friendly up there. [mmhmm]. And it’s a good school. [ok]

H: Why did you choose to start here, and not just go right there?
L: Because... my um... my grandma... [ok] yeah, I want to stay and watch my grandma a little bit ‘cause she, she um, she aint doin too well [ok]. I chose to stay down here for a semester or two to watch her and then I was gonna leave.

H: So you don’t necessarily want to complete an associate degree, you just want to get your coursework and then transfer? And right now you want to stay close to home, just in case something happens with your family. Do you anticipate something...
L: mmmmm... not really, but just to be on the safe side for right now.

H: OK. Cause you’re gonna get to a point then where... the longer you stay here, the older your grandmother gets as well [mmhmm] so at some point, a decision will have to be made. Whether or not you do want to leave. So how close are you with your grandma?
L: Real close. Like a mother. [ok] A mother, son type ordeal.

H: OK, and how does she feel about you going to school?
L: She ready for me to go [laughter] she ready

H: She ready for you to get out of here or just ready for you
L: Ready for me to get out of Richmond county period.

H: Yeah, why is that?
L: Cause there aint nothin really down here.[OK] Not too much down here you can do [ok]

H: So she wants to see you branch out [mmhmm] sorta go away [yeah] and... and do stuff. OK

H: So, how then. I wanna talk a little bit about how each of your, you family members have sorta played a role in you going here to this college, and sorta how that helps, or maybe doesn’t help. So, you’re living at home and you have the support network also of your grandmother, so... how do they help you in terms of school? What are some things that help? And this doesn’t have to be doing homework kind of stuff [mmhmm] it could just be conceptually support, or any other of that stuff.
L: Yeah, they do show...um... they do show support, but now I’m sayin my grandma, she always wanted me to go places and do things. She always told me that if I aint either get a college degree, or go off somewhere. That I wasn’t, You, you couldn’t do nothing around here. [ok] It’d be hard. You’d be strugglin’. And to prevent all that I might as well go ahead and get it out of the way early, while I got the opportunity to [ok]. My Daddy, he always, yeah he focuses on that. He loves school. He, he didn’t care about sports or
nothin’. He always had me focused on school. He really didn’t want me to be involved in sports. Why, I really don’t know, but he always motivated me to do, do right in school. Education, that’s always what he beat in my head. Education. Education. Education. He always tell me, no you’re not goin’ into no service, or none of that. Cause he used to be in the Navy for 4 years, so he said he know why, he said, it’s best for me to go, to go to school [ok] to get a better job. [ok]

H: So your dad, did he have the GI Bill then to go to school? [yeah] Because of the Navy? [yeah]. OK... Um... What about maybe some of the disadvantages of having family around. Is there anything that could be sorta getting in the way?

L: Well there are... certain colleges... like, some of them my Daddy and grandma, some of them that, well not it ain’t necessarily my grandma, she really don’t care what college I go to as long as I go to school period. But my father, you know, he a good more younger, so he know a little more about colleges and how they is, the environment. And some colleges he be tryin to get me not to go to. He believe all they want to do, to do up there is party [ok] stuff like that, he be trying to get, some colleges like A&T for instances, he claim don’t, nah you don’t need to go there. You’ll probably flunk out after the first year [ok] cause all they want to do is party and have fun up there. Certain colleges like that, but other than that, there really aint no disadvantages. They support me in everything I want to do.

H: OK... so, and the party thing, so is Greensboro not known as a party school?

L: Some schools, but, some, some schools not.

H: OK. Is there maybe an advantage in your dad’s sorta point of view. So you came here for your first year so you wouldn’t be partying? I mean, did he encourage you to come to this college [unhunh] and stay closer.

L: Nah, he encourage me to do what I want to do. [ok] If I want to go, just go where you want to go. [ok] I just chose to go here for the time being.

H: Alright... So, I want to talk a little bit more then about decision making processes coming here. Did finances have anything to do with coming here, as opposed to going to Greensboro, any other college whenever you were a senior, thinking about what do I wanna do, where do I wanna go?

L: No, because, I coulda got financial aid at any of the colleges that I applied to, so nah I got to. Nah that really a issue.

H: OK. So you have applied for federal financial aid and have received it and you don’t have any concerns? You are not having to sorta struggle [unhunh] to pay for anything? OK. Umm... Alright.
So, let’s talk a little bit about your friends now. So you had mentioned that a bunch of your friends had gone to different schools and some of them are here as well. So let’s talk about that. Your decision and your friends and where they went and how that played into what you were interested in doing.

L: Ah really. It didn’t. Obviously it didn’t have a part in it at all cause I got friends, but I always, I always been a leader. [OK] I don’t think I can follow them. I know they all gonna be there. I keep up with them, but my decision, you know what schools I wanna go to, was based on me and how I feel. [mmhmm]. They don’t have no part in it.

H: And you think the largest thing that made you wanna go here was staying close to your family, [mmhmm] your grandma [mmhmm].

L: As far as friends, that, that was the last thing on my mind when I cared about staying [ok] (exhale).

H: What about now? You were mentioning sometimes you get to know other people, other students. Is that something that makes you feel good about going to school? Knowing people in class [yeah] and sorta making new friends?

L: It’s always fun to meet new people, but that’s everywhere you go. [ok]

H: So you describe yourself as a leader, and . . do you think that translates into academics as well? That you feel like a leader in a classroom? [mmhmm] And you feel like you maybe represent other students?

L: yeah. [ok] A lot of people be asking me for help. [ok] I try to give em help like [like what, give me an example]. Like something. Somebody don’t know what to do on a certain math problem. I’ll be one of the first ones XXXX you know how to do this [laughter—ok]. Like that. Or if like say, somebody want something to eat, or need some change, I be one of the first person they come to, cause they know I’m a generous person. I don’t mind givin.

H: OK. Do you like that part of your personality?

L: Yeah

H: That is something that you [mmhmm] feel good about?

L: Cause I know if I, 9 times out of 10 they help me out too cause they seen I was quick to lend a hand. [OK]. I always been like that though.

H: Do you think that, have you had to call on other people to help you [not really] to do any favors. ok

L: But, if I do need it, and they offer, I wouldn’t mind takin. But I don’t just always go out and ask for something. I try to get it for myself.
H: OK. Alright. So you have then, it sounds like a pretty good support system of family that is really supporting what you choose to do. Not a specific path, so when you talk to your grandma or you dad about, hey I wanna go and open a club, They are like, OK XXXXX (laughter).

L: If that’s what you wanna do.

H: Work it out, figure out how to do it.

L: They aint like [and ahh—go ahead] They aint like some parents wanting to live through they child. No you gonna do this, no you gonna be a basketball player. [right] My peoples aint like that.

H: Do you know, do you have friends who do have parents like that. They’re driving them to live out their own lives?

L: Nah, cause, I really try not to get involved in too many personal issues [ok] But not close friends. As far as close friends, I don’t know none of their parents like that. But you got associates really these days cause you can’t trust everybody, so. The people I call friends are real close like brother sister, people I done grown up with since I was young [mhmhm] But people I just meet, they aint, I really don’t call them friends. I call them people I associate with out here[ok].

H: Of the friends that you have, that you’ve grown up with, how many of them are going to college?

L: (exhales—mumbles names and counts on hand) About 5 or 6 I can name right off hand.

H: Out of? Maybe like half, 75%?

L: Yeah most of ‘em

H: Most of them?

L: Yeah most of the people, only about really close, close friends I hang around like 2 or 3 of them aint in college. [ok]. Mhmhm. That’s cause one of ‘em still in high school, one of em just decided to go just chill at home right now, just work and stack his money, but he plannin’ on goin’ to college next year. He said he’s startin’, plannin’ on startin’ next year.

H: OK. So some of them are still in high school, some are going to college, one of your friends is right into work [mhmhm] saving money. Um, did any of them choose the military?

L: Now, the one in high school, he’s planning on choosing the military [ok]. When he, when he graduate this year.

H: How do you feel about that as his friend?

L: So, I support him in any way. that’s what he wanna do. I aint gonna stop him from doing that. He don’t wanna do, unless it is something that’s negative. There aint nothing wrong with going into the military.
H: What branch is he considering? Do you know?
L: Nah, He, he’s thinking right now. He’s been talking about the
Army, but (laughter) his mom said she don’t know about the Army
H:(laughter) What branch do you think he should choose—would
you have chosen if you had to go? The Navy like your dad?
L: mmmm, I don’t know. I aint scared of water, so maybe. I don’t
know though. I’d rather be on land though. [laugher] I’d rather be
on land. I don’t know. [I’d like the opportunity maybe to fly planes]
Yeah the airforce [yeah, I don’t wanna be hardcore, frontline
(laughtsr). Fly away from all of the shooting] First into combat—
nah [ohh that’s tough]. Call me last. I’ll be in the back waiting on
ya’ll to come back.

H: So let’s talk about some transitions you’ve gone through, because
part of what this study is about is making that transition from high
school into college, or if you’re older making that transition just into
college. [yeah, period] What are some changes that you’ve noticed
in yourself?
L: I’m startin to learn how to . . . hold my money. . . I mean like,
not spend it as much. To conserve [ok] Cause I try to help my
Daddy out on the bills every month, even though I don’t have to, it’s
not a necessity, but I feel like pretty soon, I’m gonna be out on my
own, payin’ my own bills so I might as well get used to it now. And
. . .that’s really about it cause I, I always been the mature type. I
always hung around with people way older than me. So, that wasn’t
too much of a problem. But, yeah, I learned how to conserve my
money, how to get my busi . . how to get set aside. Cause I gotta pay
my own phone bill now and all that. I don’t I don’t have no car
payment cause I aint got no car right now. [ok] but . . yeah all the
stuff that I do, or, or the stuff that I have to be paid for, I pay for it
out of my own pocket. [ok].
H: And what do you do to earn money? Do you have a side part-
time job? or . .
L: Nah, not right now, but I, I’m trying. I’m lookin’ for a job. I was
workin at Burger King.
H: Ok, so hourly work
L: yeah. mmhmm. right
H: OK
L: I’m . . just using financial aid. I got a pretty good little bit
[mmhmm] from Obama, so (laughter).
H: Yeah so, are you then on a Pell grant, [yeah] so you get to keep
the funds
L: Yeah I get to keep em.
H: And that’s enough [I put that up] to make you comfortable then?
L: Yeah for right now. For this semester. See it’ll last me ‘til the
next semester. [ok] by the, hopefully by the next semester I’ll have a
Follow-up with job in second interview

job. I just put an application in today, and they said they was hiring like hotcakes, so. Hopefully, I’ll get a job in the next couple of weeks.

H: Ok. And why is having a job important to you then? If .
L: Cause I like making my own set income of money. Like you could get money, you try to hold, be tight with it, cause you don’t know when the next time you get money. I ain’t tryin to be like that. Nah, I got to have, I got to know when I can get money so I know what I can do with it. I like lookin’ at future plans.

H: So have you worked at all during this semester?
L: Nah
H: You said you worked at Burger King
L: yeah, that was [before] that was yeah during last semester and during the summer.
H: Ok, so that could be a change maybe that happens now? That you are going to have to find time for work and school.
L: mmmmm, but not
H: What do you think that is going to
L: I don’t think it’s gonna hurt too bad, cause . . . I got a nice little schedule right now. I start at 10 o’clock and be out by 1, that’s just my whole day every day.
H: OK
L: So I gotta whole, I gotta whole lot of hours to work, so I shouldn’t be too bad. I can leave school . . . at 1. Go to work and I, I probably be out of work by like 9 or 10. I work all day, then I can go home, do what I got to do. If I got any homework, I probably, more I, 9 times out of 10 I do my homework in school cause, I be, all that extra time that I have during those breaks I just go ahead and get that out the way. Cause I, I’m gonna be honest. I’m the type of person that likes to go ahead you know. When I get home I like to chill and relax. So I like to go ahead and get my main work out of the way while I’m in school. I’ve always been like that too. In high school and all.
H: And that’s actually a really good coping skill, we call it compartmentalizing [mmmmm]. So you are able then to shift into another role and enjoy life [yeah] as a reward [yeah]. To go home and not worry.
L: yeah cause I hate putting stuff off. [mmmmm] Man, That’s too much to carry on your back. I ain’t got time for that.
H: OK. So, that will be something that I want to talk with you next time about too to see how the job thing turned out, if it made any changes. So is that the only change in your life? The money, being more conservative, or concerned about saving and stuff like that?
L: mmmm . . . Not really. Cause, I’m just . . . doing me [ok] I’m just going to school, making sure I keep my grades up, and taking care
of my personal life as far as hobbies and stuff, so no big change.

H: OK. So what are your hobbies?
L: I like to play basketball, I like to club every now and then. (exhale) I’m a more relaxed guy I like to just chill. I don’t like to do too much at too... at ahh I don’t know what to say, I don’t like to do too much at one time [mhm] like trying to run around everyday and do this and that. I like to get stuff out the way so I can get some time to myself [ok]. I like a lot of personal time. I don’t like too much noise sometime, it get aggravating.

H: So give me sort of a typical day for you then, so I can sorta picture what its like for you. So you already mentioned you have class form 10-1, when do you get up in the morning, what do you do before you go to school?
L: (chuckle) wash and brush my teeth.
H: (laughter) that’s it and hen you are out the door
L: yeah
H: So you sleep pretty late?
L: yeah [ok] yeah
H: So, once you’re done with school, what then?
L: Then I, if I got homework, or got an assignment to do, say I got like a, a week assignment like a paper or something [mhm] I try to go ahead and get probably 1-2/4ths of the paper out of the way already so I won’t have to worry about it too much later on that week, but if I don’t got anything, like if I got a free day. I just go home. Most of the time I go kick it with a friend of mine, I wouldn’t call her a girlfriend, it’s just a girl I be chillin with, but not... Go chill with her for a little bit. That’s about all I do during the week. [ok] just sit over there and just chill, watch tv. [ok] Maybe go outside and play basketball, if somebody, people at the court are willing to ball, but other than that, I don’t do too much. I’m like H: so pick up games of basketball usually
L: yeah
H: not a set game
L: yeah, not a set game. And I might, if I, it aint really no certain thing that I do, like if I feel like I wanna go to the movies, I might call a friend, not necessarily a girl, but it might be a dude, just a friend in general. And I might kick it with, know what I’m saying, just go out. You wanna go out to the movies, you wanna eat, see what’s out. Know what I’m saying [ok]
H: Do you leave town to do some of those things?
L: Sometimes
H: Where do you go?
L: Maybe Southern Pines, are you talking about the clubbing?
H: yeah yeah
L: mmm Most of the time I try to go to Greensboro.
H: OK, How far of a drive is that?
L: About an hour and some change. An hour and 20, 25 minutes, depending on how fast you drive [laughter, ok]. Most of the time its about an hour and 20 [ok]. But see
H: Is that a regular weekend thing?
L: Mmmhmm.
H: With people that you know from school or from high school, from town?
L: Well during {beach grad} um, one of my friends I was talking about, we met some girls as beach grad and they pursued us, so they all during the summer, so they started coming down to see us. and, Now she attends USCG. She graduated from a school in Winston. [ok] So, she um, be coming to get us, and we be going up there on the weekends, but
H: Ok, so you have a separate set of friends that you hang out with one the weekends
L: yeah, mmmhmm, yeah.
H: alright. It sounds like you have a very active social life. Do you think that helps support you going to school or just
L: yeah so I can get used to the university life. When they say college life, this is college life right here, but this aint no university. I’m used to dorm rooms, walkin on campuses and stuff like that.
H: How is it different?
L: Oh, it’s way different. You know it’s like a mini, like a mini town. Like its own town by itself. You know what I’m saying? you got, you got like . . . how should I put it, you got food, their own food places up there, they got their own clothing stores up there, plus you got a mall you can, a mall you can go to and shop at. And you go the night life, you got downtown clubs, and you got, they got at the college, the college has got special cars. Like if you wanna catch the bus you don’t got to pay, everybody else got to pay $1.30, you can just swipe your, or they just show their card and get on free. You get discounts at certain stores and stuff cause you go to college [mmhmm] there’s a lot of college differences, advantages. And there aren’t really too many disadvantages I noticed. [ok]
H: So you feel like you can transition pretty easily once you go there [yeah] cause you’ve felt it out a little bit. [yeah] OK. That sounds good. . .Alright. So, I wanna talk if there have been any obstacles once you’ve been here. Any difficulties you’ve had as a student here. And this can be anything from technical stuff like signing up for classes [mmhmm] or actual . . subjects in class, or people, or advisers or teachers. Anything that you feel as though . . . wait a minute, that doesn’t help. Any obstacles at all.
L: . . .mmm. . . not any that I can . . . think of. I did, I came did dual, dual enrollment [mmhmm] very easily. I just, Well I had,
when I was signing up for classes, I got a little help. That’s about
the only thing. Like, I knew what degree I wanted, but I didn’t
know what classes I should put down right off hand. Like, you
know they got like tons of different classes and that certain criteria,
so I asked a umm cousin of mine. She helped me out. She’s a little
older, like about 25, 26, she helped me out fillin’ out my forms. But
other than that, after that my placement test, all that stuff was just a
breeze in the wind.

H: Ok. What about classes for next term. Have you signed up yet
[nah I aint start yet] are you waiting
L: ahhh I, I think there’s like a week or two when we can start
signing up for our next semester.
H: Have you thought about what you are taking yet?
L: Nah, not yet.

H: . . . Alright . . . So, you . . . this is sorta on the same
subject. We mention a little about the obstacles which you didn’t
seem to have many of, So things that help you succeed. What are
some things, maybe systematically that are helping you ahhh make
those transitions.
L: you mean when you say systematically like school system [yeah,
mhmm] or just the environment period?
H: Either. Whichever one you think might be helpful.
L: Well, the school system, yeah that . . I like they policies, you
know you can basically be your own person. Basically you grown,
you gotta take everything upon yourself. I like that cause that’ll get
me into taking care of my priorities more better, but . . . The
environment, I aint really got, see too many negative people.
There’s a couple people that might . . dislike you cause the way you
dress, or might not like you cause the way you act might think you
think you better than everybody else, or might, just cause you dress.
I mean everybody wanna dress nice, but sometimes people portray
you cause the way, you feel me, the way you come across to them, .
. . but sometimes they take the wrong. But I don’t pay no attention
to that. I try to look over little stuff like that but other than that, yeah
I aint really had no problem with no peers. Nothin’ out here. They
been positive “get to class . . you about to be late” [laughter]. They
help you out out here, but . . [ok] you know. Other than that I done
good.

H: So your peers are helping you? People that you see, hang out
with. Reminding you you’re late [yeah] or tellin’ you to get to class.
That’s good . . . um . . . what about other . . . things. Like you
mentioned you were in dual enrollment. Do you think that that
helped you decide to transition into, or out of high school into
college? What dual enrollment classes did you take?
L: Um . . . just ahhh . . that Intro to Business class. [ok]
H: So that sorta got your foot into business [mmhmm] as a degree?
L: yeah
H: Did it make a big difference for you? Did it help you decide?
L: Yeah, because. That’s like goin’ straight into my career. Cause, that’s that’s one class that’s like straight into my business degree, leading to it.
H: Did you know before you took it [mmhmm] that you wanted to be into business?
L: ye, yeah [or were you trying to] yeah, I um . . . been in business administration since high school
H: ok
L: yeah
H: Wow
L: (chuckle) mmhmm yeah. It’s been hard, I’ve been on it since high school.
H: That’s amazing. I didn’t know what I wanted to do until . . . I don’t know if I do know what I want to do (laughter). It’s nice to meet some who has a clear vision. That’s good.
H: Um, I wanna talk about your confidence level. So how confident are you in that final goal? This club in . . [mmhmm] someplace else, that you’re gonna be running?
L: I’m glad you used the word confidence, [mmhmm] cause I don’t like the word cocky too much. Yeah . . . I um . . . I’m pretty sure I can get it done. Everything, anything is possible.
H: OK . . . what makes you feel confident? What grounds that confidence?
L: . . . . . . mm . . . (chuckle) what grounds it . . I don’t really, I don’t really know. It just, I just. It’s somethin’, I don’t know. I just know I can do it. I aint really. I always been like that. For some reason I just, If I got my mind set on something. I know I can do it. [mmhmm] If I try hard enough. And right now, I think in the, in the situation I’m in. I’m doin’ pretty good working towards that goal.
H: Um, I wanna talk about your confidence level. So how confident are you in that final goal? This club in . . [mmhmm] someplace else, that you’re gonna be running?
L: I . . don’t really know? (exhale/laughter) Cause I aint. I don’t really know. I aint ever failed. I aint ever had no problems learnin’ nothin’ in school. [mmhmm] . . . .
H: So you don’t have a plan B? Just work hard [mmhmm] and . . .ok . . alright.
H: Um. This sorta relates to other students. So this is, you’re consider yourself a leader. So what if somebody then, a peer, of yours, or somebody you felt . . um, do you have any siblings? [yes] do you have a younger [one little brother, 2 older] a younger
brother.

L: A older brother and a older sister

H: So, what if your little brother came up to you then and asked you ok about college. What it was like, what to do. What would be some advice that you would give him to succeeding in college?

L: Prepare for the best. [ok] Because, you got to get ready to take care of your own self, and take care of your own priorities. You can’t be lookin’ for our Daddy to tell you this tell you that. You got to get stuff straightened by yourself. Like if something happens at school like say you get in trouble for something and need a parent teacher conf, aint no parent teacher conference. You got to go to that certain counselor for yourself, get your own self out of it. So you can’t be lookin’ for somebody to back you up, you got to get ready for the real world.

H: OK, so, sort of a be your own advocate [mmhmm]. Speak for yourself. [yeah] ok. and learn how to do that. What if it’s somebody who’s sort of, not as confident as you? Ahh, how do you encourage them then?

L: Tell them to . . . keep working at it [ok]. Like . . . don’t give up. If you feel like you aint gonna do the best, talk to somebody, get somebody advice about how you can work at it better or work at it harder.

H: OK, so then what are some keys to your own personal success? You’re, You’re saying that your work hard, that you’re confident. [mmhmm] So what are some strategies that you use to make sure you succeed?

L: Keep other people out, out of my business. [ok]. Like if you. sometimes if you let people know what you got goin’ on, they might try to mess it up for you. So I try to keep everything I do to myself. [ok]

H: so . . . does that maybe cut yourself off a little bit [y] from others [yeah]? Have you had that in the past happen, where somebody sorta got in your business and got in the way of it.

L: mmmm. .kinda in high school. [ok] People used to always try to . . . get you to get into trouble or try like . . . you know . . . I can’t really explain it. You have to be there in a certain situation. But yeah, people will try to get you out your game though. [ok] Try to get you off track. But I try to pay people no attention. [ok].

H: Do you, is that a lonely thing?

L: mmm nah. Not really. unuh

H: So would you say you reveal some of your stuff to your close friends? The ones that you said like the 8 or 10 of them that you have that you grew up with?

L: please say that again. [that’s ok. I’ll let you finish] My phone went off. I shut it off.

H: So, the friends that you have that are close to you. That ah know
you from your youth and all that. Do you share some of your goals and your plans with them and do they help you?
L: Yeah
H: Ok. So those are the people that you do share
L: Yeah, they’re about the only ones. Yeah the people I could, cause I told you, I mentioned earlier. I don’t really trust too many people, they’re associates out there in my circle, yeah, I let em get a little involved. They do share advice and help [mmhmm]
H: So what are some. When you go to class everyday, and you’re basically on campus. About how many people are your good friends and how many are associates? Do you have any good friends here?
L: . . . . . yeah. About one. [one?] two . . . . ok
H: And everybody else is just sorta people you know and [yeah] ok.
L: . . . . . . He about the only one I grow up with that I really I trust out here.
H: . . . . . OK. . . is that something that you worry about? [mmmm]
L: It’s not. It’s like because, I don’t worry. It’s not the point that I don’t trust them. It’s just that I aint know you or nothing. Know how you is. You know what I’m sayin’? You can know a person 3, 4, 5 months and think you know how they is but they’ll change on you. That’s what I’m saying as far as that outlook (clear throat). When I say I don’t trust nobody like, I don’t think nobody gonna run up and hit me in the back of the head or nothin’ (laughter) [right, right] like but I don’t. Just like, I don’t believe in nobody like I wouldn’t give them no money to go get somethin’ to eat on their break or bring me my change back, like that. Nah. That kinda type trust, like James I would. That’s my, I mean go on up there if you wanna get somethin’ I say and bring me my change back and get me some food. He’ll bring it all. Wouldn’t even get the receipt, I know he wouldn’t. You know that sorta situations like that.
H: It seems to me a little bit that your saying that some of your associates, some of those people that are just sorta other people out there. They get a little dramatic and they have some of their personal drama [yeah] that get you distracted from your own
L: yep, you on, you on. I ain’t got time for that
H: So don’t let other’s people’s drama [yeah that’s] sorta pull you
L: I always try to stay to myself in certain situations. I only got, that’s why I speak whole conversations and when unnecessary stuff comes around I try to avoid it. unhunh. Try to drag you into they stuff and I don’t even know you long enough that, you know? [right] Nah.
H: So so far we’ve got then the advice that you would offer would be stay out of other people’s drama. [mmhm] Don’t let them pull you away. [yeah] Um . . be confident, work hard. What are some
other things maybe specifically. Let’s say what are some strategies
for your classes to get work done and. You mentioned earlier you
like to do work as soon as possible [mmhmm] so . . . not procrastinate
[yeah] maybe . . . alright.
L: yeah that’s what I do. Once a teacher tell you the assignment tell
you the due date, you might as well go ahead and start. Go ahead
and get on it cause. I know how people be, and I know how young
students, young folks is. They’ll have something totally different on
their mind then when it come to that day, **dang** [mmhmm] I forgot
all about that. Put it in the back of your notebook, nah, you might as
well go ahead and get on it so when you see it sitting there you be
like oh yeah I got to finish this work right here
H: mm . . . ok . . . ok . . .[or you] that seems like good advice. Ah .
. . oh go ahead
L: Or you could take it like a note. I used to I aint get it since I been
out here at college cause I like got it online, you know we got online
ahh . . ahh. how you put it . . . online folders where you can go look
at your grades and what you need to do and stuff, but in high school,
you couldn’t look at your really look at your assignments online. So
I took notes. You could have a notebook and have a . . . ah . . sp . .
what you call it? . . you know the little [the blackboard stuff is that
what you are talkin] yeah nah, I’m like talkin about in high school
when you carry, [oh like a planner or something] yeah, yeah like a
little planner. You could just write down what you need, your
assignments so you could know. Like I do go look, go into you
book,[mmhmm] mmhmm. bit I don’t , I don’t really did that too
much since I’ve been out here. [ok] Cause I can just go online and
look at my assignments and deadlines it is.
H: Alright, we haven’t talked any . . much about your older siblings,
so I wanna talk about them a little bit in terms of influence. Have
they influences you in any way [not really] are they goin to school?
or what are the [unhunh]
L: Cause I didn’t really grow up with my older brother and sister.
[ok] So they don’t really have too much to talk about. You know
they . . they been on their own since we were little. But she, my
sister, she raise her kids right now. She got a job [ok] And my
brother, he workin’ too, he didn’t go off to college. [ok]
H: Are they much older than you?
L: About 4 or 5 years. My brother, 20-21, and my sister 22. I’m 18.
[ok] about 3 years, [ok] my sister 4 years older, my brother 3 years
older.
H: OK, and then your younger brother, is
L: 4 years younger, 14. [ok] but he’ll be 15 before I turn 19 so [he’s
in high school now] yeah you might as well say 9th grade.
H: Is he into any of the athletic stuff [yes] or is your dad like [My
Dad] the same with him?
H: For Basketball?
L: Mmmmm. Cause when I was growing up I focused on it but . . . I used to try to . . . be a little grown, try to get into worldly things early. My father stopped all that but my little brother, he ain’t really tried to do too much. He been focusing on sports like . . . like nerds do on books [laughter]. You know how you focus on sports, you got out there every day. You catch up on basketball courts you by yourself or with others, but it don’t matter if anybody else out there or not, he gonna be out there (chuckle) [mmhmm] so he really focused on sports. He love em.
H: OK So you mentioned there that um . . you were sorta distracted by worldly things in high school [mmhmm] does that mean that you sorta took the wrong path at some point?
L: Nah, I was tryin’ to, but unhunh
H: Do you wanna talk about that at all
L: nah, nah (laughter)
H: OK
L: I really don’t
H: Did it help you [yeah] to focus [yeah] on school
L: It helped me to focus on school though
H: and your Dad sorta stepped in
L: Mmmmm
H: Ok . . .OK . . . Alright, so were getting sorta towards the end of the interview, and one of the interests of this interview is to talk with students about being labeled as um at risk. And the research is starting to label African American males as some of the most at risk students, the student that struggle the most in college. So I wanted to talk with you a little bit about what you thought of that label, and why you think maybe that label exists. So, do you feel as thought you’ve ever been labeled at risk? [no] Ok so . . . what do you think that even means in terms of, why do you think it exists?
L: I really . . . I don’t know [ok] Ahhh I know myself. I don’t think that nobody ever. I don’t know, I can’t say, I don’t know what people think but I hope nobody ever labeled me like that, but
H: OK, What, why do you not wanna be labeled like that?
L: Because I’m not no at risk person. [ok]
H: What do you think that means
L: At risk of goin down the wrong path [ok]
H: Does that make you angry at all [yeah] that somebody would think that they would know you?
L: yeah a lot
H: And be able to label you
L: Like a whole lot angry (chuckle)
H: Ok. Do you think then that. So lets say that a program at a college. Let’s say they would start a program for at risk students. Would that be something that you would want to participate in [nah] You would be like, nah, that’s not me [unhunh].
H: Ok, alright. Um . . . what kind of behavior do you think would lead people to believe that students are at risk? What the research shows, and what they are trying to say is that certain students withdraw more frequently or drop out of school more frequently [mmhmm]. Do you think there are reasons for that? [mmmmmm] Maybe not for you but for other people?
L: maybe personal life. [ok] they goin through a struggle in they personal life. Like hard raisin they kids [ok] Or they takin care of old, ahhh, a older person like they grandmother, they grandfather or [could you see that happening to you then] no. [ok] maybe, not really nah not. I’ve not been at risk, cause my grandmother, she, I take care of her, but she gets somebody to take care of her while I’m in school so she, so nah, but as far as dealing with your at risk, it could be personal affairs too. Like having trouble with they wife, or their marriage or something like that. Started missing day because of something like that and gettin dropped out. I think there’s a lot of stuff that could go behind at risk students but personally H: that sounds like stuff that happens to everybody thought right L: yeah
H: Ok, OK. So is there anything that you would like to add that we haven’t covered? About school, about sorta how you’ve been doing this semester or sorta some things that maybe didn’t come up in the interview that you would like to to talk about?
L: You know that was one thing I wish they had a basketball team [laugh] out here.
H: We can add that
L: Some kinda, some kinda recreational activity after school cause I sure would attend
H: So you would like more sorta support for like a
L: yeah, more social [extracurricular] activities
H: Intramurals, sports related.
L: Yeah cause all they really have offered out here is . . . a couple degrees a few degrees bachelor’s degrees, transferring to another university once you get yourself on track, and that’s about it. They aint really got no recreational or no local activities that you can get into out here.
H: OK, so if it wasn’t like a competitive sport. Let’s say it wasn’t like community colleges competing, but student groups competing, that would [mmhmm] be something
L: yeah, yeah just something [intramurals or something] something to do after school cause like I told you. If I aint, if I aint decided, like if I want to do something, I’m my own person. If I want to do something I’m gonna do it. Like I might just go home, I might be sleeping, taking a nap and I wake up and I wanna go to the movies. I’m gonna go to the movies some how some way. Whether I got to call a cab or call somebody. I’m gonna go to the movies. If I wake up and I’m like I wanna go out to eat, I’m gonna go out to eat. [mmhmm] That’s the kind of person that I am, so...

H: So if there were more activities here on campus, do you think that that would also be a good thing for the community? Are there any places that

L: Yeah. There’s a couple of places but its been shutting down lately. I could just I know one place just right off hand. that’s about the only one that you really could go. It’s like a inside gym First Health. You got to pay for it though, know what I’m saying [mmhmm]. But Falling Creek is free. You can go to Falling Creek at like 4. I don’t know what time they close. Probably like 8, 9 [mmhmm] something like that you can go around shoot around basketball. but other than that, nah there aint really nothin to do [ok] around here.

H: and you think that that would be a good thing for students [mmhmm] cause you’d be interested in that [mmhmm]. OK

L: I know a couple of associate that I could call [laughter] and those that mention it they always “I wish we had a basketball team, or football” [mmhmm] so

H: Maybe not even a team, but intramurals, maybe four on four sorts set ups.

L: Something we could do out here

H: OK
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<tr>
<th>Name: Holly Smith</th>
<th>October 28, 2009</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview 1 (M)</td>
<td>Community College B Library (3-4:15)</td>
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shows up to interview in Arby’s uniform. after the interview he will have time to go home, take a shower, and then come back out to the school for class.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>H: Alright. So the first few questions that I’m going to go over are just sorta warming up, getting sorta familiar with the topic, getting used to talking about college. So it’s gonna just be What classes are you taking this term?</td>
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<td>M: I’m takin’ . . . reading, I don’t even know the name, the back name of it, I believe its reading 90 or something like that. [OK] . . . and um . . . math 070, and ahh typing.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>H: OK, keyboarding or computer typing, or</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>M: Keyboarding. [ok] I need some help with that [laughter].</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>H: Alright, and are you taking that Student Success course too, or is that [not yet] no. So you have 3 course going on.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>M: Yeah. I had signed up late, so</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>H: OK. You signed up late? What time, when did you sign up</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>M: Like 2 days before they even</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>H: OK</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>M: So I had a problem going through financial aid and gettin’ into classes and stuff like that [mhm] everything. So it took me a while, but.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>H: What took you so long to decide to go back, or to go.</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>M: Ahh actually I was working all the time, so [mnmnm] I never had time to come over here. But I’ve been planning on coming over here.</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>H: OK. Do they have like hours that would extend to when you could get out here or is it just hard to figure out when they had time [yeah] based on when your schedule, cause its different all the time probably right? [mhm] ok. So you’re taking 9 hours then, does that sound right, or is the keyboarding like a one or two hour course?</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>M: I think my keyboarding is a hour and 15 minutes. My ahh math is 2 hours.</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>H: Each time that you meet.</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>M: Yeah</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>H: OK. So that would be 4 credit hours for the math and 3 credit hours for the keyboarding. OK</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>M: and then I get an hour in the morning, every morning, from 8-9 for ahh reading.</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>H: OK.</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>M: I’m doing good I mean I’m passing everything. [yeah] yeah.</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>H: have you had contact from your professors to give you grades, like the midterm grades or anything.</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>M: yeah I think it was a 87, I, I got 3 grades. 87 . . . a 90 something, and a 86. [mm sounds pretty good]. Either way I think I do alright.</td>
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</table>
H: That’s good. How do you feel about that?
M: Real good [Laughter OK]
H: so, you’re taking 3 classes then and obviously you’re working so how many hours a week are you working?
M: I get like . . . 30
H: mmm that’s a lot
M: 30 a week
H: yeah. So ahh do you live on your own? or are you living at home?
M: With my mama.
H: with your mom. so you don’t have a lot of [stress] bills on your own.
M: only thing I pay is my cell phone bill ah . . insurance [mmhmm]. . . that’s about it. [ok alright] and my cell phone bill about to get high . . about to pay 115 a month
H: ohh that’s the new plan, the new thing [yeah] what was the old?
M: It was 55 a month
H: that’s a difference
M: yeah but the difference is. I used to go over all the time on my [ahhh] and um, the new phone I’m gettin’, I won’t go over at all cause everything I’m gettin’ unlimited.
H: mmhhh. Unlimited texting, unlimited [everything], surfing , downloading.
M: Everything. I got a GPS on that thing [ooh] and everything
H; So you are pretty excited (laughter). You get the phone tomorrow is that what you said?
M: It should get here tonight.
H: Oh you ordered it? OK
M: Yeah, when I ordered it, it cut off yesterday. It’s already cut off.
H: Well thank goodness I got the call in right before it cut off. (laughter). Alright. You’ve got 3 classes that you are takin’ and what, what are you going to school for? What is the . . goal?
M: Engineering, and I’m trying to do like two cause I like to work on stuff [mmhmm] So I like, I was thinking about going into auto mechanics school.
H: So you like the applied, the working on stuff element of engineering?
M: I don’t like to sit around or stand around too long.
H: Or sit at a computer (nodding head no and chuckles) so you, applied engineering [yeah] OK. That’s interesting. Ahh. So what’s motivating you to go to school?
M: . . . well . . . I just want a good life man. [ok] I don’t have to struggle . . . my mama and them have to struggle all the time . . . I don’t wanna be like them. [OK] . . . mama work hard all the time . .
H: What does she do?
M: Ah she work at Michaels [ok] and my daddy drives trucks.
H: Michaels is the fabric store
M: yeah
H: Just making sure that it’s the same place that I. yeah. ok. and
your dad drives a truck [mmhmm]. Long haul, long distance, or
short.
M:Nah in, in town
H: Day, ok
M: yeah but he was getting kinda bad cause aint nobody building
houses. He work in like wood and stuff like that [mmhmm] so aint
nobody building houses [mmhmm]
H: so you . . . are your parents together still? [yeah] at the same
house, live in the same house? [yeah] and ahh
M: we actually live with my aunt [ok] me, my brother . . . and my 2
sisters [ok] yeah . . and she has 3 kids [wow] So there a lot of people
in the house. [mmhmm] (laughter).
H: and that’s separate from your paraents, or your parents live
there too? (nodding) they live there too. Is it a big house or is it just
tight?
M: It’s not tight per se (laughter)
H: That’s a lot of people
M: Yes. We got a um, they got a trailer, but they’re supposed to be
fixin it up or whatever before they move back in it, so we’re staying,
we’re out in XXXXX now. [ok] I know I’m gonna to stay down
there cause I work in XXXXXXX so.
H: So where is the trailer gonna be then
M: It’s in XXXXXXX [ok] . . back in the country (laughter)
H: OK
M: I mean we don’t have nothing but 4 trailers in that trailer park,
but . . . I like school though. [ok] School’s fun.
H: So you say you don’t want to struggle. What is the struggle that
you see your family going through that you don’t want to [money]
go through. The money?
M: yeah [ok] money money money
H: Yeah I grew up
M: I wanna enjoy my job too
H: You wanna enjoy the job
M: yeah
H: OK
M: My daddy don’t really like, he like driving trucks, but then
again, he gets tired of it. [mmhmm] so I mean. He was actually, he
was actually trying to get a truck one time. Get a truck for his own,
one his own [mmhmm] And you know he gonna need someone to
work on it so I was thinking about going into diesel work too
[mmhmm] so I can work on engines, and um, I was trying to work
on planes one day [mmhmm] that’ll be a lot of money.
H: yeah there are lots of different programs for that too yeah.
definitely.
M: mmm I couldn’t get it here could I?
H: Ahh I don’t know if it, I don’t know where the program is.
Usually each state will have one, a similar program like for. ah
what do they call it . . aeronautic engineering or something
M: Aeronautic engineering? (laughter)
H: yeah I think it is something like that (laughter). Sounds fancy
doesn’t it.
M: yes it does [laughter]
H: if only they paid for how many letters were in the title that would
be great. Um . . so not wanting to struggle. So for you, you are
trying to get a job so you don’t have to worry about money.
M: yeah
H: What level do you think that’s at? How much do you need to
make do you think to not worry?
M: No telling
H: no telling
M: Ain’t no telling. Cause I want a lot in life man.
H: what do you want?
M: . . . I mean I want, I don’t want a mansion or nothing like that
but, I wanna big house. I want like . . . I want everything to be
stable. [mmhmm] know what I’m saying? . . At least 2 cars . . .
nice place . . . not like where I’m stayin’ at now . . [ok] . unhunh . .
don’t wanna be in no bad neighborhoods.
H: you feel like you’re in a bad neighborhood now?
M: psss . . . somewhat . . . somewhat
H: yeah . . ok . . so would it be accurate to say then that going to
college is escaping your current situation [mmhmm] for a better
situation [mmhmm] where you make more money and . .
M: I’m happier where I am at
H: OK. so how do you feel then working where you do now?
M: I don’t like Arby’s
H: No. How long have you worked there?
M: Three years [whoa] I worked there since I was in 10th grade
[mmhmm]
H: They just have you a line cook in the back . . or
M: They used to have me on drive through and front line. I didn’t
like none of either one of those. I’m on back line now and that’s
better.
H: You don’t have to deal with the customers as much
M: Yeah, cause . . . people get mad cause Arby’s is really high, and
you know they’re gonna get mad, their food is so high, you know
what I’m saying.
H: they have a new sandwich that’s out too I just saw that looks
pretty good
M: which one
H: It’s like, It’s like a mixture of the hamburger with the roast beef.
M: oh um . . roast burger
H: yeah I think so [mmhmm] I like roast beef.
M: we got about three of em. We have a we have a all American, a
bacon cheddar, and a bacon blue, [yeah] I don’t know why anybody
likes that.
H: yeah yeah, some people like that blue cheese
M: oohhhh
H: I know
M: it smell nasty (laughter)
H: (Laughter) yeah, I know. I worked in . . food service for a long
time too. Ok. So tell me a little bit more about your program then,
what made you decide on engineering, or . . auto, sorta mechanic
work
M: I like cars . . um
H: Do they have an auto program here?
M: I don’t know. I was supposed to um, I’m gonna get my
developmental classes out over here. Then I’m gonna go to
Sandhills and get that.
H: Sandhills? Is that
M: yeah
H: they have a specialized [yeah] program that has the diesel and all
that stuff [yeah] ok
M: Actually I think I might have to go somewhere, like a bigger
college to do the diesel [mmhmm] so
H: or maybe a different specialized program perhaps
M: yeah
H: OK. Is that your goals then to get . . So help me understand the
different degrees. So do you want a bachelors degree in engineering
or do you want to get more of the applied certificates to go right into
work . . for like the auto mechanics stuff . . . .are you sure yet, or do
you not know?
M: . . I don’t know yet [ok] but
H: you’re just figuring stuff out with these developmental courses
M: yeah [ok]
H: Which way do you think you will lean? Do you want to work
sooner or . . maybe go to school longer and maybe
M: Well if I’m working somewhere I’ll probably have more
advantages going to school and um working at the same time.
H: OK. Is that your , pretty much what you had envisioned going to
school and working at the same time?
M: yeah
H: you can’t think, you wouldn’t imagine never working and just
going to school full time

M: (laughter) I got to have some money [ok] I can’t be broke. I can’t do it.
H: are you on financial aid?
M: yeah
H: ok, and is that not enough to have some spending money?
M: not during . . . not during the month [ok] yeah.
H: Are you expected to bring in income for your house too to help out with other bills? (nodding) So that’s important to you to bring in some money while you are going to school too [mmhmm] how long
M:I know I supposed to be getting some kinda little apartment soon [mmhmm] sometime this year or next year.
H: You’re wanting to move out on your own?
M: mmhmm [ok] out on my own feet, know what I’m saying [mmhmm] by myself [mmhmm] independent
H: some of the larger schools have dorms too, so you get that sorta middle ground feeling things out
M: yeah [ok] . . . I’ve been to a real college before. I mean to look at it anyway. I had a couple friends that were in colleges.
H: You’re saying real college, does this not feel like college to you?
M: Oh yeah it do (laughter)
H: (laughter) You said it
M: I didn’t mean it like that
H: A four year college, a a bigger college
M: yeah, yeah
H: OK, what, you had friends going to another college? or other
M: yeah . . ones goin to XXXXX, I don’t even think that’s a big big college, but mmhmm [yeah] ummm . . . I got a girlfriend now, she’s goin too, but, actually she’s in the 12th grade, she graduating high school. She goes to, she trying to go to NC State. [mmhmm] so
H: Ok, so does that seem like a place, where, where is NC state?
M: I think it’s in ah . . .
H: (laughter) you don’t even know . . . I felt bad not knowing
M: Nah, its way up there. It’s not nowhere close to us. [mmhmm]
know what I’m saying . . it’s like
H: The Raleigh Durham area? . . up there
M: Probably in that area . . . [ok . . . maybe] yeah
H: (laughter) OK
M: It’s probably actually farther than Raleigh or Durham I think.
H: That’s pretty far north . . . ok . . . so you took a while to sign up for classes. Do you feel as though there was a disadvantage to that?
M: yeah cause I think I would’ve had more classes
H: Ok, they didn’t have any more that you could take? . . They were closed out [yeah] ok
M: So I’ll probably end up taking a lot of classes next semester.
H: OK, what’s a lot?
M: mmmmm
H: right now you’re taking three
M: yeah . . . (I don’t know noise) How many classes can we take?
H: Um at . . my school, it’s six courses [six], and then you have to
get special permission to take any more. 5 is generally full time at
the college level, 4 qualifies you for full time financial aid. so your
financial aid package might change based on what, however many
classes you take next term too. You might get more financial aid.
M: ohh [you should . . . to pay for it] yeah [so . . ] I might try to take
maybe five or six. just to get the ball rollin.
H: 6 is a lot
M: 6
H: I never took 6, (laughter). I stuck with 5. that was a lot [laughter]
um . . . ok . . so, you probably would have signed up for more
courses. Do you feel like you have the time to take more courses? I
mean you’re working 30 hours a week, does it seem like you can
handle more?
M: I will make time
H: you will make time
M: yeah . . . gotta make time.
H: So, do you feel like you have time now? That sounds like you
don’t (laughter) . . no?
M: Not really
H: OK
M: But I would try .
H: Do you have to work 30 hours per week?
M: Probably not
H: So cutting back at school could be a way to make room?
M: Cutting back at school?
H: Or cutting back at work
M: yeah. I don’t really think I need that many hours, right now.
Cause I’m living with my, I’m living with my mama now so . . . But
when I get out on my it might be different.
H: yeah . . . yeah . . . ok. So tell me a little bit more about your
family going to school, so your dad ahhh is a truck driver, so does
he have a [yeah]
M: they um, they dropped out, they dropped outa high school . .my
mother and my father. They actually proud of me. I’m, I’m the
oldest but . . I’m like . . . . . The first one of they kids to go to
college [mmhmm] They happy about that [yeah]
H: I, I have the same story. My mom has a GED that she earned, she
dropped out of high school too.
M: mmmmm.
H: Did your parents earn a GED?
M: yeah [yeah]. My mama still goin to school actually [yeah] my
daddy he, he taking that truck driver, he trying to work hard to get
his truck. [mmhmm]
H: So does he have a certificate or something for truck driving?
Don’t they have some type of training or school that they go to?
M: Yeah. I think he went to training for like 3 weeks [ok]
H: Like at a private sorta training thing?
M: Yeah [ok] Not too long . . But he, he pretty good at it. I done
went, I done went out on the road with him. I don’t know how they
back them things up. I don’t know how they do it cause.
H: now they have cameras and stuff too back there so you can see.
[they have cameras] Fancy cars. Yeah yeah, just like you know the
ones on the fancy cars? They have cameras back there so you can
see, you can look, and you can see what’s behind you.
M: My daddy aint got one of those. He uses his mirrors.
H: Well, He’s a good driver. (laughter)
M: (laughter) he uses his mirrors
H: You might want to get a camera so you can (laughter)OK. So
both of them dropped out . . . dropped out of high school
M: My mama was pregnant with me. [ok] So she dropped out. My
daddy did too. He was working, he was working 2 jobs. He said it . .
what was the story . . . working at McDonalds . . . ah somewhere
else, and somewhere else, a turkey factory, and somewhere else.
[mmhmm].
H: Lots of hard labor then
M: mmhmm
H: yeah ok
M: almost always at work . . . I really got my work ethic from my
daddy [mmhmm] and my mama
H: describe your work ethic for me
M: I don’t mind goin to work [mmhmm] ever . . I mean I put off a
lot of things to go to work . . .
H: Does that translate to school?
M: unhunh. I put off school.
H: So you would rather work than go to school?
M: unhunh. . . .[no?] Cause . .
H: It’s easier to go to work than school? Is that what you are saying?
M: um . . . I actually like school but um I just want to get my own, I
wanna get a career going [mmhmm] yeah
H: You wanna use it in some way, [yeah] not just go to school and
be studying all the time. You wanna do something with it?
M: yeah.
H: OK. Well that sounds like then that program is a good choice for
you. Engineering connected to mechanical, or mechanical
engineering.
M: yeah cause once I get help, once I get my degree in mechanics or
whatever, I can, I know I can get a mechanics job at [mmhmm] already [mmhmm] so . . . I could still, I could still go to school. Probably night classes. [mmhmm] to um . . . move up [ok] and . I know good and well that diesel work, diesel engines are more pay [mmhmm] the truck is like no other engine, and the thing is like big. [yeah] you never seen one of those truck engines H: no I have, my uncle drives a truck M: for real, they’re huge H: he did the long haul ones, so he had the bed and everything in the back, the big 18 wheeler kinda thing. I don’t know how people do that M: ohh I thought you was talkin, when you said long haul, [yeah] I thought you meant, like the area H: no no no, I mean like the ahh . . weeks like across country and out of state and all that. M: My daddy used to do that [mmhmm] but he still drives a big big truck [mmhmm] it’s just . . . he only goes to like Greensboro [ok] sometimes he go to Atlanta, but he always comes home . . sometime, sometimes 2 days. but most of the time he be home. [ok] he’s off on the weekends [that’s nice] H: It’s good to be home with your family [yeah] so how many brothers and sisters do you have? M: I have 2 sisters and one brother. H: And you’re the oldest? So how far apart in age are you guys? M: My sister’s 2 years younger than me . . my brother is 13 now, and my sister is . . . ele . . . H: (laughter) ok . . spaced out, a few years apart yeah . . ok. So how is it, how is it being the oldest? Do you feel a lot of responsibility with your family? M: A little bit . . I try to be a role model for my brother. [yeah] I wanna keep him into football. He’s a real good football player. [mmhmm] I know I would’ve been a very good football player if I would’ve stayed in it. But I started working. I started gettin’ money so I was . . . just quit football. I don’t want him to do the same thing [ok] He’s a very good football player. H: So what ah would you rather him do then . . . Why is football such a good thing to invest in? M: . . . really . . keep him out of trouble [ok] and dealing with the wrong people, cause . . you can get caught up like that . . for real. H: And do you think football keeps you from that? M: Football, work, anything that . . H: Work. Did work keep you from that? M: yeah H: OK. So you’re concerned he might be hanging out with wrong people, or that that’s just always there? M: yeah it’s something, it might be there one day and I don’t want it
to happen [mmhmm] you know. . .
H: OK . . . do you think he looks up to you as a role model?
M: . . . well yeah . . he hugs me every day, he’s always, “that’s my
brother’ and stuff like that (laughter) . . but yeah I think he looks up
to me.
H: Yeah, do you think that he’ll go to college because you are?
M: mmhmm [ok] He said I’m proud of you cause you graduated
[that’s nice] yeah it made me feel good [yeah] I couldn’t take that
little gown thing off that night (laughter) [yeah]
H: So imagine how many more gowns you could wear, I mean
(laughter) ok

H: So this sorta relates to the next question. Tell me how you feel
then about college. You talk about how um . . it’s sorta an escape
[mmhmm] to other to something else. And you have a specific goal
for diesel specific to auto mechanic. So, what else do you think
school represents in your family and to you. You were talking about
how, how good it felt to graduate from high school [mmhmm] so
what does it feel like to go to college then?
M: . . . . I don’t really know how to explain it . . . . I don’t know . .
It make me feel like I’m a grown up, you know what I’m saying
[mmhmm] grown up a little bit. Making decisions on my own . .
I’m dependent on going to class [mmhmm] They don’t call your
parents, they don’t none of that. If you miss class, you out of luck
[mmhmm] mmhmm.
H: Are you pretty good about going to class, or have you missed?
M: unhunh, I don’t like to miss class. I don’t like to be late. [ok]
sorta gets on my nerves, I don’t like to be late
H: yeah . . . ok . . . so those things are important to you. They make
you feel grown up, more adult, take on responsibilities. [yeah]
H: ok . . . . .what about your parents, how do you think they feel?
You had mentioned earlier that they are proud of you. What does
that mean? How do they show you that they are proud of you?
M: (exhale) . . . . um . .[do they say it] all the time. [yeah?] yeah
H: Does that help you keep up with it? Keep motivated, keep going
M: yeah it does
H: OK, so they notice [yeah they notice] that you are doing well
M: they notice that I’m tryin’ to do somethin’ for myself [ok] . . .
so . . . mmm . . .[ok, good]
H: So I wanna shift gears a little bit and talk about your first day,
and first week here on campus. Ahhh so you were coming straight
out of high school, you were transitioning right in [mmhmm]. So,
what was your experience like here? . . . . .What was your first day
like? what class did you go to?
M: I went to ah . . . reading . . .
H: Ok . . . did it feel different, the same?
M: A little bit different [ok] I mean I aint wear ahh khakis, I was sick of wearing khakis all the time.
H: So there’s a dress code at your high school
M: yes they just drive us crazy
H: Just khakis, you could only wear khaki’s
M: Khakis and collared shirts. . . and ah . . like little polo shirts
H: [mmhmm, and that’s it] Pants they pulled up, ahh belt, name tag, all that other stuff [ok] yeah [so here] you can wear anything.
H: On the first day did you like try it out, just to wear whatever, completely opposite of your uniform was?
M: yeah I wore the opposite (laughter)
H: Some jeans [mmhmm] a t-shirt, that’s so funny
M: Why is it everybody come to school they try to look they best, I mean like all dressed up and stuff like that.
H: I don’t know
M: Why do they need to do that?
H: I, I don’t know. I’m wearing jeans and a t-shirt (laughter) I’m breaking all the rules
M: that’s what I wear, I mean [yeah] I don’t need to be dressed up.
H: It’s the opposite problem when you go to a 4 year college with dorms. P people will show up in their pajamas and like little slip on shoes.
M: Yeah, they don’t care. [unhunh] (laughter)
H: they fit right on in, scoot shoes. Well it could be that they dress to impress maybe to find a partner, to find a boyfriend or a girlfriend.
M: Yeah. I’m not really . , I mean I got a girlfriend . . [mmhmm] so . . . I’m not really worried about it . . .but . . . why do they need to dress up to get a girlfriend . .
H: Well you don’t, but maybe they do.
M: Yeah
H: (Laughter) Ok. So the first day you noticed that clothes were different [mmhmm] ok. What else? What about the people?
M: . . . older [older?] Everybody older. I think we got like a 50 year old in our class [mmhmm] that’s . . odd . . [it’s odd?] Yeah. My mama is . . . 30 . . 4 [wow, yeah] my dad is 35.
H: My goodness. I’m almost that old (laughter) wow. So they could go back to school. They could be here with you.
M: (laughter)
H: They’ve got plenty of time
M: mmhmm [yeah] yeah my momma’s goin. I think she’s on the internet though hers
H: She’s taking college classes [nodding] ok. What is she going to
He likes to say his parents are “really good” at their jobs. M: ahhh . . . actually I think she already got a degree [ok] . . . she got a degree in um . . . I don’t know what it is but I know she do, does our taxes every year [ok] so that’ll be do doing with that [ok].

H: SO some type of ah um, maybe it’s a business thing? or [I don’t know] but some type of Accounting maybe, something like that?

M: Yeah [yeah] accounting. [OK . . . alright] She’s really good at it. H: number cruncher, well she has to be, she’s got all you guys to take care of right (laughter).

M: She does everybody’s taxes. Know how everybody else charge you about 100 [mmhmm] to do your taxes or something she only charges 50 [mmhmm] . . cause she really . . you could still put me. . . I didn’t know you could still put me on the um as um under some body.

H: yeah. You can be a dependent I think for some time, at least I think until you’re 23. If you still live at home. [dang] yeah.

M: Well I’m at home, I’m at school, [mmhmm] I guess that why she using me.

H: mmhmm, yeah it’s a big tax break [mmhmm] alright

M: I guess this year’s . . this um my first time I’m . . using anybody dependent. the last time I didn’t make anything . . somebody used me.

H: So, you’re claiming yourself this year. Is that what you’re saying?

M: I don’t even think I claimed myself last year

H: What are you claiming this year then?

M: um . . my um . . . I think it’s my god sister’s baby I guess [ok] yeah . . her name Ziggy . . that’s her nick name Ziggy [Ziggy].

H: And ah, we talked a little about your family and how they responded. Um, what about your friends? Do you have friends that go to school here?

M: Yeah I go a couple of em [mmhmm] . . ehh . . They just tryin to um . . . they trying to . . . . I don’t know what they trying to do . . . I don’t really

H: Do you talk to them about it? About school?

M: I tell them about what I was here for, I don’t remember what they was here for. Like I’m more interested in trying to get myself straight [yeah]

H: Do you see them on campus?

M: All the time

H: Do you hang out on campus and socialize at all

M: Yeah . . sometimes we go out to like parties and stuff like that

H: And are these new friends or are they friends that came over
older college friends are a bad influence

he has a hard time on the follow up. I am not sure how much thought he has put into these things.
M: yeah
H: and not surrounded
M: new scene
H: ok
M: yeah . . . nice place . . . [yeah]
H: someplace other than here, that’s all you know so far [ok] cause
larger towns will give you more opportunity [yeah] when it comes
to working.
M: money wise
H: It’s also more expensive to live in sometimes, so it’s a tradeoff
M: mmm . . . . I would want to live in a city though. To see what
it’s like.
H: What kinda city? Like XXXXXX, is that a city?
M: You might as well call it a city [yeah] Somethin’ like a city.
H: You done been to XXXXXX?
M: Mmhm. I like XXXXXXX a lot
H: there’s crazy people everywhere. (laughter)
M: Yeah . . . but we don’t do nothin’ down here that they do.
H: How are they different?
M: ahhh . . . I think . . . I read in the paper that somebody did
something stole somebody, kidnapped, stuff like that [ok]. You
know they robbed an Arby’s up there [hmm] and got away!
H: so you think there’s more crime, well
M: he got away
H: maybe it was an inside job
M: (laughter) nah, a girl I know, she was um, like when they open
the door they held her at gun point
H: oh my goodness, that’s horrible, oh my god. so and you feel as
though that stuff doesn’t happen here. Doesn’t happen at your
Arby’s.
M: Nah, it wouldn’t happen.
H: Cause you would know [cops] who they are
M: everywhere around our store [ok] In and out so . . . [ok] . . . aint
even worried about that . . . aint nobody that crazy
H: Or that desperate
M: yeah
H: maybe . . a lot of people don’t have work, so that’s I’m sure part
of the situation
M: people just . . . doin whatever [yeah] they like right now
H: so you’re talkin a little bit about your girlfriend who’s about to
graduate, she’ll be goin to college
M: Yeah she’s tryin to move out
H: NC State
M: She tryin to go somewhere too, once she graduate
H: OK. Does that affect you in some way about what you wanna do
with school?
M: unhunh [ok]
H: how long have, is it a serious girlfriend thing?
M: Actually it is [yeah] yeah
H: So you would just do a long distance relationship?
M: Not really cause I can make some time to go up there [ok]
H: But you’re ok with that, it’s not something that you worry about?
M: yeah [ok]
H: And there are schools up there that you could go to too, so that
might be something, when you go out on your own.
M: Yeah. Already talked about it. She not really worried about it.
She’s pressed on seeing me [mmhmm] so she trying to actually stay
closer to me, but I’m, tryin’ to um . . . get her to go where she wants
to, you know what I’m sayin’ [mmhmm]
H: Just in case. So she’ll make the right decision.
M: She tryin’ to be a nurse.
H: Oh, that’s a good program
M: Yeah, this day, she testing with nursing over here she um, RCC,
like they leave school and go to the RCC. I think it was like 15, 20
people in her class. She’s one of the 5 that’s still there. [ok]
everybody else failed.
H: Does she do like a CNA thing, like a certificate [yeah] ok. My
mom was a CNA for a while, so yeah. And they have those bridge
programs so you can do CNA, to LPN and RN and all that stuff to
so
M: yeah
H: that’s interesting. alright. Is she supportive of you going to
school? Does she [nodding] ok
M: She was kinda impressed, she was kinda impressed cause I
won’t be in class, won’t be in school with her no more. [mmhmm]
yeah. said I’m happy but I’m sad at the same time.
H: But, she’s just down the road right?
M:mmm
H: Does she worry about you meeting other girls? Does she pressure
you about that?
M: a lot. . . . [uhoh] . . . A lot [yeah] So I don’t even worry about it.
I’m actually used to it so [yeah] aint nothin
H: so you’ve dealt with that
M: Yeah, we deal with it [ok] she calls me a lot. I think she kinda ah
on edge cause I aint, my phone aint on right now [mmhmm] yeah
H: She wants to make sure
M: . . . I aint gonna cheat on her. . I aint gonna do it
H: OK. So I wanna talk about some things you noticed as you were transitioning. Some changes that have happened for you. So one of those changes sounds like the relationship changed a little bit with your girlfriend. She might be a little more concerned about you being here. But what are some other changes that happened in your life? Between that transition from high school to college.

M: mmmmm . . . . . mmmm . . . I don’t think really anything changed (yawning) except, I think I’m more serious in school now. than I was before. [ok] I’m serious about what I’m doin’ and my grades.

H: So how does that seriousness show up in your behavior? What are you doing differently?

M: . . . ahhhh . . I’m actually going to class more. [ok] yeah . . .

H: What about homework?

M: Actually we don’t have any homework. [no?]

H: In your math class or anything like that

M: really I get done with my homework before I leave so [ok]

H: So you are doing it on campus

M: yeah . . go ahead and get it out of the way. Aint gotta worry about it later

H: that’s good

M: mmmmm . . . but I know next semester I’m gonna probably have . . . . (exhale) a lot of homework.

H: ok, so what’s your plan then? especially if you are takin’ 5 or 6 classes. That’s gonna be a lot.

M: (chuckle like noise) You make me wanna think about it . . . 6 classes

H: 5. 5 is a good idea, move from 3 to 5. [yeah] or maybe just pick up one extra one each time.

M: yeah . . . I’ll get used to it a little bit more

H: yeah. Do they have any mini-mester classes? That you can take to try . . . like the 8 week ones? . . . Some of the classes are, don’t go 16 weeks, it’s just the 8 weeks, so that might be an option to think about for next term too. A shorter, faster class, like that student success or whatever it is class, the ACE class.

M: That’s only 8 weeks?

H: Some of em are . . . yeah. Have you looked at the schedule for next term yet?

M: unh unh . . I been meaning to

H: ok

M: How do I register?

H: ugh . . I wish I could answer that. I’m not sure how it is on this campus, but the way that we do it at my school, I could help you out with that. So we have our schedule online and we have a printed
Is not aware of the resources available to him

1. does not expect others to adapt to him

M: I don’t have a sheet of paper. I wish I had one
H: you can . . I’m sure that Mr. . . XXXX . . XXXX is it? I’m sure that he would be able to help you with that. He is one of the advisers right? [mmhmm] So . . . even through email he might be able to help you if you don’t have time to stop by. I think he has late hours on certain days of the week too, cause he’s not here on Fridays. So he might be able to . . you might be able to come a few hours, or an hour early next week or this week before your night class.
M: yeah . . I can come at 5 and go talk to him [mmhmn]
H: Yeah I think he stays still 6 on some nights. We can check his door when we leave.
M: Yeah it does stay til 6, cause I seen him at my um night class.
H: mmhmm. but that’s what you’ll want to do, and the earlier you do it, like cause what you said, waiting 2 days and all the classes are closed.
M: mmhmm
H: The earlier you do it, the better your schedule is for your life, so you can pick
M: I won’t be so stretched out here
H: yeah, you could work it so you could have 2 days a week where you go to class and the rest of the week you can work, so you don’t have to work and go to class on the same day. That sometimes helps students to
M: yeah but . . this is how I do it right now. um . . Monday and Wednesday I have night classes [mmhmm] so like during the day they have me working [mmhmm]. I leave for school at like 9, (yawning) sorry [no that’s ok, you’re tired] I go to bed at like 10 . . and then I get up at like 5, right before I go to school.
H: And then you are in class until maybe 9?
M: 9:15, 9:30
H: And then you go to bed? You go right home and go to bed.
M: Straight to sleep. Straight to sleep. But some days I get off. I like them days. That’s when I sleep during the day.
H: Do you have a good relationship with your manager so you can get certain days off [mmhmm] choose a better schedule?
M: yeah but, I’m not the type of person that asks for days off. [mmhmm] unless I like really really need it. [right]
H: but they might be able to work with a regular schedule, so like you never work on Tuesdays or Thursdays, but all the other days whatever. [mmhmm] Um . . my husband is going to school and working at Starbucks right now in our home town so that’s how he
does it. He has to drive an hour and a half to classes [really?] one way—yeah.
M: There and back dang [hour and a half there hour and a half back—yeah]. tell him I’m feeling for him (laughter)
H: So there is no way he is going to be able to work on those days
M: yeah. I know gas is something else right now
H: yeah. But those are the sacrifices right . . . we have to make sacrifices [yeah] But it doesn’t have to be so difficult. If you plan earlier you might be able to fix it up a little bit more so you can get a better schedule for yourself so you are not so tired.
M: yeah . . cause I hate it
H: Yeah. You can maybe go 2 days a week to school and the other days you can work
M: nah, no. I’m tryin to
H: You’re like, no I wanna work every day
M: Trying to um . . . like get an advantage on school. get most of my stuff. I’m trying to get it done. I still wanna work and do the same thing [mmhmmm]
H: Ok. So let’s talk a little about what you’re, any obstacles . . for example you mentioned waiting til 2 days to register. That could have been an obstacle. You couldn’t get all the classes that you wanted to take. You could only get 3 classes. So, what are some other things that maybe have limited you or, that you have struggled with . . um this term. [mmmmmm] And it could be anything from people to things.
M: . . . . . . ahh .. . my girlfriend. [ok] ah she gets on edge a little bit. I call her on my breaks. She comes sees me on my breaks sometimes [ok . . on . . on campus] yeah . . mmmmm sometimes gas [ok] yeah . . . . . mmmmm . . .
H: so finances a little bit. Is that what it is with the gas? [yeah] the money?
H: OK. So you have your own car
M: yeah
H: OK
M: I have a Pontiac
H: Alright and is it paid off and you pay your insurance you said I think earlier you said that. An you pay the gas. How much is, are you spending on gas a week? I mean you live in town right.
M: Its. Its 40 um to fill up my tank by the end of the week I’m probably gonna fill it up again.
H: So about a week on a tank you can get
M: yeah [ok] . . . . . . It’s pretty, actually it’s pretty . . It would be better on gas if I didn’t have them rims on it.
H: OK . . now we see how it goes
M: (laughter) Yes
H: Alright.
M: The car’s so heavy man, and it got so many
H: It’s an older car? Older Pontiac
M: No I think it’s a newer 98
H: Oh ok The rims are heavy?
M: yeah
H: Oh. I thought you were like describing a jalopy from the
seventies, talkin about it’s so heavy, I thought you meant like a steel
car.
M: laughter. Nah but um . . . it breaks down a lot.
H: yeah
M: Yeah it does.
H: So that’s a cost as well that you have to . . .plan for
M: Yeah my radiator pipe broke . . . um popped, like it . . . went out
like real big just like POP [mmm] I was kind like Oh God.
H: Have you ever had car troubles that prevented you from going to
class?
M: I made a way.
H: You made a way
M: I made a way.
H: OK
M: We got about . . . 5 cars in the yard
H: (laughter), ok. So somebody’s got a car that you can use.
M: Yeah
H: Alright. What about gas. Have you ever not had the money to get
out here for gas.
M: Yeah but then my mama or my daddy will get me here
H: OK. So you have a plan, a back-up plan.
M: yeah . . . um . . . It’s like a put money in my savings and I forget
about it so I’ll b thinking I’m broke and I’m really not.
H: That’s kind of a good thing I guess.
M: yeah unless I unless I need to use it
H yeah yeah. So obstacles then would be the girlfriend just sorta
feeling a little bit [mmhmm] upset about that, um gas money,
anything else? What about the classes? Have you run into some
subject matter that’s like WHOA, I’m not ready for that. Or where
did that come from.
M: ah yeah. I had a couple times with that . . . were that . . . I’d just
sit back and look . . . at it. Took a while for me to finish some things
up but I got it, I got it right.
H: Ok. What do you do to figure it out?
M: Sometimes, I can actually ask my mother [ok] I think she a
really good teacher.
H: So your mom helps you out if you have a problem?
M: yeah . . [do you] Especially essays. I have problem with essays.
[ok] essays drive me crazy.
H: So writing. Are you doing that for your reading class? The writing?
M: Other than that yeah. I have a feeling its coming.
H: OK. So we’ve got then . . . those issues. What about asking for help from people in class, or your teacher. Have you done that?
M: unhunh
H: ok. Is that something you would consider doing?
M: unhunh . . . mmmmm . . . I don’t have a big problem. I try to sit there and figure it out on my own. [ok] I never, I really never ask.
H: Why is that do you think?
M: (snicker) . . . . I don’t know
H: Does anybody ask you
M: I know I need to, but, huh?
H: Does anybody ask you for help?
M: unhunh [ok] unhunh . . . I mean once or twice but nothint’, it was nothin too serious [mmhmm] yeah.
H: So what would it take for you to ask a teacher for help?
M: If I just couldn’t, no matter what I did, just couldn’t figure out what I did wrong.
H: And your Mom couldn’t figure it out [yeah] and then your dad or [nah] whomever is at your house
M: I go to my mom, not nobody else (laughter)
H: OK . . Does your mom tell you to do any of those types of things: go to your teacher or whatever [(nodding)] ok
M: yeah she kinda, she’ll nag me until I do it
H: OK . . Does your mom tell you to do any of those types of things: go to your teacher or whatever [(nodding)] ok
M: (laughter-then imitating mother) “You better come in here and tell me how to do it too.” [ok] yeah so
H: does that help you . . with college, or it it sorta give or take
M: actually, it helps me [ok] my mama will nag me and nag me and nag me til I do something.
H:OK . . . and that actually helps you?
M: yeah . . .
H: What are you going to do when you move out then? . . . . Are you going to have her call you up and nag you?
M:(laughter) no [laughter]. Nah, I’ll probably just . . .I’ll probably just get myself together. [ok . . . alright] [inaudible]
H: So it sounds like your family is a good support network for you. You see yourself as a role model for your younger brother, and that you want him to be proud of you, and for him to go to school too.[yeah] And then your parents are proud of you and your mom helps you with school . . . that’s a lot to give up if you move out.
H: Have you thought about that?
M: . . . mmmmm . . . unhunh . . .
H: I’m not saying its
| speaking over one another | M: they, They are always just a phone call away. . . .  
1 H: OK. they are always  
2 M: My brother talk to me about his problems sometimes  
3 H: yeah, your brother . . . so you are most concerned about your  
4 younger brother actually, you are not concerned about yourself?  
5 M: . . . [not having] . . . both . . . both  
6 H: yeah . . . . ok  
7 M: I don’t want him get in no kinda trouble at all . . . . got into a  
8 fight at school, I got mad at him  
9 H: when you were in high school?  
10 M: but the thing is . . huh?  
11 H: when you were in high school, you got . . .  
12 M: He got in a fight at school  
13 H: Oh, He got, your brother did  
14 M: yeah . . . but yeah, he sorta had a reason, cause this boy put his, .  
15 put something in his mouth and then threw it at XXXX and he just  
16 got [oh] yeah . . I would have too . . . I don’t . . he, he has a temper  
17 like mine. I keep telling him that . . easy  
18 H: You don’t seem like a very ah . . .  
19 M: Aggressive person  
20 H: no  
21 M: I try not to be  
22 H: (laugh) you don’t seem at all angry or  
23 M: I try not to be  
24 H: Ok . . . so you think that’s something you can offer your little  
25 brother [mmmmm] Is that a change you made in high school?  
26 becoming less aggressive or is that something that you work at?  
27 M: yeah cause he was looking at what I was doing.  
28 H: OK . . . have there been times here where you were frustrated  
29 and wanted . . felt . .  
30 M:Aaaaaa unhunh  
31 H: Ok . . does it happen at work?  
32 M: A lot  
33 H: I’m just wondering what sets you off.  
34 M: A lot I can’t [yeah] I can’t deal with most people. They get mad  
35 about that money man. [yeah] I can’t do nothin about that price, I  
36 can’t do nothin about that [yeah]  
37 H: Customers will drive people crazy  
38 M: yeah I can’t stand when somebody up there holler a me [yeah]  
39 Different things. I don’t like when people talk about me, or anything  
40 like that, so I try not to give them a reason to.  
41 H: Do you feel then that that’s something that happens outside of  
42 school? It doesn’t happen here on campus, you don’t feel that vibe?  
43 M: unhunh [ok] . . . I don’t have a problem coming to school at all.  
44 [ok] . . . I mean I do . . . I think it runs in my family all those anger  
45 issues. [mhhmm] cause it came from my grandpa . . . and went |
H: hmmmm (soft laughter)
M: yes . . . and my sisters just . . . actually my sister’s pregnant now
[yeah] by um XXXXX that dude you seen [ok] when you came out here. I might as well call him my brother in law. [wow] might as well. Cause they go through and argue like a married couple, so
H: your younger sister. How old is she
M: 16
H: an how old
M: I was actually surprised [yeah] yeah he was surprised too
H: Was this like when they were in high school? That this happened like his senior year or recently
M: Nah she’s like 5 months
H: OH, ok so [he probably] this summer
M: yeah, this summer probably. I was like wow, I couldn’t even say anything about it.
H: Was that awkward when we were all in the same room together or
M: Nah
H: No you see him outside
M: yeah, he’s always at the house. He’s a good dude. [mmhmm] I’m just glad it, it wasn’t um her last boyfriend, I didn’t like him at all.
H: yeah. So what is she going to do?
M: Ah, she’s trying to be a nurse
H: yeah
M: mmhmm
H: complicated life you got here, there is going to be a lot of people in that house
M: mmhmm (chuckle)
H: A new baby and everything
M: yeah. I feel bad for Bird man. He was trying to go to NC state, but he had to stay home because of the, so, he gotta, he’s kinda, his schedule is kinda a bad ground. And mama don’t want him to move up, him or Michele, to move out. [mmhmm, why is that] So he’s gonna stay with his mama, and Michele’s gonna stay home until they get settled enough to where they can move out. [ok] I actually like that, cause . . . they’ll probably be home every five minutes “mama will you give me 20 or 30 dollars” you know what I’m saying. [mmhmm] yeah that’s why I’m trying to get stable enough so I can
H: So you don’t have to keep coming back
M: yeah
H: that’s, that’s your goal. OK.
H: So what about, so we talked a little about obstacles. What is helping you then . . succeed, what is keeping you focused? . .
you are at school, or on your academics . . . Why do you keep coming?
M: . . . The hope of somethin better. [ok] . . . that’s what it is . . . . [that vision] yes.
H: OK, is there anybody here or anything that’s helping you with those small steps along the way? What about your teachers, your friends, or your family? You had mentioned you mom helping you with some of the homework. Anybody on campus that’s helpful to you?
M: . . . unhunh . . . there’s my girlfriend that’s helpful to me.
H: OK, . . . How does she help you?
M: I don’t know . . . sometimes she, I have little problems at home and sometimes he keep me um . . . stable to where it won’t mess with me or my school work [mhmhm] so
H: Yeah when there are so many people
M: As long as I talk about it I’m good [ok] like I don’t feel nothin at all after I talk about something
H: Then you don’t let any anger built up do you [yeah] you get it out
M: Is that weird?
H: Not that’s not weird. That’s normal. That’s an excellent strategy for dealing with stuff.
M: Just go ahead and talk about it to get it out of your way
H: mmhm yeah. It’s good that you have somebody that’s you know [there for me] helps you do that.
M: I aint gonna talk about, talk to my mama about that . . I aint gonna do it
H: Yeah . . So you feel like you have somebody that you can go to based on the type of problem. You go to your girlfriend if you are having problems with the family, you go to your mom is you are having problems with academics.
M: yeah, And I go to my dad if I am having problems with life.
H: OK. How does he help?
M: Actually, most of the stuff I’ve been through, he done been through already. [mhmhm] . . so . . He probably . . can do more than anybody else could, so . . . [ok] . . he’s a heck of a help . . . Keeps me out of a lot of trouble
H: What kind of trouble
M: He, helps me pick my plan . . my plans better. [ok] Cause I remember ah . . . yeah I had . . . I was like in 11th, I think it was 11th grade. I had skipped school with some friends, and um . . . we had got pulled over . . . I had no idea what they had, what they had in their pockets [mhmhm]. So . . I’m over there going, what’s going on and stuff like that and they tryin to blame it on me [mhmhm]. So, I kinda actually got in some trouble about that.
H: So how did your dad help out in that situation?
M: . . . Really he just told me how to pick, pick my friends better.
Trust/Friends
/Associates

you know like . . . you can’t trust most people. Just cause they talk to you and they seem like nice people, you know what I’m saying [mmhmm] at the time. Don’t be ahh

H: How do you tell?

M: . . . really how, how they act. Cause they, some friend will come around you when you get paid [mmmmm, mmmmm, yup I know those people] (chuckle) . . . Some people . . . only call when they want something . . . . and some other people just call just to call. And those are the people I hang around with [ok] Just to see if I’m having, If I’m alright. I like them people. I know you got some friends like that. [mmhmm] yeah

H: yeah those are the ones that you look for, those are the ones that, I don’t have many of those other friends . . . I don’t, I don’t even bother.

M: Yeah but they always find, they always seem to get your number though.

H: yeah, well I don’t have a cell phone (laughter)[laughter] so that’s how I deal with that.

H: So um, . . a good scenario would be then, ah one of these questions is about what advice would you give other students, so if you’re thinking of your younger brother coming to college and sorta what you’ve gone through this semester and what you know about college. What would you tell him as advice to help him through the first semester?

M: mmm . . . keep your goals in mind . . . and . . . don’t slack, go to class every time, um . . . I Don’t know . . . what is it I tell him yesterday? I told him a lot when I graduated [yeah?] . . . . . . . .um . . . stay in school, don’t let your friends influence you [mmhmm] . . . you know.

H: That seems to be coming up a lot, um, do you think that’s a good survival strategy? To be able to choose good influences? [nodding] ok. Cause there’s a lot of bad ones?

M: yeah . . . . that’s actually how I learned my lesson with friends [mmhmm] my little situation. I don’t want to have him, have him go through that situation to learn it [right] go on and get ahead (inaudible)

H: Do you think that is something you have to go through to learn? Experience yourself?

M: I hope not. I hope not . . . . I hope for him, I hope not

H: you can imagine the feeling that you have for your younger brother. Imagine how much more they are form your dad to you. Cause you say he’s gone through all these things. He’s experienced it and to watch you go through all those things too, hoping that you don’t have to go through it to learn the lesson, hoping that you’d listen to him.
M: yeah . . . and then it happens anyway [yeah]
H: Well some things you have to
M: It hurts. I know it hurts. I know it hurts.
H: We also learn best from our, disappointments and our failures
than our successes. So, you know some of those things are really
important for us to grow as people.
M: yeah . . . I wish I wouldn’t have had to learn that way.
H: yeah . . Do you feel better for it, or no?
M: Actually I do
H: Yeah
M: I’m happy it happened then and not now
H: When you were in 11th grade, so it would’ve been about 2 years
ago, about
M: yeah
H: Did you face any charges or anything? [nodding] yeah. Is it on
your record, is that a long term thing that you have to deal with?
M: No, actually no . . . . I think it should be off like next year.
H: yeah, possession?
M: mmmmm . . . [yeah] . . . It make me sick [yeah]
H: does that affect any of your financial aid or anything
M: I don’t think so
H: ahh I think its felony, as long as it’s not a felony you’ll be ok.
M: nah, it wasn’t a felony. I’m glad about that though.
H: It’s tough though yeah.
M: My daddy actually he went through a lot . . . . a lot. I’m actually
surprised he got that job he got now [mmhmm] . . . he got felonies . . .
bad . . . . Mainly just trying to take care of me, you know [mmhmm]
my family [yeah] but he’s changed those ways after that. I mean he
went to jail that time, after that time he aint never been back [right]
H: So like I said, for some people, that is a really life changing
experience. Even though it is a bad thing that happens . . . it results in
good . . . good behavioral changes. but like you said, you don’t want
to go though the bad to get to the good
M: I know [chuckle] I wish I didn’t have to
H: yeah . . Is there anything that you feel that you are struggling
with now that’s affecting your school?
M: . . . . . I don’t really think so [ok] . . . . . mmmmm . . .
just trying to do my best. [ok] trying to do my best in school and
that’s it . . . . . go to work, go home . . . . . . job and home and
everything else is good.
H: alright, so how confident are you in yourself and completing
your goals, getting to that
M: I’m confident. I’m really confident.
H: And what . . . how do you know . . . what, what inside of you
makes you feel confident about it?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M: . . . . I usually know when I want something bad enough, I get it [ok] No matter I do, I get it . . . . I just try hard.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H: Try hard</td>
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<td>M: mmhmm.</td>
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<tr>
<td>H: So what if you try your hardest and something happens that gets in your way?</td>
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<td>M: . . . . (chuckle) keep on tryin. I guess</td>
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<td>H: Ok, just start, start over keep trying</td>
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<tr>
<td>M: yeah</td>
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<td>H: so you feel then that you’ll just keep, you’ll just keep tryin [until I get it] even if you fail.</td>
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<td>M: Until I get it right I’m gonna have to. (inaudible)</td>
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<td>H: What are the options if you do fail? What is your life like if you are not in college?</td>
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<td>M: Arbys . . . I don’t wanna be here. I don’t want to be at the Arby’s.</td>
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<td>H: OK. 3 years is a long time.</td>
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<td>M: I know</td>
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<td>H: Have you considered other work?</td>
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<td>M: Um, yeah but . . this job right her is really, while going to school it’s better. [mmhmm] cause if I worked at Purdue or something like that, I would probably work the 3rd shift, go in at 12 o’clock at night and then get off at like 8 o’clock and go to school. I go to school smelling like chicken and dookie and stuff like that.</td>
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<td>H: IS that the closest industry job? Purdue, the chicken house?</td>
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<td>M: yeah it’s the closest. [yeah] other than fast food joints and</td>
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<td>H: So if you didn’t go to school . . . . that would be . . [probably] fast food and manufacturing with chicken houses. That’s about it in this area?</td>
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<td>M:eehh . . yeah. . . . I don’t, I couldn’t do no chickens.</td>
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<td>H: was military ever something that you considered?</td>
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<td>M: Actually I was thinking about it</td>
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<td>H: yeah</td>
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<td>M: but um . . . . I don’t know. I just changed my mind at the last minute. But I was thinking about it</td>
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<td>H: When, when were you thinking</td>
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<td>M:I was thinking about it during school. I was wondering if I was gonna go to college first or be in the military. I didn’t want to get shot at.</td>
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<tr>
<td>H: Yeah, that’s a pretty big fear, I wouldn’t want yeah</td>
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<td>M: that’s the big thing. I don’t want to get shot at [mmhmm] and we in a war now too [mmhmm] unuh unh. (snicker)</td>
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<td>H: OK. Long term, engineering may not be a bad career to partner up with the military so. They do loan forgiveness, so you don’t have</td>
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to go first to get the. So the way the GI bill can work is that, if you’ve already gone to college, then they can pay off your loans once you’ve done that or pay off any of your debt for that schooling, and then you become a service member. So it works both ways. So if it’s something that you are thinking about once we are no longer killing people, you know it might be something that could be an option in the future too.

M: yeah

H: yeah I never thought about going into in the military

M: It’s still a thought, It’s still a thought for me. [yeah] I mean my grandpa was in the military. He was a um Sergeant [mm] drill, I think he was telling everybody how to do everything. You know

Germ . . German, Germany aint got no speeding, speeding

H: oh the autobahn doesn’t have a speed limit, yeah. Just the one street, (laughter) all the other ones do have speed limits.

M: oh really

H: Yeah it’s like a racetrack. Well back them, what was he there during WWII? Back then they maybe didn’t. But now they do.

M: I don’t think it was then, I think it was after that. [ok]

H: The autobahn does not, that’s true, does not have a speed limit. today, you could get on the autobahn and go as fast as your car can go.

M: dang

H: It’s one of those its one long straight, there’s nothing around you. You now, it’s not like cars are coming at you. It’s like a really big interstate.

M: oh for real?

H: Yeah. So it’s not like Broad street (laughter) with people going 100 trying to get out of Wal-Mart you know.

M: boy, that would be scary

H: It would be

M: People driving so crazy sometimes though

H: yeah. yeah it’s bad everywhere. Everywhere you go its bad.

H: So we’ve talked about your family, we’ve talked about your friends, your girlfriend. Ah are there other friends that you have? We briefly said there are some people here that you know from high school, stuff like that. Are there friends of yours that are sorta in a similar situation as you are? Sorta thinking about a certain type of career, um

M: Um, I haven’t really asked anybody nothing like that.

H: no

M: I think I should start [would that be helpful] I think I should start [yeah ]

H: Maybe you could team up

M: (laughter) yeah (laughter)
H: That would be good support
M: yeah, most girls, most girls are going for nursing. Why is that?
H: Oh . . . ah . . what they’re, old gender stereotypes that girls should
be nurses and teachers—that’s part of it. Um, but also it’s a really
good career. So, for some reason guys don’t think they should be a
nurse. Would you become a nurse?
M: no
H: see that’s why
M: (laughter)
H: It’s a really high paying
M: I tell her to be a doctor
H: She could certainly, you know you could be a doctor of nursing.
So she could choose to be a nurse and get a PhD in nursing, and
then be the boss of all the nurses. She could teach other nurses.
M: Hey
H: yeah, just keep going to school . . so
M: That’ll be a while [yeah] (yawning) be in school a long time
H: So we’ve got . . I think we’ve covered most of the questions.
This is sort of another type of question at the end here. Um. One of
the reasons that we are researching African American is that the
research shows that this population of students, um withdraws from
school at a higher rate and ah drops out at a higher rate. So that puts
them in a category called at risk. And there’s concerns that this
population is struggling with that transition into school. Um, what
do what do you think about that idea . . ah.
M: I think it is kinda true. [ok] I see a lot of people that’s like 30 and
they aint doing nothin but they, nothin but sittin at home. [ok] I
don’t think that’s cool at all. I wouldn’t like that [ok]. I’d have to
move out.
H: Well why would you um, why do you think some people start
and then stop? People like yourself. What would it take for you to
stop going to school?
M: the only thing that is gonna stop me from going to school is
gettin my degree.
H: Ok. Doin it, gettin it
M: mmmmm [ok] That’s the only think that’ll stop me, but other
than that.
H: Well what about people that you work with at Arby’s. Are there
people there that maybe took a class or two and then stopped?
M: They just, their heart wasn’t in it. There was one girl I was
talking to and she said her heart wan’t in it, so she dropped out. She
said she thinking about it though.
H: So you think they come back? Students come back.
M: She thinking about coming back, she didn’t say she was coming
back [yeah], but
H: Is your heart in it [yeah] do you feel that way [nodding] ok.
H: What do you think about the label at risk? Do you think it’s
M: nah . . . it’s bad
H: yeah, It makes you feel bad?
M: Yeah
H: Does it make you feel more likely that you would fail? If
M: yeah it make me feel bad. It hurts my feelings. that you would
H: So it’s important to you to feel like you’re not at risk, that you’re
not that group you’re not that kind of person. You’re not the
stereotype.
M: yeah . . . I’m goin here for a reason, not to get some money.
H: OK. you think some people are coming here to get money
M: Sometimes. That’s what I heard somebody say.
H grants
M: yeah, but
H: yeah you can make money going to school on pell grant
M: I wasn’t even thinking about that when I signed up
H: yeah you’re working 30 hours at the Arby’s. Have you gotten
some? Your classes are paid for right, you don’t have to worry about
M: yeah I already got my um
H: And your books and everything, you don’t have to worry about
paying for those things.
M: I was surprised. I didn’t know they gave you that much
H: nah, it’s because your car might break down, you might run out
M: yeah, but
H: It’s meant to help the whole process of going to school to cause
you, you’re making a choice not to be at work for that time, so you
know it is, it’s a tradeoff. For some people it’s too much. They can’t
not work. Like you were saying, you can’t imagine being a full time
student and not working.
M: yeah. It be kinda hard for me. [yeah] cause I’m so used to it.
H: (laughter). You’re like it’s punishment not to work. If you really
M: (laughter) I could stop working [nah]. Is it because you’d
be bored? What is it? Are you afraid you’re gonna get into trouble?
M: nah . . . (I don’t know noise). I don’t wanna be at home. I wanna
have . . . I don’t know how to put it but . .
H: I think when you have a close family and you are around them a lot it’s important to have something that’s your own [yeah] so maybe that’s what it is. That this is you, on your own.

M: It’s something like that . . . . I guess . . . [ok] . . . I guess you could say that.

H: Alright. Is there anything that you want to add or that we haven’t covered when it comes to school and college. Stuff that you thought about that I didn’t cover?

M: I thought it was gonna be like, . . . . piles, on piles, on piles of work. [yeah] that’s what I thought. It aint that much.

H: Are you disappointed that it’s not more [shaking head no], no . . . no?

M: Laughter. I wouldn’t say that

H: OK. Are you ready if it does become more?

M: yeah [ok] I know it is pretty soon. I know the farther the farther I get, the more and more work I’m gonna have to do.

H: Are you grateful for this sorta gradual lead in?

M; I just sorta

H: Or would you rather just jump in and go?

M: unhunh. If I really jump in I’d be kinda struggling [ok] that would be hard for me.

H: So it’s a good thing that it’s not as hard as you thought it would be this semester?

M: Yeah

H: OK. Alright. So now what you need to do is go figure out what your schedule for next term is going to be. What classes you need to take.

M: yeah, that’s the hard part

H: That’s not the hard part, that’s the easy part. Doing well in those classes, that’s the hard part.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: Holly Smith</th>
<th>October 29, 2009</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview 3 (A)</td>
<td>Community College B Library (8-9am)</td>
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<tr>
<td>H: Alright, OK, so the</td>
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<td>first question basically</td>
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<td>just gets us warmed</td>
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<td>up talking about school,</td>
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<td>talking about your</td>
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<td>semester [mhm] So</td>
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<td>can you tell me what</td>
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<td>courses you’re taking</td>
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<td>this term.</td>
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<td>A: Ahh, I got a math</td>
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<td>like, but I’m majoring,</td>
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<td>trying to major in</td>
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<td>computer engineering.</td>
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<td>They got me in like a</td>
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<td>Math 080, which is like</td>
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<td>. . . math for like,</td>
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<td>how different kind. . .</td>
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<td>Well basically it’s like</td>
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<td>engineering part, like</td>
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<td>how to take apart a</td>
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<td>computer. I’ve got to</td>
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<td>learn the structures and</td>
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<td>like what size go here</td>
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<td>and what size go there.</td>
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<td>And they got me in an</td>
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<td>English class, and a</td>
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<td>typing class where I just</td>
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<td>speed type. [ok] and</td>
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<td>basically yeah, that’s</td>
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<td>all they got me in right</td>
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<td>now.</td>
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<td>H: So the math, the</td>
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<td>keyboarding or typing</td>
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<td>class [ahun], the English</td>
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<td>class [ahun]. 3 classes</td>
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<td>is that right</td>
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<td>A: yeah but the English</td>
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<td>class counts like, there</td>
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<td>are 2 sides of it. [ok]</td>
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<td>we go in at like 12:30</td>
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<td>to like 1:45, then we</td>
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<td>go on break. [ok] and</td>
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<td>then we meet in the lab</td>
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<td>for the next class for</td>
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<td>another hour. [ok] It’s</td>
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<td>like 2 hours for English.</td>
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<td>H: So you do writing in</td>
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<td>a computer lab sometimes.</td>
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<td>A: yeah</td>
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<td>H: OK, alright, and so</td>
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<td>this is your first</td>
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<td>semester [ahun] at the</td>
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<td>college. Did you take</td>
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<td>dual enrollment or</td>
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<td>anything like that here,</td>
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<td>or any other courses?</td>
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<td>A: Well nah, I didn’t</td>
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<td>do all that</td>
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<td>H: No. So this is your</td>
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<td>first time as a student</td>
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<td>on this campus?</td>
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<td>A: ahun</td>
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<td>H: Ok. And when did you</td>
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<td>sign up for classes?</td>
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<td>A: Ahhh . . . in August.</td>
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<td>H: OK, so close to when</td>
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<td>they started?</td>
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<td>A: yeah</td>
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<td>H: OK. Do you feel like</td>
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<td>that affected your</td>
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<td>ability to get the</td>
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<td>courses that you wanted?</td>
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<td>A: Kinda, because they</td>
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<td>had the late (inaudible)</td>
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<td>classes for most</td>
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<td>people to come get in</td>
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<td>cause they didn’t have</td>
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<td>enough classes. And</td>
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<td>students were like,</td>
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<td>everybody was holding</td>
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<td>the student up because</td>
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<td>they didn’t have no</td>
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<td>classes to put me in.</td>
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<td>[ok] They had to make new</td>
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<td>classes so students</td>
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<td>could come in. [ok]</td>
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<td>H: So when you first</td>
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<td>came to sign up for</td>
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<td>classes did they have</td>
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<td>fewer [yeah] then they</td>
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<td>told you to hold for a</td>
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<td>little bit and they’d</td>
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<td>open up some new ones</td>
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<td>[yeah] Ok. Alright. And</td>
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<td>how many days a week do</td>
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<td>you come to campus.</td>
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<td>A: Well I . . ah on Mon,</td>
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<td>on Mondays I come at 8:00</td>
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<td>. . my ah typing class</td>
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<td>[mhm] and it’s over by</td>
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<td>like 9:00, I mean 8:50.</td>
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<td>And I start</td>
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my other class at 9:00 [ok] which is my math class, and it’s over by
around 10:00. Then I got a 2 hour break. I come back about 12:30
and go to my English class. [ok] the first part, and then like 1:45 we
get a break and we meet at 2:00. But on Tuesdays, I got ah one
class, my math class. My math class is every day. [ok] at like 9:00.
[Everyday] ahun
H: So every day 9:00-9:50 you said.
A: yeah
H: Ok. On Friday’s too
A: yeah
H: Wow
A: and ah . . . I have another class at night on Tuesday. Which is
my hybrid class the ACE class. [ohh]
H: So that’s 4 classes a student success kinda class.
A: yeah, but
H: you said hybrid
A: yeah that’s the yeah. Like, let me see, we, we, it’s only for a
certain amount of time [mmhmm] but last Tuesday was our last time
we meet, now we got to take a test. that class is basically gone. [ok]
H: So it was an eight week class, [yeah] or a smaller semester class
[yeah] ok. Alright . . . and ah, you mentioned that you want to go
into computer programming [yeah] as your . . so are you trying to
get your associates [yeah] degree here then?
A: but yeah, then get transferred out
H: OK. transfer out to where? Do you know yet?
A: I, I want, well, my family is planning on moving to Raleigh, [ok]
so we looked at some schools in that area.
H: OK. Lots of good schools in Raleigh. Ok yeah. And your
family’s moving . . .
A: Probably . . . probably like during Christmas break [ok] or if we
don’t then, we’ll probably wait until the summer time.
H: Ok. Is it for work or . .
A: ah . . nah it’s just . . . they planning on moving up there, been
around and . . . [ok]
H: OK, so what is motivating you to go to college? Why are you,
why are you here?
A: I mean . . . There’s nothin else better to do. I mean, if you look at
the economy today, barely get a job. So . . goin to . . I mean I love
computers. I been on computers all my life. When I was in the 8th
grade they taught me how to take a computer apart and put it back
together. That’s what made me come to computers. And actually it
just went on from there.
H: Ok, so that was something that you did in the 8th grade. You said
it was like a project of something? [yeah] ok.
A: they has us all um. Well it was like a DARE program. They came
to our school, they um showed us how to take take it apart, put it back together. Fix it like if we had, had any problems with it. And our reward for doing that was they would give a computer for free. [mmmm] and we had internet free for a whole year. [wow] H: Do you still have all that stuff? A: yeah
H: that’s pretty cool a free computer and all that stuff. [yeah] Ok. And that sparked your interest to be [ahun] a computer major. OK. Alright, and ahh, so while you’re going to school, so that means you’re taking 4 classes. That’s a pretty substantial load. Are you working? [yeah] do you have other stuff A: I work at McDonalds. [ok] part time. Basically I come in about like 5 hours. I probably get of work every day by like 11:30 or 12. 1 at, 1 at the most nights, if they need me to stay. [ok]
H: So you’re staying up, that’s in the morning [ahun] 1 in the morning? [yes] ok. And then you have to get up and go to your 8 o’clock class sometimes? [yeah] yikes.
A: It’s rough though
H: How many hours do you get a week usually? A: Probably like 23, around that range, but on the weekends, it probably go up maybe like 28 to 30.
H: OK, so in your weekly pay check, about, anywhere between 20 to 30 hours?
A: I don’t, I get paid like, we get paid every 2 [2 weeks]
H: Ok so how many hours do you think are in the 2 weeks then?
A: probably like 40,45 [ok] around that range
H: Ok. And how long have you been working at McDonalds?
A: Well . . . March I’ll be there a year.
H: Ok, . . . so your senior year in high school [yeah] you got. Alright. And, so, have you had any um . . . problems working your schedule with work, or going to school?
A: Nah, I mean, I just told them how my schedule was, and they just . . . combine with it. Like, my manager, she asked me what days I need. What I, . . . I um . . . She, I get, I can automatically I get Tuesdays and Fridays off so, [mmhmm] Cause Tuesdays I have that night class, and Friday it’s like I get out of school probably like 10 or 11 so they just go ahead and let me have that day off. And, that’s basically the only 2 days I get off, or if . . . if the schedule is like real packed, I’ll probably get another weekend off like a Saturday, or probably a Thursday off. [ok] But, . . . they been combining with me, my, my last class of the day probably end at like 3. So if they need me to come in, I probably come in about 5. [ok] So that’s like just
H: But generally you are working in the evening time [yeah] and going to school during the day. [right]. ok. And . . . do you feel that
you’re able to get all you work done [yeah] like during the day.
A: Yeah. Basically I try, I try to finish it in class. And what I don’t, I
just. I mean, we get breaks at work. So, I can take it to work with
me, and whenever I break I can work on some of it then, or just once
I get home I work on it. [ok] Sometimes we, we be at work, and if
you feel like you don’t want no break, you can leave your break and
get off a little early [mmhmm] leave early [alright]. But if I have
like major homework. She’ll let me leave if I ask here. Like if I
said, I got major homework can I go home and do it, she’ll let me
leave and go home and do it.
H: Well that’s nice
A: yeah

H: Ok. so tell me a little bit about your feeling about college. When
you think about before you came here and now you’re here.
A: Well at first, I thought it was gonna be rough. I thought it was
gonna be too tough and I wouldn’t be able to handle it. But now that
I’m here, it’s alright. I’m just get along with it like high school.
H: Ok. So does that make you want to keep going [yeah] that it’s not
too hard (nodding) ok. Do you feel like you are in the right place. Is
it too easy?
A: I mean it aint too easy, but it’s where I can catch on and learn it.
[ok] It aint holding me back from like learning what it is. [ok]
H: So for you, it’s just the right [yes] pace to ease you in [yeah] ok.

H: Do you anticipate it getting harder?
A: yeah I do.
H: Ok, when do you think that’s gonna start happening?
A: I don’t know. Well next semester I supposed to be, I supposed to
move up 2 steps in my math so [mmhmm] I know that’s gonna be
hard. And . . . . they talkin about . . . a . . these type of classes I’m
doing now don’t require so much. But the one I take next is gonna
require me to type like 60 words a minute and all that [ok] so that’s
gonna be a little harder.
H: OK. Do you think that’s gonna help with your computer apps or
goals [yeah] ok. good.

H: So tell me a little bit about your family.
A: well, . . we’re from the country or whatever. (chuckle) We stay
on our grandpops or whatever until . . . like around . . we turned 8
then moved in with my father, . . . and him and mama got together,
after that, probably when I was like 16 or 17 they separated, so it be
me my mom and my brother and my stepdad. And my stepdad, he
originally from Raleigh, so he know people up there or whatever . .
and basically we just living . . living like ordinary people. [ok]
H: Do your parents, or even your step parents, have they gone to
A: But they pushing us anyway, cause they say they want me to have a better future, so
H: Ok. So what’s a better future?
A: Well, right now my mama working, she working for the school. She feel like, she . . aint achieved enough . . cause, she got to go to work every day, at work, people there every day but she feel like she gotta do extra work in order to keep the family goin. [ok] so she wanted basically for me to have it easy street
H: easy street? (laughter)
A: (laughter) yeah
H: So, what, what does she do at the school?
A: Ah, she work in the cafeteria
H: Ok, so she feels that she works really hard. Does she have a second job or
A: Nah, she had a second job but ever since she work for the school she just [ok] that one job. And my step dad, he got 2 jobs. He work at Purdue and Wal-mart. [mhmhm] but . . he supposed to work for some construction company when we move. Cause he say he had an old job down there, when he was a the mill, he was working at a mill [mhmhm] and he say he want to try and do that again.
H: Ok, that sounds like lots of manual labor though right
A: yeah
H: the Purdue is the chicken [yeah] factory right. And then ahh, a saw mill sort of thing [yeah] ok. Wow, so easy street, would that mean then no hard labor? [yeah] So a desk job [yeah] a computer job [yeah] field. What else would be, ahh different? . . . what else does . . going to college mean to you?
A: . . . . I would . . . I wanna . . be something . . like be somebody, with ah . . probably like right now the first one in my family to go to college. So, It’s like a big deal for them, for me to keep going [mhmhm] so they pushing me along and helping me whenever I need help. Or either . . . just doing little stuff to keep me going.
H: OK. And you said you have siblings, you have younger
A: Yeah I got a younger brother, that’s it
H: That’s it just a younger brother
A: Yeah, he at the high school, at Richmond.
H: So, just a few years younger?
A: Yeah he, he like 2 years younger than me . . . But (inaudible)
H: Ok. Do you think he’s thinking about going to college.
A: Well . . . I would, I would say yes because he’s into sports and that’s what you do when I played sports in high school [ok] so I think that’s gonna put your mind on going to college.
H: What sport does he play?
A: He play basketball.
H: So you think he might get some sort of deal to go to college [yeah, yeah]. I mean his coach and him been talking about it with mama about going to college, so . . . I reckon he might go.
H: OK, so that would be 2 of you then, going to college
A: yeah . . . we the only 2 kids my mama got, so it look he gonna get pushed on it like I did [ok] I mean not like pushed on me cause I mean I was, I really wanted to try it, it’s just encouraged me to go.
H: So you’re saying your family pushes you a little bit [yeah] so tell me what they sorta do to encourage you.
A: Like, alright, . . . so like, If I have a rough day or whatever, or come home and do my homework, they’ll try to give me my space to do my homework and she ah, ask me if I want her to cook anything or, . . basically she’ll like do stuff that’ll help you. Or like, if I need . . . for her to come to the school, she’ll come up here. She work most of the time though. If I call her, it’d be kinda hard for her to get here, but she’ll make her way here. Like . . basically she’ll come here ask me, like, did you have a nice day at school or, do you want me to do this, do that. Basically she be like . . don’t let school get you down, and try to push me on.
H: Ok. There, there are times when school does get you down?
A: I mean . . . it’s not
H: when you have a rough day
A: They’s some days where like . . say I get off work late and I come here at 8:00, alright I probably not get out of here til like 3:00, by the time I get home, I probably be tired [mmhmm] and she come in there ask me if I’m hungry or whatever . . or . . I mean most of the time I don’t feel like being bothered, but she’ll come in there and mess with me anyways [ok] so like try to cheer me up or whatever.
H: That’s nice. So she try to keep you positive [yeah] about school, help support you by feeding you (laughter)
A: (laughter) yeah
H: Alright, what about your step dad? How does he, does he
A: Well he be, he don’t really be home that much, but when he is . . he is home, he, he like has a higher education than what my mama got. I think he went to . . well I don’t know, hold on . . well he is kinda smarter than what my mama is. So, like, if I get stuck on something, he, he kinda there to help he. He’ll like um, he’ll probably take a minute to understand, I’ll probably have to show him myself how we do it, and then he’ll catch on to it and then he’ll help me, help me out with a problem.
H: OK, so is that like for math [yeah] or for the classes.
A: He, He’s kinda good at math
H: OK. So you said that he may have more education than your
mom. Did you mom get a GED or a high school diploma.
A: She graduate here
H: OK. and he may have had some college, is that what you’re
thinking? maybe
A: yeah
H: OK Alright. So . . . tell me some more about what motivates you
to go to school. So you were talking about . . um . . having an easier
life [yeah] than what you have now [yeah] what else?
A: I mean . . . . . Well, If you stay in the area where I stay, you’d see
most people don’t, . . who don’t really do too much for theirself.
Like they just sit around . . . and sit around and do nothin, not goin
get you anywhere . . . like me working . . . that’s a that’s an OK job,
but if I was, if I had to work like I’m working now and make my
own living conditions, it would be hard because I have to pay bills
and bills here, so basically I’d be struggling [mmhmm] so that kinda
motivate me to just go to school and do better. Basically it’s . . . . it
just pushes me on. Like to see . . . how other people just not go too
much, you know there’s something out there for you and you just sit
around not doing anything. So basically just . . push yourself say I
can do better. I will do better than that.
H: Well how do they make it then? How [who] the people who sit
around and do nothing. What ah
A: Basically, . . .well . . . some of em graduated with me, and they
still live with their mom, I mean I stay with my mom, but they just,
it’s like they just staying to feed off their parents or whatever
[mmhmm] that’s how they do nothing . . But like . . I could come
home and they’re still doing the same thing they did when I left.
[yeah] like you doing nothing all day.
H: OK so you’re talking mostly about people your age [yeah] that
maybe aren’t maybe working a lot, or haven’t figured out what to do
[yeah]. OK.

H: So for you, what were your options then? Once you graduated
high school, what were the options that you felt that you had?
A: Well . . I had the option of going full time working, or . .
trying to ah . . . see, my mom been talking about moving for the
longest, so we’ve been saving, so . . . but I don’t know, I don’t have
like really 2 options and that was to keep working, or either to come
to school so I can start and I transfer to something better. Basically
those were the only 2 options
H: Ok. So where would you have worked if you decided not to go to
college? Would you have stayed at McDonalds?
A: yeah
H: Do you think that then you would have been able to make it on
your own?
A: I probably would because working full time, like 8 hours every
day, so we get paid every 2 weeks
H: Did you have that option [oh yeah] ok they would’ve. You
would’ve been able to roll into a full time job [yeah] there. Ok
alright.
A: They asked us, like when we was graduating they asked us “was
anybody planning on going to school.” And then they talked to me
about it and they was like, maybe you can go to the college and get
a good schedule at work . . . . They, well . . my mama was talking to
me about the colleges and I was talking to my manager about it and
she was encouraging me to come on out here. She like basically just
check it out and see how it is, or like it or not. You know. they were
helpful.
H: So do you like it?
A: Yeah . . I like it. [mmhmm] It’s . . pretty good out here.
H: OK. What’s good about it?
A: Well, . . seeing new faces every day . . . basically especially like,
you feel like you progressing. Cause I can be in class some times,
and the teacher gonna be teaching, well basically my math class,
she’ll be teachin, and it will be kinda hard for me to catch on, but
whenever I call her to the side, and she can show me exactly what I
did wrong, It’s like, Oh ok, I never knew that. Basically I like that.
And it’s like, it’s really something good . . to learn, learn something
new. [ok] just encourage you to do better.
H: Alright, so we’re talking a little bit more about your family. How
has your family, you had mentioned your mom helping you when
you came home, asking you if you need any food, asking how your
day was [yeah] um, do you feel like everybody in your family is
positive [yeah] about you going to college?
A: Yeah, they really up cause I’m the first one, so . . they, well
basically they ask me how it is, “Oh you like it here” you know “is
it good out there” maybe we should try it or whatever. I’m like
“Yeah come on out here.” It aint like you can’t go.
H: So you’re sorta the guinea pig [yeah] in a way (laughter). How’s
it going, yeah ok. And . . . do you feel any pressure from that?
A: Mmmm, not really because . . . I mean, if they bother me a lot
about it, I probably get aggravated, but other than that it’s alright
cause I be happy to tell em how it is out here. So . . . . it’s alright.
H: OK. Now I wanna shift a little bit to friends. Talking about your
friends, people . . other people that you know going to college
[yeah] Are there any people you’ve met here?
A: Ahh I got plenty of friends out here. Most of em came from high
school with me [mmhmm] I see em every day. I sit there and chat
with them, whatever. And it’s like, my new friends they, they
coming along just like, just like I knew em before I even met em. Cause it’s like, people are nice out here or whatever. They, they like, alright . . . see my math class I have this one man in my class, his name is Mike, he is like 26 or 27 [mmhmm] But it’s like his second year out here I think. And he’s like, he’s smart, he’s really smart in math. He like, he sit right beside me and like if I need, ask a question. He right there. [ok] It’s like, It’s like every. It’s like basically everybody like family . . . I would say . . just like family. H: So do you think you’ve made friend in all of your classes that [yeah] you [yeah yeah]. And do you study with them? You mentioned in class A: well, in math class we study a lot cause like she like us getting in groups, like study buddy. Like, she’ll like, if we have a test on Friday, Thursday we’ll probably go in class, she’ll like go over some work on the board and then leave us to like. Like get into pairs and like we’ll work the math stuff and then if you need help, the other person’ll help, help you out. H: OK. Has that happened in your other classes? A: nnn Nah. H: no, ok. But you think that’s important for math? A: Yeah. I mean cause math is a little harder than what . . . reading is. I mean, I never really struggled in read, reading that way because it came naturally. Like I was about, I was little I loved to read . . . . But math is like . . it’s gonna take me some time to get used to it. H: Yeah, ok. A: Especially when learning something new, like formulas and stuff. H: What about friends of yours that maybe you have that haven’t gone to school. You said you know some people [yeah] that just sit at home and they’re doing the same thing [yeah] whenever you get back from school. A: I mean . . . They generally just . . . sit around and do nothin. But it’s like sometimes when they come and ask me and be like “ah, man I shoulda went to school.” And I’m trying to encourage them that it’s not too late, you still could go. I mean . . but other than that, they, we really like, when I have some free time I hang with em or whatever. We’ll probably ride around or either go to the movies be hanging or something like that. Or go to a party of something like that. H: So do you still socialize [yeah] with those friends A: I still socialize with em, but I just . . . don’t do it as much as I used to. H: And how do they react then to you. Do you feel different form them sometimes, do they give you a hard time at all, or are they just curious. A: Ahh, they just be curious most times. But most times they feel
like I be abandoning them and stuff when I told them I got like stuff to do. Like if I got homework of stuff to do, I be like see you later, and they be like, “man why you leaving so early” or something like that [ok] I be like “Well I gotta go to work”, or “I gotta do homework.” And they think, you know what I mean you hang around and get used to it. Just gotta keep moving.

H: OK. Do you think about that a lot or is it just kinda
A: Yeah I do . . I think about it because I feel like . . . it’s, it’s making me seem like I’m better than them. At times I feel like because It’s like they look at me and think “ah you think you so smart” or whatever or he fixing to do that. But it’s not really that. It’s just . . I don’t like to sit around and do nothin. I be tryin to encourage them to just, come join me, but most of the time it don’t work.

H: Ok. Do you think . . have you lost some friends because of that?
A: Well I wouldn’t say I lost em, cause they, people the same way, I mean (exhale) we’re gonna be friends regardless it just . . . you don’t hang out as much. Were probably more, we probably, we won’t, we won’t go part of the day without seeing each other, but . . . we don’t socialize as much. [ok] But that’s alright.

H: So I wanna talk about then obstacles that you may have faced . . getting into college, and also some, maybe some road blocks you’ve faced once you’re here. So . . have there been some things that have held you back a little bit, or gotten in the way?
A: nah, not really. Only thing that really slowed, slowed me down was when they had to make new classes for students to get in. But other than that, everything’s just . . kinda easy.

H: OK. So have you looked at next semester yet? Figured out what you’re gonna take?
A: mmm. I was supposed to be doing that sometime this week or next week. I’m gonna go talk to my counselor [ok] and . . he’s supposed to let me know what other still, what other classes that I need to go further on. I know, a bunch of em from my math class and my typing class.

H: So you think getting there kinda early is gonna help you get the classes that you want? [yeah] When does registration begin? Do you know?
A: It start in November
H: Ok, so your goal is to get it early on [yeah] so you’re not at the end of the, the line.
A: They be saying their starting this new program where we can register online [mmhmm] and though, in order for us to do it quicker.
H: Ok. But you still have an appointment to figure out what classes
H: Alright, so, so the opposite of this question is: what are some thinks that are helping you succeed, what are some things that are going well for you?
A: well . . . It’s like, it’s easy, it’s easy for me to catch on. So, once you show me, it’s like . . I know it already. Well I, just go on from there. Like, if you show me something and I learn it. Just try it every day and then just, build it into my schedule just go along like little more little more.
H: So, then have you had good teachers that help [yes] show you [yeah] ok.
A: Teachers are nice. It’s like . . . alright, so like this one kid I got in my class, he hardly ever come to school because he be trying to work so he work before he goes out to the school, so he probably come to class and he wouldn’t know anything. Like and, he would ask the teacher and she would, she would help him but he would, they were kinda stressed because he wouldn’t be in class and he wouldn’t know anything, and she be trying to tell him. So they’ll probably fall out or whatever. And she’ll probably give up like helping or whatever. And he’ll come to me and whatever, I’ll just try and show em. Basically it’s not, it’s hard for him to learn because he’s hardly ever here [mmhmm] so
H: So are you here every day?
A: yeah
H: Have you missed any classes?
A: I . . . I only missed . . . 3 classes. And that’s when I was in the hospital cause I had my appendix tooken out.
H: Oh my goodness . . . that’s an obstacle. (laughter)
A: Yeah
H: Wow . . were you OK? Did you have an appendicitis? Like an attack?
A: nah . . it had burst.
H: ohhhhhh
A: I had . . . that that Friday we aint have school and it had burst then. I went into surgery that, that morning, Saturday morning [mmhmm] And I stayed in there ’til about like . . . Monday. Monday, on Tuesday I came back. The doctor say I could go back to school, just don’t lift any heavy objects [mmhmm] so that’s what it’s been.
H: Did you talk with your teachers about that
A: Yeah
H: And that, everybody
A: Yeah I talked to em. Yeah I brought a note and explained to them what was goin on [mmhmm] and they helped me out like, so If I like was walking into class a little late, she wouldn’t count it against me.
Or, if I needed help carrying my books, so . . . well I didn’t really need that much help cause I had a rolling book bag. I could roll it, but stairs or anything, someone would have to help me.

H: And when did that happen in the semester?

A: Ahh like . . . before October, so it was like . . . [September?] . . . I think it was like October 1st somewhere around October 5th, or the 3rd. [ok] around in there.

H: You were already a few weeks into class

A: yeah

H: ok. Were you afraid you’d get behind?

A: yeah I was. I didn’t want to miss that days that I miss cause I was like when I come back, I’m not gonna know anything.

H: SO how did you get caught back up?

A: Well . . . basically, . . . when I had that operation, I won’t working, I wasn’t working. I couldn’t go back to work until like he, my doctor, recommend me go back to work. So basically I had free time. I couldn’t work so, basically sometimes I would stay and my teachers would help me, like . . . extra stuff that I needed. Probably like we’ll make an appointment and meet, and ahh I would . . . I’d come to the office or whatever and they show me what to do. Start working on it, she’d show me what we went over on this day or what we went over that day. Basically pick it back up.

H: OK. Did you do that for all your classes? Or just math?

A: mmm just um, just math and English [ok] cause in my typing class, she just . . . let me type on it at home [ok] we got a computer at home so she just, let me work on it at home. [ok] And I caught back up with my typing class quick because, it’s like . . . in that typing class we use, you only can do the work at school cause there’s like a little disk that we gotta have, but she let me bring the disk home so . . . She told me not to work past a certain point, basically so I just work and tried until I got caught back up with her class and then I started back coming to school and (inaudible).

H: mmhmm . . . . OK . . . um what are some changes or transitions that you have gone through this term? How has your life changed?

A: Well its changed for the better. It’s not like it’s changed for the worst for me because . . . right now I feel like maybe the point where every teenager or young person would want to be . . . like . . . let me see . . . like in high school we would have . . . like certain stuff like . . . basically that you just like kids, like we couldn’t do stuff to a certain extent . . . but like here they give you freedom or whatever. It’s like you decide what you wanna do, but they here to help you [mmhmm]

H: So have you recently decided, or, it seems like you’ve known what you’ve wanted to do for a while.
A: Yeah . . I mean . . I basically talked about how I’m gonna do it all the time. My grandparents told them I wanna come. But I mean there would be some point where I would be like I didn’t want to get out there and just fail so I was kinda scared to come and they just pushing me on like “Go ahead, you could just try it” I mean there aint no wrong way or no right way to do it, just go, if you don’t like it . . try somethin different. But at least try it. Don’t just give up on it if you wanna do it. They basically just push me on.

H: Ok, so you mentioned that you were concerned that you might fail.

A: Yeah

H: Is that something that you worry about?

A: I mean . . it’s really . . I don’t, I don’t like to be in something and then have to stop it because I can’t do it. Cause I always have in my mind I can do it, or whatever. Basically I don’t like failing. I don’t like failing. It’s against my heart, I don’t like failing.

H: So how, have you failed already?

A: Nah, It’s not that . . like . . ok you know how you are little and your mama tell you “don’t be bringing me no bad grades.” So basically you try to bring in good grades. And then it’s like, when you’re young, most students, they don’t really care too much. They bring home bad grades or whatever, like it aint nothing. And it’s like well they don’t care about it, but if you look at it, it’s a big deal. Just start off young (inaudible) instead of just starting off like you didn’t care.

H: OK. So how are you doing in your classes? What are your grades?

A: I’m doing like well, the only class that I got a low grade in is my reading class, and that’s because I recently messed up on a test I gotta retake. It’s like a reading test where, basically we had to write like a 3 page paper and I didn’t, didn’t do it. Cause I was caught up in a lot of stuff. But, she’s gonna let me do it. I’m supposed to be writing it this weekend, hand it into her on Monday. I already started writing on it, like I started on it Monday. Gotta go do my final, my rough draft and then my final draft and then print it out and turn it in to her [ok] but it’s like, I’m not failing, I got like a 78. but it’s just not something that I’m used to me having. I’m used to having like As and Bs [ok]

H: And your other classes are

A: Yeah . . like in my math I got like a 88, so I’m doing really good in that class. I feel like if I’m above an 85 in math I’m doing really good cause . . math is not really my subject.

H: Ok. What is your subject?

A: I would say reading is.
H: And that’s the one that you have the lower grade in.
A: yeah, and I’m behind in it, I gotta catch up. Cause like in reading, you can express yourself, like how you feel. Like last week, she, she does, most of the time she let us choose our own topic. but she give us topics for us too (inaudible). But other than that she let us write about anything. It’s like you can really write about anything because just about what you thinking about. Like you just write about your job, or a car, or how life is, your parents, grandparents, your brother, sports, [mhmhm] anything. It’s like whatever, what comes to my mind that day, I just start writing about it. And then just turn it into how . . . I would go about it.

H: OK. Now you mentioned that some stuff came up that got in the way of turning in that essay.
A: yeah
H: personal stuff
A: Yeah. Cause my grandparents ah, well my grandma she had to have surgery. So, me and my mama went to the hospital mostly . . . . (exhale) it’s just . . . mmm . . . I, I say to myself it’s my fault cause I could have did it, but it was like it wouldn’t have been very good because I probably wouldn’t have been able to think straight. If I did would have turned it in, I probably would have gotten like a worser grade you know, than me not turning it in.
H: There’s a worse grade than a zero? (chuckle)
A: I mean, I didn’t get a zero for it. It was like, she was saying that we had to turn it in. She wasn’t taking no for an answer so you had to turn it in regardless [mhmhm]. So if I didn’t turn it in, she still wanted it. [ok] So me not turning it in
H: on time
A: yeah
H: So you are turning it in late
A: yeah
H: And your grade will be affected because it is late?
A: It, yeah. Probably be 10 points. She said that we can let it be 10 points off. But then if I would have did it anyways, I probably would have got like more points off cause I wasn’t concentrating.
H: Ok, so you feel like it was a wash [yeah] basically the same grade
A: I kinda benefited from it a little bit.
H: Um. So you mentioned your grandmother, is she not in the best health?
A: Oh no, it’s, nothing but a little operation that she had. [ok] It’s like, She had a hernia in her stomach [ok] so she just had an operation on that. It’s just, she’s kinda scared cause she’s old and she don’t like getting put to sleep (inaudible). And we was basically
there to show her kind of support.
H: And she lives in the area, locally [yeah] ok. Do you have a good
relationship with her? Close [yeah]. OK. do you have a lot of family
in the area, like aunts, uncles like that. [Yeah] Is that good?
A: Somewhat good . . . cause well like on the holidays when
everybody meet it’s good, but there comes some time when they can
get aggravating like they want you to do this for them, they want
you to do that, and you just like aint got time for that really.
H: OK. Is it hard to say no to your family?
A: most of the time. . . . yeah . . . I end up doing it anyway.
H: yeah. ok . . . um . . . so how confident do you feel right now about
completing your program? Your computer science program.
A: m m m I feel like .. I’m gonna make it
H: You feel like you’ll make it.
A: yeah I feel like . . . basically this is what I want to do.
H: Ok, and then what’s the next step after the Associates degree, if
you go up to Raleigh for example [well] cause if you’re moving
soon you still have to go up there and finish the associates [yeah].
What . . . do you wanna go get a Bachelors degree or go right into
work?
A: That’s what thinking about doing. I haven’t really decided yet if I
want to go straight to work, or if I want to keep going for my
Bachelors degree. [ok] that’s still on my mind right now, I’m
thinking about it.
H: What’s gonna help you make up your mind?
A: Basically, how my, my living conditions come when we move.
H: OK, when you move, [yeah] whether or not you move [yeah] all
that? [yeah] ok. So you are just going to put that off until you know
more [yeah] about the situation. Ok

H: Um . . . . you have a younger brother, so a way to conceptualize
this question is, do you have advice for your younger brother or
people like yourself [yeah] trying to decide between school and
A: I would encourage them just to give it a try. I mean, it’s not like
it’s gonna hurt you. I mean, it’s basically just like school so if you
wanna do it, just go ahead and give it a try. I mean I wouldn’t hold
no one back saying nah I don’t think you’ll make it or anything. I
would encourage them to go ahead.
H: And what are some maybe suggestions or strategies to succeed
that you would give them, what are some things that have worked
for you that you would share with others.
A: that . . go into something that you want, like to do, like something
you enjoy. Don’t do into something that look this person did it and it
look good to me so I’m gonna try it. Go do something you enjoy
doing [mmhmm].
H: Why is that? What’s the benefit to that?
A: Cause it’s like, you would want to have . . . like, well there’s nothing worse than end up going to a job that you hate. You won’t, nobody going to a job, get up and go to a job they hate. If you enjoy that job where you at, or enjoy what you’re doing, it, it’s like . . it’s doing something you wanna do. You aint stop doing the thing you wanna do. I mean basically, . . . alright, I love computers, so whenever it comes to me learning stuff about computers, it’s like nice when we learn something about computers because I feel I do really good. It’s like computers are . . . growing [mmhmm] technology is coming along better. It can do more stuff than we think it can, what you used to could do. It’s like kinda amazing to tell you the truth [mmhmm] I just, I like it. And if you really do something you like, just figure in what you’re lacking and just go on in life.
H: So how does knowing what you wanna do and doing what you like relate to your every day classes here? Like math, and keyboarding and reading and the student success.
A: I mean . . . It’s not really too much, because . . . alright, doing it doing it is like it kinda good in the end. But like when you first start off you would be like how would this help me with a computer or whatever. But, if you start doing the class and they show you why you need this to do this then you realize, oh I didn’t know that. Or I’m glad I did learn that, if I never would’ve learned that I wouldn’t know what to do with this computer right. What, why would I need that or if somebody with a higher experience or learning would tell me I need this I would be like what is that what is she trying to say I wouldn’t even know what they was talking about.
H: OK. So connecting your classes to what you wanna do [yes] doing what you love, what else. Let’s say he is having a hard time in class, let’s say it’s a peer of yours, somebody in math class for example who is having a hard time. What would you suggest to them to do to succeed?
A: Basically to ask for help [ok] don’t sit there and struggle or stress yourself out. If you ask for help, somebody will help you.
H: And who do you ask for help?
A: Either my teacher or like, my friend Mike in my class. he really good. It’s just, It’s easier to learn from them. It’s like . . . they can explain in a way where I can catch on “oh ok ok, I understand.”
H: OK so you would recommend asking for help. [yeah] Any other things
A: Or, getting a tutor [ok] A tutor can be like there with you every day show you basically how to go how to do it.
H: Have you used a tutor here on campus before?
A: Nah I been thinking about it at one point but when I caught back up, then everything was good and I just put it to the side, like I
really didn’t need it.
H: You thought about it for math?
A: Yeah
H: After the surgery and all that
A: Yeah
H: OK, but you feel like you’re caught back up now?
A: Yeah

H: Alright . . . um . . . . . . . . . . I wanna talk some more about some more specific family things. So you talk a lot about your immediate family and sorts this big decision that’s coming up, moving or not moving, and that’s gonna be something that we’ll wanna follow through with and figure out how it affects what you decide to do for school. Um . . . what about girlfriends, do you have one on campus do you have one
A: yeah, I gotta girlfriend. She’s, she’s not graduated yet. She’s in the 12th grade. She’ll graduate this year. She’s like one year behind.
H: Ok so you met her in high school [mmhmm] and how does she feel about you going to college?
A: She like it. She basically, she’s out there, she’s taking some courses out here too.
H: Ok so she’s like dual enrollment classes
A: yeah [ok] Yeah like she’s at the high school but she’s trying to major in nursing so she take, pick up some nursing classes out here there’s some part of the day where she would just leave the college, I mean lose, leave the high school and come out here. And I probably see her and I’ll probably talk but anyway.
H: So you see her on campus
A: Yeah
H: It’s almost like she is here out at the college. ok. Does that help you?
A: yeah . . . I mean . . . cause like . . . . We really like each other. I mean it’s like I, I known her my whole life . . . she’s like . . . basically another mom . . cause like she drives me crazy to do stuff. I mean she’s . . . natural . . . for me.
H:ok . . . so what about the move? How’s that going to affect things with
A: Well, she, me and her are supposed to move out to our own house or whatever [ok] , we go to college or whatever. We talking about staying in a dorm, but we haven’t really decided yet.
H: So it might be that whenever your parents move, and your younger brother moves, it might mean that you get a separate place with her. [yeah] OK Does that sound exciting to you or is that scary.
A: I mean, it’s kinda both. But knowing that mama and them gonna be there to help if it gets hard. [ok]
H: So that’s a good sorta fall back, a good sorta safety net [yeah]
Alright. And her parents are supportive of you too? [yeah]
A: they, they encourage us to go down there too because she asked
to move down there too [ok] Like whenever we talk to them or
whatever. they basically trying to help us out with schools down
there. [ok]
H: So in your mind . . . within the next year, you are going to move
up north a bit [yeah] and she’s coming with you [yeah] and you
guys are gonna figure out where to go to school, whether or not
you’ll be living on your own [yeah] or connected to your parents.
Ok. that’s a lot of changes going on [yeah] (laughter).
A: hoping for the best though
H: Yeah, that’s good. This is the time when you life changes the
most, so I wish you the best of luck with that. Um so you are
planning for next semester [mmhmm] you have an advisor set up, or
a counselor[ yes] that you are going to meet with soon, and trying to
figure out what classes you wanna take. Um we’re anticipating some
changes taking place. Alright . . . . Are there other things that you
want to add about going to college and your experiences here that
we didn’t cover?
A: The only thing I think should go on at the college out here, I love
to play basketball. I’m a sports person. [mmhmm] And XXXX they
don’t really have no sports team. And I feel like when I do move on,
I can try and play sports.
H: Would you want to play for a team, or would it intramurals, so
like other students coming together and competing on this campus.
Would that be something
A: I wanna play for a team, like a, like a university. [ok]
H: And what sport do you play?
A: Basketball
H: And why, why would that be important to you?
A: I mean, it’s cause I love sports. I always, I grew up with them.
My father always when I was like young [mmhm] you know it’s
like whenever I was 8 or 7, all I was doing was sports. It’s like,
being in the gym and people cheering you on is just . .something . .
good to me. Sports have always brought good into my life.
H: So when was the last time that you played then for a team?
A: In high school
H: your senior year?
A: mmhhmm
H: Ok. What position?
A: I played power forward
H: (chuckle) Do you miss it then
A: Yeah I miss it, but I mean, I still go to the gym and play, but it
just not as fun as playing on game night when you go out and see
the crowd. You play in front of everybody.
H: How would that help you as a student then? How did that help
you in high school?
A: I mean because . . . alright in high school basically it was work
work work. Playing basketball gave us some play time where we
could just have fun to ourself. We would be like an hour hour and
half just to have fun. And you see your teachers there and
everybody, it’s like really really . . . enjoyable.
H: So it made you feel good to have so many people cheering for
you, and you miss that?
A: A little [yeah] well a lot
H: Is that something that you have had to adjust to then? [yeah} Not
having that . . . feeling.
A: yeah
H: Alright. Do you think there are other ways to get that feeling of
support?
A: I don’t know yet . . . it’s just . . . well . . nah.
H: No . . so maybe it’s not the sport as much as people cheering for
you, so many people behind you and supporting you [yeah]
A: positive
H: Cause you can play pick up ball right?
A: yeah, you can play ball anywhere, any gym you want
H: But nobody’s watching
A: (laughter) yeah . . or most of the time you have people to go play
with [mhm] It’s like you depend on who gonna be at the gym.
You can go there, but there’s not necessarily other people gonna be
there to play with you.
H: So let’s say that the school had intramurals. So that would be
almost like 4 on 4 set up, that you would have a bunch of people on
campus that would be sets of 4. Would that be something that you’d
be interested in?
A: Yeah it would.
H: And then maybe there would be some students [yeah] that would
watch and cheer you on and that would make you feel good about
coming out here. [yeah]
A: Yeah it would.
H: OK Seems interesting. I’ve never played sports [chuckle]. I’ve
never been cheered on (laughter)
A: I tried
H: I would imagine that that is something that feels really good, and
then for it not to be there you would miss it.
A: yeah. like . . I tried football. The coaches told me to try football.
Football is easy, the only problem is that it’s more risky at getting
hurt. [yeah] . . . I tried though. I know some that say . . . I don’t
want none of that. Coaches say something and I would.
H: And you think your brother, he, he plays basketball, [yeah] and
you think that that might turn into something for his college too?
[yeah] Now would be the time when he’s sorta thinking that out
right? [yeah] Where is he considering going . . do you
A: I haven’t really talked to him about it.
H: yeah. Is that something you would talk to him about?
A: yeah. It’s nothing now, but we like
H: Do you feel competitive with him in any way?
A: yeah we, we always compete against each other.
H: Who’s winning?
A: me . . I get pick . . he, he’s probably the one that’s trying, but
we’ll pick at each other “Oh I beat you today, I beat you today” or
“well let’s go play now and see who wins” [mhm] Stuff like
that.
H: Ok . . . so some type of sports thing to do, that would be helpful
to connecting to the college you say. Anything else?
A: nah, not really.
H: Ok
Research course structures

1. H: the first few questions are just to get us warmed up to talk about school [ok] and I wanna know what you’re taking this term.
2. C: mm Business.
3. H: Business? ok, so what classes specifically?
4. C: ahh I’m taking business law, introduction to business, algebra, and I was taking typing. And I’m taking English and Reading 90.
5. H: Oh my goodness [yeah]. So you’ve got business, business law, English, and reading, math, and a keyboarding kind of class.
6. C: Well, I did have that one, I had to let that one go though. That was too many.
7. H: Did you drop it [yeah] or, ok. What, what was happening with that class?
8. C: I really wasn’t being able to make it every day. It was late in the, in the afternoon. I always had something happening so I just went ahead and dropped it.
9. H: Ok. Well you had a lot of classes anyway.
10. C: Yeah [chuckle] 17 hours
11. H: Wow. How did you end up in 17 hours worth of classes?
12. C: Cause, when I first tried to get in, get um my financial aid and stuff straight, they told me something had happened where I had to go back and do it again. So when I went back to do it again, it put me behind cause all the classes were about filled up, so I could get in where I could get in. [ok] I just told em, put a lot of em that I was supposed to take next semester, put em in this semester. [ok] So I could go ahead and get em out the way.
13. H: So is this your first semester or did you start in the summer?
14. C: this is my first semester
15. H: this is your first semester, ok. That’s a lot of stuff still. [yeah].
16. How are you doing in those classes.
17. C: I think I passing all of em, I’m doing pretty good.
18. H: Passing, with a . . . C . . up and down in different classes?
19. C: Different classes yeah. [do you] My English, English and reading I probably say B’s and A’s [ok] Algebra, . . . I wouldn’t be able to say B’s and A’s.
20. H: (laughter) That one’s a little bit harder?
21. C: Yeah it’s a little harder.
22. H: Ahh what, what level are you at right now in Algebra. is it
23. C: I had to start back over, I think it’s 070.
24. H: And then you have to build up [yeah] to the college level [yeah]. you have to take a test or something at the end.
25. C: Yeah I keep going ‘til the next semester, I get out of this one.
26. H: OK. but your goal then is to get a business degree here?
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<td>1</td>
<td>C: Yes Ma’am.</td>
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<td>H: And then what?</td>
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<td>C: Open up my own business.</td>
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<td>H: Ok, so right into work. Are you thinking of transferring or just using the Associates degree to open up your own business?</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>C: I haven’t decided yet. Right about now, my main goal is to get the associates degree. [ok] When I get that, that’s when I, . . I’ll set different goals [yeah]</td>
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<td>H: Have you thought about going . . to get a bachelor’s degree? If there’s a benefit to that.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>C: Really to be honest, I didn’t even really think I could get into here.[mmhmm] Knowing that when I went to regular school, I didn’t get to get my high school diploma [mmhmm] So I didn’t think I could get into here cause somebody told me if I got my GED and did all that, then I can get in here. So really right now, I’m just happy to be here (laughter).</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>H: But yeah, if you graduate with your AA, that’s your first 2 years of a Bachelor’s degree.</td>
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<td>C: then I could like transfer to another [mmhmm]</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>H: yeah, whatever 4 year college you want. Who knew? (laughter)</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>C: Yeah who knew. That’s what I was thinking.</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>H: So what happened in high school then?</td>
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<td>C: schhhhh problem child. Got into trouble, that’s it.</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>H: yeah. So you got in some trouble and it led to you dropping out of high school?</td>
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<td>C: Led to me being put out of school and then eventually not trying to go back for 2 years [ok] and then I decided I needed to go back. Well when I first got kicked out, I went and got my GED [mmhmm] and I was like, well I can get a GED, I’m all right. And then somebody told me I could go to RCC and further my education, and I was like, well I’m gonna do that too. [ok] And now I’m in here, so.</td>
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<td>H: But you waited 2 years you said.</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>C: yeah cause I was 16 when I got out, and now I’m 18.</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>H: Oh my goodness, Wow. So you, you skipped right through there. What, what were you doing the last 2 years.</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>C: Nothing. That’s the whole thing. Everything is new to me all again. [yeah] So that’s why it’s hard to catch up with everything right about now. [yeah] It’s pretty, It’s pretty good though.</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>H: have you been working then</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>C: What you mean like working on jobs?</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>H: yeah, yeah</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>C: Nah, I aint had no job recently. I was working, but I stopped working. [ok] I felt like going here would be better.</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>H: So right now you’re doing the . . . you did have 17 hours.</td>
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203
Dropping the keyboarding class, what did that bring you down to?

15?

C: Yeah I think so

H: Ok, so it’s probably not 3 credit hours the keyboarding.

C: Yeah I think it’s like 2, 1 1/2 [ok]

H: So you’re doing that and that’s ally you’re doing. You’re focusing just on school?

C: Yes ma’am

H: Do you find that you have the time to do that? [nodding] ok

C: Cause around here really aint no jobs, so, I mean, you could focus on one thing, or be out there causing trouble. I just focus on school [ok]

H: So um . . . let’s talk about what motivates you to come to school, cause you, I mean obviously you had some time to think about stuff, but you are still a young guy, so what is it that makes you want to be here instead of out there causing trouble?

C: Because, I know, I seen what happens when you end up out there. I’d rather be different than all that. Cause I know school, education is the key to success, know what I’m saying. Like even if you got dreams and goals, if you got an education with it, you always have something to backup [ok] you know to back up on, so that’s why I wanna get the education out of the way, so everything else that I want to do, I can do it and not have to worry about it. [ok] And then business, at the same time, I mean that’s what I like.

Business, doing business is what I plan on doing, so

H: What do you like about it?

C: Cause I plan on running my own business. I got, I wanna run a studio and a barber shop [mmhmm] so I like this

H: What kinda studio? Music studio?

C: Yeah music studio, yeah [ok] and a barber shop. [mmhmm] So I just like conducting business with people.[ok] Satisfying people I guess.

H: What made you choose those 2 areas that interest you?

C: What the barber shop? [mmhmm] Well, cause I have cousins, they, they own their own barber shop in Rockingham. Ever since I was young, I always look at that. That’s a way to make a living [mmhmm] and the studio is cause I always love music, and my uncle, he was a producer [mmhmm] and he’s a big time at one point. And I always felt like I had it in me to do something like that. And so I guess that I wanna do that too. [ok] And I know that if I get a business degree that I can do both of them. [mmhmm]

H: Yeah you could choose; you could do both. You could have a studio hair place. (chuckle) That would be cool.

C: (chuckle)Yeah, that would be kinda cool.

H: Where are you thinking of doing this, this business?
C: Where at?
H: Yeah. Do you imagine yourself here, or do you imagine yourself someplace else?
C: Right now . . . I was thinking about somewhere in Georgia. [mmhmm] Around there, cause I got family that live in Decatur.
H: [ok] and around there’s a lot of people doing music type stuff and
C: Yeah, Atlanta’s a pretty hot scene for music right [yeah, yeah] It has been for a while, yeah.
H: Yeah, and she knows a lot of people that own barber shops and beaticians and stuff like that so, that’ll be a nice way to get into it.
C: Have you talked to your cousin then, who owns the barber shop, about that?
H: Oh yeah, well I was in barber school at one point before, right before I got in here. It was, it didn’t work out like it was supposed to so I came here instead. And he’s the one that told me that’s what I need to do, go to barber school if I wanted to own, open a barber shop [mmhmm] go to barber school, I can run the (inaudible)
H: So what happened with the barber school?
C: (exhale) mmm . . it’s a long story with that cause, like the , it had a lot to do with my instructor [mmhmm] his personal problems [ok].
H: You had personal disagreements with the person, or
C: Nah he [I see] had his own personal issues going on which affected his work [ok] and it affected my learning so I was like I’m just gonna stop [ok].
H: And you had this going on at the same time or you stopped that and then decided to do this next?
C: Yeah. Stopped that and started to do this. This is my next “Ok, I’m gonna try school”
H: OK. Alright . . . so ahh, when you came here after being away from school for a while what was it like on your first day?
C: It was exciting to me. Like everybody I seen, they was like it was a regular normal day. But to me it was like bringin back old memories of being in school again [mmhmm] And I seen old people that I knew, so that made me wanna . . get it, you know what I’m saying? Get, gettin to know everybody and that. But, I was ready to do the work though, cause through the past 2 years you could think about all the stuff that went on. You would think it’s better to just stay in school and really pay attention, do your work [mmhmm] cause you’ll have something to look back on whenever you get out. You know it won’t just be trouble. mmm That’s how I look at it. [ok]
H: So you said you found some familiar faces on campus [yeah] and stuff like that. So what about . . tell me something . . some stuff about your friends though. Did you make friends while you were out of school and are those friends still your friends now that you are in
school?

C: hmm. I had friends, but I didn’t never really call ‘em like friends. It’s like, it’s cause, . . there’s certain things, but, I had a lot of people that I hung with when I was in school, and when I got out, didn’t see ‘em for a long time. But when I did see ‘em, it was like seeing ‘em in the road, or seeing em somewhere when I drive by. but when I seen em here, like meeting old friends, know what I’m saying [mmhmm] so I guess they still my friends, but the people that, I, I, I usually hang with. They’re real true friends. So yeah, they still my friends now.

H: So you had them [yeah] throughout [yeah] through that whole time

C: Yeah through my whole life really.[mmhmm] Cause I don’t hang with a whole lot of just friends everywhere [yeah]

H: So those friends that are your close friends [yeah that’s] those friends you’ve had your whole life

C: They’re still there. But as far as the like going to school buddies, we really don’t even associate so I wouldn’t even say we was friends anymore [ok] I mean we associates though. [yeah]

H: So these close friends that you have, do they support you going to school, or do they give you a hard times sometimes. (chuckle)

C: See, my friends, (chuckle) my friends we try to support each other. [mmhmm] you know like, I got one friend like really, I got the main friend, he, he was trying to get into school too. he, he basically got the same situation as me. He was, his was about that he was having a baby, so he had to drop out of school. So with him, I pushed him to go get a job and try to do something to try and support his baby. He just recently got a job so, then with me. He support me to stay in school [mmhmm]. So it’s, it’s like we help each other out [mmhmm]

H: That sounds good. Do you think that’s important for you to keep going? That you have people supporting you?

C: Yeah, Yeah I know it’s important cause my mama tells me all the time.

H: (Laughter) Well that’s a good . . I was just gonna ask that. So how about your family, um tell me about your immediate family.

C: Well my immed. , my mama’s the only one that I lived with all my life cause my daddy moved out. But my mama, she basically, she . .is the motivation cause she did it at this school [mmhmm] like that’s what made her be able to provide for me cause. When we first . . was born, she was workin’ just a regular job just one of them 9-5 jobs. Then, she decided to stop working and go to school. We, we at one point we was just living off of the check she got every few months from the school [right] but when she finally got out, it was like a big difference. Like how she got a job and then like how she got promoted [mmhmm] then she went to another place. And it was
just like, you can really make stuff happen if you go to school.
[yeah]
H: And you saw that
C: Yeah I seen, I’m growing up just watching her do all this stuff, so
its making me think like, you can really do this. [mmhmm] If you
really try.
H: So how old were you when all this was happening?
C: Well I’m 18 now, and my mama be working at . . . a hospital in
Pinehurst for like 2 years, . . . so . . I guess, I aint been long [ok]
recent like everything is just recently happening. Like right now I’d
say she at the best point in her life that she ever been since I’ve been
born [mmhmm] and that’s because she went to school got an
education and got promotions. [mmhmm]
H: So is she a nurse at a . . hospital?
C: Yeah she’s a nurse, like she’s a doctor’s assistant [oh ok] or
something like that.
H: Physician’s Assistant
C: yeah [ok] yeah
H: That’s a pretty good gig yeah, that’s nice.
C: It pays, I know it’s good because, they have, they ahhh they went
on a vacation or something like a meet, where everybody at the
place goes. They went to um, Las Vegas [oh wow] She came back
with chips and all this other stuff [laughter] Go . . Ily. [you want
some of that] I was, I was just thinking I bet she never thought she’d
end up doing stuff like that, or going to a place [yeah] just by going
. . I didn’t think just by going to a community college you could go
places all out of state and places like that you would really want to
go to [mmhmm] so . . that’s more motivation to me. [mmhmm]
H: Ok, and you mentioned you have a younger brother right? Is that
what you were saying, you were
C: Well I got, I got a few younger brothers [ok] from my daddy’s
side [ok] We don’t really communicate. Just recently getting close
to each other again.
H: Ok, so you live at home with your mom. It’s just you and your
mom? Right now?
C: Well right now cause both of my brothers went off to college
H: Ok, so the older brothers?
C: I’ve got 2 older brothers
H: OK. And where did they go?
C: Well one of em is at A&T, and one of em’s at East Carolina.
H: ok
C: yeah
H: And what are they doing?
C: well one of my brothers, he was going for computer engineering,
and he switched it up like half way between, and now he’s doing,
ahhh what is it like a physician for an athlete. [ok, yeah, ok] yeah um and my other brother is a computer engineer, well technician or whatever you call it.

H: OK. Do you go visit them and check out those schools at all or
C: Well one of my brothers, he always come back cause he’s in um, National Guard. So he has to come back and drill every few months, every few weeks out of the month, so I see him all the time. My other brother, I just talk to him on the phone.

H: Ok, now is that something you considered? You said the National Guard is what your brother did, is that something you ever thought about?
C: Nah, I never considered it. I mean if he would’ve told me I should cause that’d be a good thing to do, but I just never thought it was something for me.

H: Is that from seeing from your brother’s point of view, or just never really wanting to be in that?
C: I was just, I mean that’s what they tried to persuade me with, showing me what he gets [mmhmm] but it just, I be like . . I don’t want to have nobody telling me what I be doing [mmhmm] for the rest of my life. I wanna be choosing what I’m doing for the rest of my life. [ok] that’s why I decided to go to school instead, and just stay out of that.

H: Ok. um . . we’ve sorta been talking around this a little bit, but I want you to focus in on describing your feelings about college. So you mentioned being excited on the first day and you mentioned . . . um . . you sorta get excited when you mention all the benefits that your mom has had [mmhmm] so do you have generally positive feelings about college?
C: . . . well to be honest, when I first get in here and I start doing my work, good, grades were good, and then like a little of the ways through I started seeing how it started going down a little bit. Then I started thinking, I need to start picking it up. So now, that’s why I’m down stairs right now [mmhmm] doing my one of my projects cause it’s like, I just had to kick it back in gear. You remember what you’re here for [mmhmm] When I first got here, I aint gonna lie, I was kinda nervous like what kinda work are we gonna be doing like [mmhmm] what kinda people are gonna be in the class, are they moving too fast, but since I’ve been here, it’s basically like regular school. they take time with you [mmhmm] try to teach you and if you don’t catch on, it’s only because of you. [ok]

H: So, when you say your sorta . . you changed behaviors a little bit once you kicked it into gear [yeah] What behaviors did you change? What do you do differently now than at the very beginning of the semester?
C: Alright, at the beginning of the semester I was ready to learn,
ready to hear what the teacher had to say, ready to write everything down [mmhmm] As the year went on, it was like, ahhh she’s talkin’ about the same old stuff[mmhmm] you know I don’t wanna hear it, but I gotta do it [mmhmm] but then I just be like, I’m not gonna do it. Now it’s just like NO. You gotta do it again. Keep, keep going. Don’t start slacking up like you used to be [ok]
H: And that’s really natural, that sort of, it’s almost like an emotional high those first few weeks [mmmmm] your just really trying something new and different, and then you get worn out [mmhmm] from all that. Especially with so many hours that you are taking. Did you speak with an adviser whenever you decided to drop that keyboarding class, or was that something that you did on your own.
C: ahh I talked to one of the counselors cause he’s the one that reminded me. And I was like, I’m gonna, I’ll just go ahead and drop this. [mmhmmm] next thing you know I get a paper in the mail that it was dropped [mmhmm] so
H: Do you think that was a good decision for you?
C: I mean for the time I think it’s a good decision, cause . . I don’t think trying to do more than I can do [mmhmm] would help me in any kind of way. Cause if I try to do that, knowing I can’t get it with all the other classes [mmhmm] It’s gonna put a bad grade on my . . you know what I’m saying . . whatever I got those progress reports, whatever we get.
H: Did that open up time for you to spend on your other classes?
C: yeah. It did.
H: Ok. And which classes did you start focusing on?
C: All of em [all of em] Well I was already focused on all of em, but this like makes me focus more on all of em. Cause I was like boy I’m glad I don’t have to go to this class and worry about doing this. I’m glad I can put my time on this [mmhmm] you know [mmhmm]
H: Which course are you spending the most time on?
C: Right about now, it’d have to be algebra 2. That’s the one I need the most work in.
H: Ok. Is that the one you are concerned about the most? Or have you
C: Yeah, that’s the one
H: fears about getting behind?
C: yeah [ok] . . Really I feel like I’m behind right now. That’s why I feel like I need to spend some more, some more time on it. [ok]
H: OK. If you, when you start to feel behind, you just feel like, “I can spend more time on it to get ahead”? Are there other things that you could do to improve or to, to get ahead? . . . Other things that you’ve thought about doing?
C: Well, studying. Like whenever we get, we get homework. I used to . . just study the night before, or do the homework the night
before [mmhmm] And just wait to go to class, and everything that I
messed up on, just learn it there. But now, It’s like try to get it in
your head when teachers tell you, go home, do the work, and then
study a little bit, then go back to school, and then go over it.

mmmm
H: So more regular [yeah] repeated practice [yeah]. Ok. What about
asking others in class? Do you work with others in class, like peers
[mmm] and study groups at all?
C: well ahh, I wouldn’t say study group but I might ask one of my
friends [mmhmm] Like if I got a problem I just ask him, what did he
say or what are we supposed to do on this one. Right after that I just
catch on. [ok]
H: What about asking the teachers? Have you ever met with them
individually outside of class?
C: Nah . . . that’s one other thing that I might have to do too
[mmhmm] with algebra anyway . . . because . . . like I said I’m a
little behind in it, but I haven’t done it yet. [ok]
H: but that is something you might think about doing
C: Yeah, its, but right now, as of right now, I’m trying to see if, I’m
gonna see how it goes studying a little bit more [mmhmm] and if
that still don’t work, then I’m gonna get with the teacher.
H: How many hours do you think you spend on that a week? . . . .
outside of class.
C: outside of class, to be honest . . . out of the whole week . . . I say
I spend about 3 hours.
H: Ok. How many hours do you think you need to spend?
C: . . . . I wouldn’t, I wouldn’t know exactly, but I know it’s a little
bit more than 3 hours.
H: Ok. But, so you feel like it’s just a matter of you setting aside the
time now.
C: And really it’s like when I spend the time on the lab, it’s like I’m
in it, then I’m out of it, then I’m back in. I need to just really take
time out of the day to rally just be in it. [mmhmm] Like a hour out
of every day, or, well if I have a hour. Well 30 minutes out of every
day, try to, understand, really get into it. And then when I’m through
with it be out of it. Me, knowing me. I look at it, ok I understand, I’d
close it and do something else [mmhmm] and don’t even worry
about it for the rest of the day. [mmhmm] And then go to school and
be like dang I forgot how to do this.
H: Yeah. For algebra definitely just doing the problems over and
over [yeah] again. Just a lot of practice problems [yeah] and
spending the time with that. Ok.

H: Um, we talked a little bit about your friends, ahh specifically do
you have a girlfriend that
C: Not, not right now at the time cause, I feel like that would just
take up my time too much. [chuckle, ok]
H: Have you had a girlfriend at all this semester?
C: Yeah I had one, but [mhmhm] . . . taking up time.
H: Ok. So what happened. Did it have anything to do with school
[ahh] and the time you were spending here?
C: Well it might have that added on to it, but personal stuff had to
do with it too [ok] I mean . . . It was just like personal stuff and all
this it was affecting my school, so why not.
H: OK, so it was affecting your school?
C: Well yeah I could say it was, but well I could be studying at
home, I could be on the phone at home. [mhmhm] I look at that as
something that’s affecting my school. [ok]
H: So it was a distraction from school, or was she not supportive of
you going to school?
C: It wasn’t . . I, I made it a distraction. Like I, I try to find better
stuff to do other than just do my homework [than homework, yeah]
And if the girlfriend calls me, hey, I’d rather just talk to her. [right]
Give me something else to do to put it off.
H: Yeah, I don’t have to do math now
C: right
H: yeah, that’s natural
C: And then feeling like I’m not doin’ anything wrong at the same
time.
H: Yeah, yeah, cause you’re focusing on your girlfriend
C: yeah, yeah (chuckle)
H: (laughter) alright, so um . . .let’s talk about some obstacles
you’ve faced. So, you’ve already had to make the decision to
withdraw from a class, or drop a class. That could be considered an
obstacle, is there any other things that have come up that are maybe
making you a bit concerned about school? [ah . . .] getting in the
way.
C: Other than that, everything’s good. Everything’s . . . [ok] I just
gotta stay focused. That’s the only thing I’m worried about is
staying focused.
H: Ah, what are some things that are keeping you from focusing?
C: mmm . . . eh . . right about now, I wouldn’t say nothing. My,
my personal life, cause like I said for my family, they doin’ pretty
good right now so I don’t have to worry about that at the time, so I
just say, right about now, it’s all on me. Just to be focused and do
what I supposed to do. mm Make it out of college. [mhmhm]
H: ok. um. How confident are you . . in . . completing this degree?
C: . . . I’m confident right now cause everything’s going good, but if
everything keeps going good, I stay confident. I just look at it like
that. When negative stuff happens, that knocks off my, my focus, so
I can’t say. Well I know, I feel like I got to make it. That’s how I
feel. I got to make it. There’s not no other options. I could get out and not be doing anything else nothing’s gonna happen, so I got to make it through here.

H: Is that what you tell yourself to keep motivated?
C: Yeah that’s what I tell myself. I let myself know that every day. I got to make it through, I got to go to school. I wake up and be like “why go to school?” aint nobody pushing me to go to school, nobody telling me I have to go to school. But now I look at it like you got to because you want to be somebody [mmhmm] And that’s what makes me go, every day.

H: OK. How is your attendance? . . Are you, have you missed any classes? You said you were having a problem missing the keyboarding [Yeah keyboarding] that lead to dropping.
C: At first like, I started getting to the point where everything’s gettin boring, I might start slacking up, missing a class. one, one class out of the week. then I, know what I’m saying, miss another class out the next week, and I look at it like I need to stop doing that too. I need to be in every class. [mmhmm] basically I’m just trying to put everything back where it was from the beginning of the year. I’m not trying to slack.

H: Ok. so you’re saying that that was a time when classes started getting boring [yeah] and you lost interest a little bit [yeah] so C: and the people got boring. Like, at first you so excited to see all the people and it’s like seeing everybody and you so ready to learn, and then it’s just . . alright, now it’s starting to get a little old already [mmhmm] you start ‘ah man, I gotta go there again.’ I just sat back and rethought about it again ‘What did I come here for’ [mmhmm] to get an education, so you need to go.

H: mm Ok. So that, again, is what you tell yourself to get through the boredom [yeah]. And the good thing is that you get to change things up then too. Next semester [yeah] you get a new group of classes and teachers [that’s another thing] so it will keep, you’ll noticed you will ebb and flow a bit like that. Your motivation will. And as long as you are prepared for that, then you can sorta psych yourself up [yeah] whenever you start getting bored.

H: Alright, so um, we talked a little bit about the obstacles that have gotten in your way, and some of that was the boredom [mmhmm] and not going to that class. What is helping you succeed, besides this telling yourself ‘I can do it’ I don’t really have any other options, I don’t have any other choices. Are there things in your life that help you keep going whenever you just sorta feel . . stuck.
C: sh . . . I look at the negative stuff. Like there’s a lot of negative stuff going on, in my family, a lot of people in my family in bad bad situations [mmhmm] and I look at it like. That’s in my family, that’s, that’s real close to me. [mmhmm]. So I look at it like. I can
There seems to be a group of young men who are trying to be just like that if I don’t do it right.

H: So is this in your extended family, like, aunts, uncles, cousins?
C: Yeah, that kinda stuff. yeah. Cause everybody in my house, everybody in my house there’s one thing I can say I’m lucky to have, everybody’s trying to do better. [mmhmm] A lot of people sometimes don’t have that.

H: Ok. So you’re looking at those negative examples in your life and using those to not be that way. Did you get close to it at one point? [yeah] when you were out of school?
C: yeah cause when I was in school, when, all through high school, junior high school, elementary school, it was like basically, it was like a game to me. It was like have fun. Barely, I was passing all the things. All my teachers tell me I was smart and I could do this and I could do that.[mmhmm] cause it was easy to me, but I always look at it like I got better things, I got other things I wanna do. And I was like, you see, how when you was doing that in school how it didn’t work.[mmhmm] Now you got out and you have a lot of time to think about it. So now when I’m back here, it’s like . . . I should take this opportunity and make the best out of it. [mmhmm . . . ok]

H: Um . . I want you to think of other people like yourself. So other students who maybe, um, didn’t make it through high school, or sorta were discourages throughout high school and took some time off. What would you say to them to go back to school? What kind of advice would you give them once they’re here? . that you’ve learned so far.
C: Well, a lot of people that I know that aint in school it’s cause they chose not to cause they want to take other paths, so really the main, the main thing that kinda get em to come, I tell em you get a check every month. You get a check when the, when the financial aid come [mmhmm] That can get em to come. But then another thing, tell em there’s no job. What’cha gonna do if you don’t get a job? You can’t get hired, you can get locked up. [mmhmm] I try to motivate them through that way. Cause people that I know, pos, tellin them positive stuff don’t motivate them. You got to have negative stuff to motivate them cause positive stuff, they don’t want to hear it. Negative stuff, it makes them scared [mmhmm] and then they think they got to do it.

H: So that’s the secret, to sorta always remain scared of the other options?
C: That’s like, . . . I’m not gonna speak for all black people, but it’s a lot of blacks around where I’m from [mmhmm] like boys my age that I’m hanging with, that I’m from . . ah . . doing good in school, is, isn’t a high priority right now [mmhmm] Like, a high priority is making money right about now. But they don’t understand that doin
make money by doing the least amount of work—consider asking about crime.

good in school could get you that money. You just have to wait a little longer. [mmhmm] That’s why I try to motivate them by telling them by telling them you need to go to school [about financial aid] yeah, yeah the financial aid, and then try to tell them that there aint no jobs so what else you gonna do? [yeah] you know what I’m saying. Then motivate them by telling them about the girls. [yeah]
The girls, there are a lot of em [laughter] another thing that make em wanna come.
H: A lot of girls who are smart too
C:yeah a lot of smart girls, get you a smart girl [laughter]
H: Bring in some more money, a nurse or something right
C: You know what I’m saying, don’t be out there gettin’ on girls that are thinkin’ the same way you thinkin’ [yeah]
H: OK, so tell me some about the changes that you’ve gone through personally this term, or transitions you are going through.
C: Like what kinda transitions?
H: These could be things that, in your behaviors in your patterns in life, they could be changes inside, like how you feel about yourself, or or . . . [ah] any, anything at all.
C: (I don’t know noise) mm changes.  Ah . . .
H: You mentioned that you had a girlfriend
C: I’m more willing. [ok] I’m more willing that’s one thing. [ok]
More willing to do work, like more willing to go study cause like they not gonna push you as hard as they think, like they not gonna make you ‘ok you gotta do this’ cause you know they taking a grade tomorrow. They not gonna do that. They just gonna tell you, and it’s your job to go do it, so you gotta be willing t do that work if you wanna get grades. So I feel like I’m more willing to do stuff, but when I was in school, it was like everybody is gonna have to do the same exact thing so it like I can just catch on with somebody else one day out of the school week, you know what I’m saying [mmhmm] Cause you know they got another class at another time, and trying to. It was always a way out in high school. But in here it’s like all on you. So I feel like I gotta be willing to do the work.
H: Ok. So then, you feel like a very different person then when you were in high school.
C: I feel like a more . .mature person [mmhmm] like, yeah.
H: Do you think this just happened because you got older? [mmm] or what are some things that maybe helped you mature.
C: mm . . . it’s a . . some of it had to do with cause I got older.
Everybody matures when they get older but [mmhmm] a lot of it is like, life lessons. I learned a whole lot of life lessons. If you learn a lot of life lessons early, then its a lot of em you don’t have to make in the future. And that’s why I take advantage of it now. When I did it, I make sure I learned from it. [ok] and I used that
H: So you, from what you are telling me you said you are more willing, it seems to be that you are more willing to focus then on yourself, and and what your future
C: yeah before, cause before it was just worrying about what I’m gonna do here, what I’m gonna do there, what’s gonna happen here. I was never thinking about what I’m gonna do down the line in my life. Like what’s gonna happen down the line when I get like 30 or 40, get older. What I’m doing aint cool no more, what I’m gonna do them? [mmhmm] but if you go to school, get an education. You, it’s basically telling you gonna have a good future if you stay in school.
H: So do you think that’s a sign of maturity [yeah that’s] the ability to envision yourself
C: That’s a lot of maturity cause I know when I was in high school, I wasn’t caring nothing about [right] what’s gonna happen 40 years, when I’m 40 years old. I just [next week even] yeah. When I’m 40 I’m probably gonna be doing the same thing I’m doing now—that’s probably what I be saying right then, but now more than likely there’s a chance I might not even be here when I’m 40 [yeah] If I keep doing how I’m doing now that I thought about it, you know what I’m saying, [mmhmm] like so I guess that’s another way I matured like, slow down what you’re doing [mmhmm] yeah, and think about the real world.
H: Do you think that you could have easily taken the wrong path, or you were on the wrong path for a while?
C: Yeah I know I was on the wrong path because when I ended up in jail, that told me I was on the wrong path. [mmhmm] That’s not nowhere, nowhere that a 16 year old boy supposed to be at. [mmhmm] no where anyone wants to be at, so [so] I feel like . . . [go ahead] . . . I feel like that was the motivator right there. Stay out of trouble.
H: So when you were jail, the, is that what lead to you being kicked out of school as well [yeah] that same thing [all that incident]. What happened.
C: Ahhh, I had got into a fight, at, at school . . with another person . . because of something that happened to one of my friends [mmhmm] the day before. And when I got into that fight, I just so happened to have a lot of drugs on me [mmhmm] . . .
H: So they go you for possession?
C: yeah
H: Was it a long? What kind of sentence did you get?
C: Well I was lookin at 14 months [mmhmm] but I ended up, I had got a lawyer and I ended up coming up with only 5 years probation.[ok] but it was unsupervised [mmhmm] . . .
H: That’s not so bad [yeah] I mean, you’re a kid.
C: Yeah. He said he didn’t want to see me in there no more. [mm] so after all that, it’s like I feel like I gotta do better. Cause I know
that I made my family sad. I feel I gotta make them happy at least once, at least one time you know [chuckle]
H: Is that then, what, what are you going to do to make them happy then?
C: Them seeing me, well my mama telling me she wanna see me happy but I’ll be happy doing stuff that I like to so that she don’t like, so I know that aint true. I know if I do something that really make, make better out of myself [mmhmm] that’ll make her happy because its making better out of myself. [mmhmm] Cause I know everything that make me happy aint gonna make her happy [right] so what betters me, I know that’ll make her happy cause she cares for me.
H: Ok. Does she support this idea of, that you have about the ah barber shop and then the alt ahhh [yeah she] the recording studio.
C: She supports me, she supports everything that I do.
H: Ok, . . alright . . um . . . let’s talk a little bit about what you are doing next term. So, have you registered for your classes?
C: Nah, I think that starts on November the 2nd
H: That’s pretty soon
C: yeah
H: That’s next week
C: Yeah [chuckle] I’m ready to register though. I’m gonna register. H: Yeah, do you know what you’re gonna take? Some more business classes maybe?
C: Yeah more business classes. I’m gonna try to stick with that. [ok] Stick with the business.
H: Alright. Um, so the final question that we have here is sorta about, we’ve been talking around this in general, about what other people are going through and sorta transitioning in to college. Um, one of the concerns of this study is retention. So what that means is after the first semester, making sure that you stick around for the second semester. So, some of the rates of retention are lowest in African American males. SO they start strong and then sorta fade out of the system [mmhmm]. Why do you think that might be?
C: Probably for the same reason why I started to slack off. [ok] that they felt like it was getting boring, and they forgot about why they was here.[ok] What they was really, what the main goal of coming to college was.
H: So what would you say to those students that were having that hard time?
C: No one likes a quitter.
H: (chuckle) Using some of that negative motivation to get them in. [yeah] you’re gonna call em a quitter and expect them to do something about it.
H: Ok. So is that then, is that, That’s an interesting pattern, so if you are setting up ways to, those negative reinforcements. That you can learn from failure [mmhmm]. I mean that’s, that’s a good system that you have. that way if you do fail, you can recuperate [mmhmm] and use it to become stronger. 

C: Then you have to come back here. You don’t have to feel that failure no more. [no]

H: And I think you made a pretty good decision to drop that one class, I mean that’s a lot [yeah] of hours that you were in [yeah].

C: I might um, try to see if I can get back in it though. Next semester.

H: Yeah. Is it a requirement the keyboarding course?

C: I don’t know. It might be though, cause of business.

H: It sounds like a lot of people are taking that class.

C: Yeah in business I think it is a requirement.

H: Ok, alright. Um . . Are there any other things that you want to share with me about college? Some things maybe I didn’t cover in the interview or some stuff that you experienced?

C: nnn No

H: ok

C: That’s about it

H: um, alright. That will end the interview.
H: So the first few questions that I ask just basically warm you up to talk about school, and . . . I just wanna know what you are taking this semester. What classes are you taking?

J: OK. I’m taking criminal law

H: Criminal law?

J: Criminal justice.

H: OK. So . . . which courses in there? just one class?

J: Ah, I’m taking um juvenile justice, LEO, um . . . I’m taking intro to criminal law, and criminal law.

H: Ok so four [four classes] classes. That are all criminal justice related? [mmhmm] Ok, and since you were, did you start in the summer? or was it?

J: I, just, just started here.

H: This term? [mmhmm] ok. And when did you sign up for classes?


H: Ok, and did you have any problems getting into courses? Or anything like that?

J: um, no . . . classes were similar, almost full up, but I managed to get in.

H: Everything fell into order

J: Get everything settled into order.

H: So were you advising yourself or [umm] did somebody else advise you?

J: Well um, I um, advised my (burp). I advised myself, well um, let’s see how it went. . . The basically how I got the CJE courses that I was um somewhere and somebody said a word that I didn’t understand, and it was a lawyer term word, and the word that was given to me if you was a lawyer, then maybe you would’ve understood it. So I took that as a challenge, [mmhmm] so I came here, um, to enroll in class, but um, they found out that um, basically, well they say I didn’t have my, um, um, high school diploma. So I had to take a GED course here. I took the GED course and then I came and enrolled in here. That’s what I said about the grapevine everything I passed, so I enrolled in the class here. And I um, and so I’ve been studying and studying and have yet found that word. [laughter]

H: Do you remember what the word is?

J: I know the word, I cannot pronounce it, but I, he spelled (spelt)
the word and if I see it [ok] I automatically know what it is. [ok] so
H: So . . . you took GED courses this summer? [yeah] or was it in
the spring?
J: This summer, this summer. [ok] I took this summer and passed
everything and came over here [ok] and I’m starting
H: Were the GED courses on this campus.
J: Yes, this campus.
H: Ok. So did that make it easier then, you were already used to
campus.
J: Um, yeah . . I was um somewhat, but still didn’t go around to a lot
of places cause you know we were kinda limited [mmhmm] When I
got here and I was able to go around across the campus. The classes
were spread out. [mmhmm] and so you’re able to walk around
campus and see. [ok]
H: So every first semester, and all your courses are CJE courses
J: I’m kinda smart
H: OK (laughter)
J: I’m smart
H: So, what do you wanna do then?
J: I wanna become a lawyer [mmhmm] Because um, a lot of people
get misrepresent, represented [mmhmm] and I, and so I feel like this is
my way to give back to the community [ok] since I was, even
though the judge that said it, or say the judge that said the word, he
helped me out in the terms and saying that, you know like, you
really aint nothing so unless you become something, or like you
know. And I took it away like, if he did me, if he would do me like
that or say something to me like that whether I’m in his court or not
then, he would say something to everybody you know, and not just
you know a person they black, you know its [mmhmm] It goes on
down, black or white. You know so, I couldn’t, they all, a lot of
lawyers need to get out and help and, I can, I can make a difference,
you know.
H: So you wanna be a public defender then?
J: mmmmm. A public defender or a lawyer, had to be
H: yeah, that’s a specific type of lawyer
J: Something to help out, give back. [ok] You know somebody who
cares, you know what I’m saying. If you didn’t do it, then you didn’t
do it. Know what I’m saying? Why plea bargain, you know. [ok]
H: So, you’re takin the criminal justice courses and then what is
your goal once you get the associates degree in criminal justice?
What do you do next?
J: Um, I wanna go for my um Bachelor’s degree. [mmhmm] And
after my bachelor’s degree go on and get my Master’s degree in
criminal justice [ok] Um, the schools I’m thinking about are either
Pembroke or Mt Olive, and I’m leaning more toward Pembroke
[mhmhm] so
H: yeah I think I drove by that on the way over
J: Yeah
H: Um . . . do they have law programs there as well?
J: Mhmhm yeah. I, I’ve already checked ah because um. I’ve
already checked and it was better to come here and I was looking at
all the different law programs in the surrounding area [mhmhm]
that I could attend and go to.
H: So you went from this summer (chuckle) getting your GED and
your whole goal is to become a lawyer. That’s a huge path to take
right?
J: Yeah
H: A long path I guess actually. Ok. Well It looks like you have
planned things out. That’s good [planned things out] (chuckle). So
what is motivating you to come to school? . . . You, you had
mentioned this thing [yeah] with the judge
J: Um . . that and . . now that I’m in it, there are so much things,
just with criminal justice [mhmhm] um . . would I, would I been a
lawyer just . . um if you have evidence in the criminal justice
system. The CJE class, there are so much things that we don’t know
about [mhmhm] so the laws um, through the regulations, the by
laws . . um and all . . um like juvin . . let’s take juvenile justice.
There are so many things about juvenile justice that we don’t worry
about and when you get to be my age, I don’t wanna say our age,
but when you get to be my age [what is your age] (laughter) 34.
H: Well that’s about my age, yeah. [laughter] in your 30’s [yeah] ok.
J: When you get to be our age, [mhmhm] um . . you know there’s,
we see so many things and been around a lot [mhmhm] you know
cause, um up until last year I was kinda fine, you know. I had a little
job, I made money, you know I went by the rules and all that. But
there are so many things that we don’t know, you know, with
juveniles. Why they act like they act [mhmhm] the peer pressure
they have, that, that that then imposed on them, and then just the
other common laws that we don’t know about you know, and we
really don’t care about cause we really don’t associate with that part.
[mhmhm] Therefore we never go down that street, so we don’t
worry about that part. So we are always over here cause we done bit
a little life off see, we know what it takes [mhmhm]. And so when I
got in there my mind started opening up.
H: When you got into class?
J: Yeah when I got into class, my mind started opening up to more
cause before I just wanted to go to find out that word. You know
what I was saying, I was like as soon as I find out this word, I’m
gone. [mhmhm] That’s it, you know what I’m saying. So what I got
here I was like, Hey what you gonna do with life.
H: What . . . I have to know this story, so what is the context of this man telling you this word? What is . . .
J: um . . . I’m a great arguer, and I’ll argue against anything. Right or wrong. I just wanta argue. [ok] At this point, no fussing, no fighting, just arguing. [right] you know what I’m saying [word arguing] yeah you tell me that water is clear, crystal clear [unhhun] and you know it’s crystal clear [ok] I’ll will argue with you that it’s green [unhhun] but then he said a word and then he’s gonna come say I’m like . . . I never heard that word before in my life, and he turned and he says ‘well had you been a lawyer, you’d have known’ . . . and ok, that’s like a challenge. He said a word, I don’t know what it means, I went to, I have a dictionary that I carry around in my car [mmhmmm] And it wasn’t in there. So I’m like . . . this aint right. [mm] . . . no so . . . cut for him . . is what I’m gonna do here, find out that word and that was my goal finding that word [mmhmmm] And it started with a P and that’s all I know. [laughter] It had like about 10 letters in it (laughter) [unhhun, ok] and so I started staring at the guy who asked me what do you wanna do, as I got into class 2 weeks later, he asked, what do you wanna do in life and all that, and I started thinking about all the people that’s been mistreated and all that. And then again, whoever he was that he would say that, whether he a lawyer, or judge, or someone
H: Do you think he was trying to insult you? Is that
J: um, I think he meant it for an an insulting word, insulting word, insult, insulting but, I don’t get insulted [mmhmmm]
H: But you think that was his intent [yeah] he was trying to make you feel bad.
J: His, his intent. But I say, I’ll say it again. If he say it to me, then he will say it [right right] to anybody. you know what I’m saying, therefore that, that was his thinking. So I’m like, I start to thinking about, If I find out what this word is, it’s gonna take me a long time (laughter)
H: That’s a lot of trouble to go through [yeah] to find out a word.
J: So I would live through this here process, you know what I’m saying. Cause . . . I went . . I went and I thought and I was like ok . . might as well get my GED, I’m out here every day, to the coll, right here trying to find a word [mmhmmm] that’s not in there. The only way I can get it, is if I get into the GED program [ok] (inaudible), and then go into criminal law. And I end up liking all, I used to wanna be a police officer, but they don’t get paid enough, so [mmhmmm] It’s not worth it.
H: What were you doing before?
J: I did home health. [ohh] I think . . . I was decided in my ways. Home health, I was gonna do that till I retire, don’t [mmhmmm]
wasn’t nothin else I wanted to do cause I fixed my income and
everything off that. You know, so I was kinda side, I had been doing
that all for a while before I worked that, I worked at Fuddruckers.
[mmhmm] I worked there for 14 years [wow] Alright, Right out of
school [unhhun]. And I did everything that you could possibly do
dere. you know what I’m saying, from going out working on the
floor. I started out making 5 dollars an hour when I first started
working there to one of the top payers which was there like 15
dollars.
H: mmhmm. And why did you leave there?
J: I um, trained the dis, district manager [mmhmm] and then he
come in after he passed his test. He passed his test on a Friday, and
Saturday he come in and tried to tell me how to do my job
[mmhmm] and I told him he can’t tell me how to do my job when I
trained him [mmhmm]. And I done, he got mad at me and said that
one of us had to go. I said, you know what, um I said you know
what, alright. I aint got time for you, you can’t tell me what to do.
H: 14 years is a long time just to walk away.
J: And I, when I walked out, I realized, all the managers that were
there, I had them trained [mmhmm] and I, I was like, this is too
much. I trained the general manager, the assistant manager, and I
trained the district manager.
H: And you were not a manager?
J: I was the back of the house manager, which is basically a blame
on manager. Everything that went wrong, they blamed on me
[yeah]. XXXX you knew better, you been here longer [yeah] you
know, so I just took my keys out.
H: Did you feel passed over in a promotion?
J: un I really didn’t want it.
H: Mmm too much responsibility or ?
J: Well it wasn’t too much responsibility, it’s that, I made more. I’d
have to take a pay cut.
H: ahhhh cause you had built up
J: yeah, I had built up and um, one other thing I had just got kinged
on is um retirement. [mmhmm] And I was in an argument back and
forth with them about buying my retirement back [mmhmm] you
know cause I already worked for 14 years and they that’s the plan
they paid in. If I stayed, they would buy back the retirement
[mmhmm] and we didn’t have nothing to go on. I was about to
leave and have to start over fresh cause I wasn’t gonna give them
another 14 years [right] You know, so I started with home health,
and um, they had a retirement plan, so I was working towards that.
[ok] Now, and then after that, after I heard the word and all that, I
come in here and then got a new career and um, and I think this way
will be a whole lot better cause um, with the type of person that I am
and being able to know people and being with people [mmhmm] I
can help them out better you know and better (inaudible). I’d be able
Is this what happened to him? Is this why he was in court?

Is this what happened to him? Is this why he was in court?

to work harder. Like I said, I like to argue. Therefore I can help
[yeah] you know cause you
H: Arguing and helping people with the argument. Ok
J: If you. If, If you’re innocent, then I will help you [mmhmm] and
I’ll go to the full extent of the law.
H: What if they’re guilty?
J: If they’re guilty, I
H: You still have to defend them
J: I would defend them, but I would, something in my argument is
not gonna be as good [laughter] you know [mmhmm] I mean, I
mean and that’s how it go. I will argue to, I will argue [interesting] I
will argue all the way down you know what I’m saying. But you
know what I’m saying, but I, my thing is trying to keep the innocent
off the streets, I mean in the streets [mmhmm] instead of [out of jail]
prison. So many people that haven’t done things and been lied on.
H: Do you feel that you know a lot of people that have been
wrongly persecuted by the system?
J: Yes
H: Ok. Would you [I] include yourself in that?
J: Yes, of course. Um (throat clearing) yeah there’ve been a lot of
people wrongly accused and it got a lot to do with if you got money,
or you know what I’m saying, or who you know. It’s now what you
know, it’s who you know. [mmhmm] And I say, I can know
anything but until you know, um, if you know a judge, or you know
a lawyer that knows a judge and all that. [mmhmm] The situation
you can get anything done because of who you know. Regardless of
what you know, well you standing on the truth and somebody else is
standing on the liar cause they, they know or this person go to they
church [mmm] that’s a lawyer and she know the judge, they can
work together and regardless of what kinda truth you bring, they just
gonna throw it out.
H: Ok. So you feel like you can make a difference [yes] in the
system.
J: I can make a big difference.
H: Ok, and ah, I want you to tell me a little bit about your first day
of class here. So you did your GED program in the summer and then
you started this criminal justice [mmhmm] program. What was your
first day like?
J: Nervous, cause I hadn’t been to school for a while [mmhmm] and
um, when I got in there, I um. When I walked in I said I need to get
through this so I can get a front seat
H: you wanted to be up front?
J: yeah cause there a lot of kids in here that’s gonna come and sit in
front of the seat, and I aint gonna be able to study, and all them can
read they fresh out of school [mmhmm] and not, they gonna know
J: oh my god [laughter] you sat an hour waiting for the class?
H: when does the class start?
J: the class start at 9:40
H: in the morning
J: yeah
H: so you got there at 8:40?
J: 8:40 [chuckle] I was up
H: you just sat there waiting?
J: I was waiting, waiting and finally someone started walking in. He said ‘I thought I was gonna be the first one in here” and I was like, ‘you’d like to be’ [laughter]. You like to be the first one, I was about to go home. [oh my goodness] He looked at me and said, what time does class start? 9:40, its, it aint 9:40. My clock’s got 10:40. [oh no]. Then, but um, but we stayed um, and then I was all nervous and all that and um at the beginning there were a lot. I was feeling like, ‘oh man, I’m in the wrong class’ [laughter] you know like. This might not be for me. [yeah] But I’m, I’m gonna stick it out. Then um, then a mixture of people started coming in and all that. And still was nervous and all that like, oh “How do I write, How do I write” [mm] I just gotta keep up with the notes. You know, I just had to pace myself while I learned. I kept telling myself through the whole class breath, breath [mhm] listen, breath [mhm].
H: so you were up front. About how many people were in the class?
J: 35
H: whew, that’s a lot [yeah] and then the professor comes in and starts to lecture, and then you had to take notes just from his lecture.
J: yeah [ok] take notes from his lecture and all that and um
H: well that can be intimidating [yeah] that’s scary to come into the classroom
J: it can be intimidating and scary and all, . . but um, you know in the middle of his lecture, he, he talks. Now and then he say, write what you think that’s the important [mhm] say and then jot that down. Say, write and listen [mhm] and then when you get, when you get finished make sure you go back and fill in what you heard [mhm] and that’s, that’s the whole
H: yeah go back and use the book and stuff like like that
J: it was, it kinda loosened me up there and I kept looking like . . this this’ll probably be easy [mhm] so it was pretty good.
H: Ok. So did you just have one class on that day?
J: I had 2 . . started Tuesday . . one class that day, then the next
day, I had um 3 classes. yeah 3 classes.
H: Ok. So you . . 1 day you just have 1 class, and then the other day you have 3 classes. [unhhun] ok
J: not to mention PE, why do you need PE?
H: Oh wow, so that’s another class, so a 5th class, so like an hour?
J: yeah, but it’s PE. I’m a grown man, gotta do jumping jacks
[laughter]
H: Is that what they make you do?
J: Similar, um . . and that’s one of those things like um, “I’m gonna put you in PE” I’m like PE. He said it’s a requirement, everybody do PE [mmhmm] I said “I’m a grown man, I aint doin’ no jumping jacks” [laughter] but
H: yeah we had a requirement for physical ed at my undergraduate too. That’s funny. I took Tai Chi.
J: If I had known [unhhun] that they had um [options] Taekwondo, yeah. I woulda took Taekwondo [laughter] I mean [protect yourself] yeah
H: Maybe Karate or something
J: They be going we get, but it, its, it’s fun you know. Um, My advisor, my um ah professor, he’s been um doing it for a while.
[mmhmm] He’s been an officer for a while.
H: And he’s your advisor too [yeah] for criminal justice. ok.
J: He’s been teaching for about 15 years [mmhmm] and so he’s been doing it for a while. So you know, he kinda, you know. It wasn’t about stereotyping and all that, he looked, he said. He say “there are no colors” and he say “in this class there are no colors. No one in this class is 100% black, is 100% white, is 100% Mexican” [mmhmm]. Everybody have different parts in you. He say and once we begin to look at it that way, then we will all, then, then we’ll, we’ll make a difference. And so, he said, then he said “The stuff I tell you is the stuff that’ll make it in” cause he say for him, he didn’t learn how to study until he, I think it was 28 or so [mmhmm] yeah 28. Because um, he had to go back to school [mmhmm] and do that because when he went to college, he did barely made it out of high school, and he barely made it out of college. He went to Clemson for 4 years but he was a wrestler and no one would hire, was hiring wrestling teachers [mmhmm] You know, they wanted you to have a degree in something, so he had to go back to grad school [mmhmm] and learn how to study, so he said he’s been there where most, where most of the older people are at. So
H: Is this your PE teacher or is this the ah criminal justice
J: no this is the ah criminal justice teacher [ok] and so he, he talks with us and try to help us out you know, the way, you know. Just don’t get up and quit.
H: Are a lot of the people in that class going to be police officers [um] or corrections officers?
J: Um. A lot of em um, not corrections officers. A lot of em have the
goals of being um, some of them are being for patrol, ah state
troopers. Some want to be Sheriff department [mmhmm] Some
wanna be regular police officers. A lot of em wanna be juvenile
justice. [ok] Some wanna be parole board [ok]
H: So you’re unusual because you wanna be a lawyer.
J: Yeah. I’m about the only lawyer. [mmhmm] which would be
good cause if everybody graduates . . and all that, I’ll be the only
lawyer so if they get in trouble, they’ll run to me.
H: Yeah, and you’ll know all the people in the police force.
[chuckle] That’d be good [chuckle].
J: That’d be good on that, that perspective.

H: Yeah. alright. So ahhh, tell me about your feelings about college.
So you’re coming back to school, um to learn your word, and we’ll
figure out what that is at some point. Ah, what do you think college
represents and what does it mean to you?
J: Um, college . . .to me, my feelings . . College represents
independence . . um . . you know. It’s more, it’s not high school, so
you have more independence. [mmhmm] and regardless what goes
when you leave campus, when you at campus it’s kinda like a more
stress free environment cause you are young again
H: Mmm young again
J: Yeah, college puts you in the mind where you 14, 15. You really
didn’t worry about the light bill, the rent, you aint got no job, and so
when you’re on campus you’re young, you’re free. And you’re
mingling with a different, different people [mmhmm] and
perspective. And you’re talking, you’re meeting more friends.
[mmhmm] You know so it’s a place where you can relax at. You
know you have to do your work and then your, um, your job here,
you know in order to stay here. But it’s more relaxed, you know it
give you such, such independence. You know [mmhmm] you happy
to go cause you say you don’t have to worry about the stress, you
know. [ok]
H: So are you working at the same time you are going to school? Do
you have job too?
J: Um, yeah, I started back working some. I’m working some, um
H: The home health stuff?
J: In home health I um work some, and I’m trying to get to working
and all
H: Is that difficult, for you to try to find time for both?
J: Yeah . . It, It is difficult. It is difficult because of the simple fact
that um you have to be at college, and um, I wanna speak for
myself, um, I’m coming just to find a word [ahh yeah, (laughter)
no], but you’re coming cause you wanna make good grades and all,
and you make good grades in school, in high school, if you made
good grades you continue cause you always wanna be smart

H: Are you on financial aid? Are you able to get help?
J: um, I was able to get financial aid . . . by grace, cause I really
didn’t work none last year [mmhmm] and all that, due to an injury
on my foot [mmhmm] and all that, so I didn’t work none last year,
but I was able to get financial aid [mmhmm] and what I did (cough)
after I got my books and stuff, um, I put that money up, or give to
my mom, so . . um . . no what I did was cause our rent, I paid up to
6 months [mmhmm] and I, with the rent . . and all are paid up . . get
[got ahead] yeah, got ahead of the rent cause, you know for the 3
months. um. Then I took the other one and I um put gas in the car
[yeah] because if you, if you got the house taken care of, you can
pretty much tighten, just cut back some with your light and water
[mmhmm] enough to scrape up enough to pay that. [yeah] But your
car insurance and stuff.
H: So it’s enough assistance so you don’t have to worry so much,
but you work a little bit for those living expenses.
J: Yeah, the living expenses and all that [ok] um . . I feel . . and
then . . I say this . . but then, each person has they own individual
[mmhmm] and my thought would be what would help us out, cause
gas is so high, [mmhmm] is the college could get a gas tank or so
[chuckle] and then . . and they could make money too, but you get
financial aid, and . . . what, what, what it would be like is they
consider , any college, it don’t have to be the college, any college
I’ll transfer [laughter] Can get like a store, you know a little gas
store [mmhmm] you know hooked onto, and you get your financial
aid and all that. Hold some of that money and say “ok, this is your
card here for gas at this place here.” [mmhmm] So we don’t have to
worry about getting here, and so once a week or so [mmhmm] you
know. You get gas off your card to put in your vehicle until that’s
gone you know.
H: So are you driving a long way . . to campus?
J: I, I drive about um, I stay on the other side of Tabor City, so it
takes about 35 minutes to get here.
H: Ok, so how many times do you fill up a week?
J: um twice. [twice] and I drive an Expedition
H: ohh . . That’s a big . . automobile.
J: yeah, and then I work over towards the beach. [mmhmm] and so I
have
H: So you’re doing both ways, opposite ways.
J: Yeah so I have the gas here, to cover here, and . . .
H: Would you say that’s one of your biggest concerns?
J: Yes
H: Gas?
J: Gas.
H: ok
J: That’s why I would say, if they could find some way to put up a little gas, and it don’t have to be a whole big store [mmhmm] Just be a little store, all the little, the little booth [right] with the little gas tanks. You could have all 3 gas and all that, and let the college tuition, um, for those who sign up for gas assistance. They say ok this is
H: Like a gas card of some sort
J: yeah. This, this is, see here. You get this much money right here. And . . the government gives you assistance cause of school to buy your books and all that . . um .. put another 1000 dollars in there and say ok “you can have 3 months to use this 1000 dollars” So what don’t be used gave back to the government or something [ok]. So pretty much you’ll pretty much use it, um . . And then you look at it ok, Mondays and, . . Mondays and Thursdays you fill up. [mmhmm] OK., or Mondays and Wednesdays you fill up and what you’re doing Saturday, Sunday . . well don’t have nothing to do with that [right] just get you to school [ok] and that’d be, that’d be less stress on a lot of people. I mean you got a student care here right at 3 dollars a kid . . you know and a majority of them driving to school. H: Yeah, cause there’s no walking anywhere to here J: Yeah
H: And there’s no public transportation out here is there? [no] Like a bus or anything?
J: So you really have to, you really have to buckle down and say and you . . come Saturday . . . Saturday you’re looking like “ok” this is what it takes to get to work this week and that week. Now I got to get to work , and I got to pay the light bill, the rent, and all that, but I need to put some aside because you have a gas bill. [right] you have to pay and try to get to school cause the school policy is 2 miss . . you know what I’m saying, You’re dropped. [oh really?]
H: you may miss 2 classes and they’ll, they’’ drop you from class? [yeah] withdraw you? [and um] Wow!
J: The problem is what that you mist 2 classes, but a lot of people H: 2 in a row, is that the problem
J: ahh no 2 total [total] 2 total [wow] of the 3, 3 months or so a lot of people at the time is struggling cause you trying to find gas money or you get here and you borrowing money [mmhmm] you know what I’m saying [mmhmm] to get gas money to make it back home. [mmhmm]. You know and ah, I’m not gonna exempt myself from that cause I have loaned my friend a couple dollars to get home, and he have loaned me a couple dollars [right] to get back home you
know. And so it, it get to be, it get to be involved that way too. [alright] and you sit there thinking “How can I get gas. What do I need to do to get gas” and all that. And that’s when a lot of that stress comes [mmhmm] cause you know if I miss this day here and I got to go to the doctor this day right here. that’s 2 days, so why should I go back to school [right] and then you have to put . . . And while we on that subject, they need to work with the 2, 2 day. You never know what goes on, and its, its unexcusable if you miss 2 classes. [mmhmm] unexcused what goes on, then that’s the situation. [yeah] and that so . . . it, it should, it, it, it need to be a guideline apart to play on that [right] because, you don’t know what peoples goes on.

H: Ok. . .I wanna talk a little about, you were mentioning friends here, so I wanna talk about friends you have outside of school and the ones that you have here at school. So, have your friendships changed? [umm] since you’ve started going back?
J: . . . some of ems changed because . . . when, when you hear criminal justice, you automatically go no higher than the police [mmhmm] you know, you don’t think about nothin else [mmhmm] They’re like, “oh you tryin to be the man now.” [mmhmm] And so, they like, we can’t be hanging with you too much anymore [yeah] We do, we might do something that, you know what I’m saying, that aint by the law and ah, you don’t wanna lock us up and all.
H: Do you think your friends are . . scared to hang out with you
J: that’s what they say
H: don’t want to hang out with you
J: That’s what they say “you, you about to be a lawyer, you about to be a police now” so you know what I’m saying. You gonna be snitch and so, you gonna be you now
H: the man
J: Yeah and so, you really don’t want to associate with the man, he gonna come lock you up. [mmhmm] and then um . . . here at school, you know. They all happy. They hear I’m in criminal justice and automatically think, “Oh you gonna be a lawyer” Well, one person say “you gonna be a lawyer, that gonna be good cause I’m gonna be a nurse.” I’m like OK. [laughter] We aint together. What? and she was like, “well no, cause if I be a nurse I might get a baby daddy who don’t wanna do right and all these drugs and stuff put him to sleep.” I’m like, “We ain’t gonna be friends” (laughter)
H: Oh My goodness.
J: I mean, but you have certain people like, ok you gonna be a lawyer then I know I know a lawyer [mmhmm] If I need a lawyer for something, I know I, I know I know a lawyer, and you know H: So it’s two different ways. Some people are
J: Yeah, yeah two different ways
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<th>H: “oh I can’t hang out with you” [the ones that] and other are “Oh I can use you”</th>
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<td>J: Yeah. The ones that are not here are like “Nah man, I can’t, I can’t mess around with you that much” So you lose friends, but you gain friends.</td>
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<td>H: Have you lost some good friends? [ahhh] Has it been hard?</td>
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<td>J: Not really. My good, my good, good friends. Today I talk to my brother, he’s saying like, you need to hurry up and do this thing cause I need to know what I can do and what I can’t do. And if there are any loopholes in there, you need to let me know. Let me know [yeah] So, if you’re not that into seeing me, I say look this right here and that right there [yeah] you know, so.</td>
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<td>H: Ok. So you do have some friends that support you?</td>
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<td>J: Yeah I have some friends that support me and some friends you know, but it’s all about, .. You know a lot of friends that support you also want you to fail and to and all that, “I knew you wasn’t college material and I knew you and, and that goes back down to get, trying to get here every day, [mmhmm] you know what I’m saying, for 3 months, August September, October, November [mmhmm] 4, right at 4 months. Them a lot of days. [mmhmm] you know. I mean and you got, you got to try and get here without missing those days [mmhmm] and so, it gets to be a struggle but we make it you know. We got 6 weeks. And I was telling this one guy today, we got 6 weeks, 6 weeks of school left and all. And he was like, you know he’s like, well, my car messed up, you know what I’m saying. I stay an hour away. I have to take a bicycle to school now and all that. I don’t think I’m gonna make it. And I’m telling him, 6 weeks. All you got to think about is 6 weeks.</td>
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<td>H: Do you know anybody who’s carpooling? Cause, it’s such a concern with the gas.</td>
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<td>J: Yeah they’re a lot, a lot of people carpool. I have a couple people that ride with me.</td>
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<td>H: Ok, do they help out with gas?</td>
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<td>J: um . . They don’t really have a job. [mmhmm] With all the classes, it’s so hectic that you know</td>
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<td>H: Well they got a financial aid check too</td>
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<td>J: Yeah but, a lot of, a lot of people um . . Take my nephew for instance. Once he . . um . . by trying to get everything set and you know. You have a saying to where if you pay me what you owe, you can always go back and borrow again. And by the time you get your books and all that, your financial check might be 8-9 hundred, some 1000 dollars. You get 11 hundred at the most [mmhmm] And, by the time you pay your Mom back for borrowing 300 dollars, you always have to pay your mom back, even though she says no you don’t need it. But when you take her 300 dollars [yeah] and that. And then you start dividing that up. And if you, . . if you get</td>
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Different from younger student—desire not to move backwards

something to drive, you don’t have money to put insurance on it
[mmhmm] and all that. And then you think about it, if you do all
that, you don’t have the gas to put in the car, gas is so high.
H: So getting to and from college is a huge concern.
J: It’s a huge concern [yeah] you know help out with the gas
H: Have you thought about next term and only doing 2 days a week
so you only have to drive here back and forth 2 days. Is that
possible?
J: Well yeah, it’s possible, but the class schedule won’t, because
H: Right, that’s what I’m saying, so the class schedule forces you
[yes] to spread it out
J: Yeah the class schedule will force you to do 4 days. Um the credit
hours is 12, so in order to get the 12 credit hours [you have 4
classes] I come at least 4-5 days . . and so
H: But you can’t find those 4 classes on 2 days a week?
J: Yeah but I’ll run so extensive and then you have to find a job that
will comply with all that. [right] that’s a, that’s a major thing.
Finding a job that could comply with your schedule you know cause
H: Right, to be flexible with that
J: Yeah, because we don’t wanna go back to work at Wal-Mart,
McDonalds and all. I, I mean . . because . . there are people who
make out the schedule and say right here “look I’m gonna put you
on the schedule for this day right here. If you come in you come in,
if you don’t you’re fired.” and so now you weighing your options
[mmhmm] It’s gonna take me 3 or 4 years, or 2 years to get this
degree right here versus working right now and feeding a family
now. [mmhmm] So what do you do?
H: So let’s talk about that now, your family. So, what are your
living situations then? [um] Do you have anybody that you take care
of or like
J: Yes. I have 5 children.
H: Oh my goodness
J: Oh my goodness, why do you say that?
H: 5? . . well I don’t have any that’s why. 5 that’s so many.
J: I want 15
H: Oh my goodness (laughter)
J: (Laughter) Now its oh my goodness. (laughter) But, I want 15 if I
can take care of all of em. You know.
H: 5 children that live with you [yeah] all of the them [yeah] wow.
J: And, and um we’re going back and forth to school and all that not
to mention with my daycare worker, she had, she had a idea . .
which was a pretty good thing. What she’s doing, she’s doing a pick
up now, that she just started this week. Cause I was telling her, well,
I’m gonna have to take em out of daycare, and out of part-time
daycare because you know we struggling to make enough to pay the
daycare [yeah] But the drive, the drive. It used to take me an hour or
so cause I had to drive to the daycare drop them off, and then turn in
to (inaudible) [mmhmm] She say, well, I, I can do transfer at 10
dollars a week, which is a savings really. Cause it’s 15 there, its 15
miles.

H: Ok so she comes and picks them up
J: So, now she’s coming to pick them up. What saved me this week
save me in school, I’m still here. Because I tell her, I said look “my
money is funny” and it’s not laughable [mmhmm] It’s just funny.
You know and it wastes, I spend 10$ a day go there and come back
[right] you know, and ahh a lot of other parents that go to school
here spend so much money [mmhmm] from spending

H: Don’t they have childcare on campus? I saw some kids that were
back here.

J: Yeah but you have to apply for it from job link, and have to be
approved for it [mmhmm] and not everybody is approved for it.

H: Have you applied?
J: um . . no I haven’t applied . . but . . . versus daycare there and
versus daycare here, if you’re out of school here, then your child,
you can’t bring your child [ok] and what the problem is there, if
let’s say I got Friday’s off, I can work Friday day [mmhmm] but
then I

H: You can’t bring your children or child here, ok
J: I’ll have to keep the child. And so what she said, which was easy
for her, she said, well since we have 4 parents that come from
XXXXX and Xxxxx, I’ll go back and pick each of the kids up,
and that’ll be an extra 40 dollars an she can make that loop and
come back. She have to come to Xxxxx pretty much every, every
morning anyways, so

J: So she have, she has a little mini bus. She comes to pick em up
she charge an extra 10 dollars a week which is 40 dollars a month,
which is a whole, a whole lot cheaper
H: for all of your kids? [yeah] for all 5. That’s not bad.
J: Yeah, it’s a whole lot cheaper than payin um . . you could look at
it 20 dollars a day you come here to leave here, you leave here, you
go back at 5:00, so you go back and pick up the kids and all that . .
all that um
H: Does she drop them off at the end of the day too [yeah]
J: It’s a whole lot cheaper than so [yeah] now when you get here, all
you have to do is go home [right] and you have a few minutes at
home to do your homework [yeah] to clean up, to begin cooking and
all that [mmhmm]
H: that’s nice

J: the gas price is really not to bother too much
H: That’s worth 10 dollars a week
J: It really has not bought too much this week here and all. Had she been doing that at the beginning of the year [mhmhm]
H: But now
J: I could save. Well yeah. It’s a whole lot less stress now [yeah] and so [I imagine] yeah. That, that works out really good. [ok]
H: So, . . you 5 kids, wife [mhmhm] with you. So, parents staying with you at all [no] aunts and uncles. Just your immediate family?
J: My, my nephew. I moved him in [your nephew] to come to school.
H: Ok, so he lives with you and comes and goes [yeah] from school. Is that ahh your sister’s/brother’s child?
J: Ah, my sister’s child.
H: Ok. So I wanna talk bigger family too then, so um, . all of your siblings and your parents, how many of your family have gone to college?
J: I’m the only one.
H: The only one [mhmhm] and how many siblings do you have [4]. 4, ok, so you are one of 5 as well (chuckle)
J: one of 5 as well
H: and ah, what do they do?
J: Um. they’re working at motels, ah my mother [service industry ok] My mother works um at McDonalds um, she been there, ahh almost 10 years now. The best biscuit maker in the world [mmmmm] yes. But she works out at Myrtle Beach and all that and um. She does . . um
H: Do they live closer to the beach then, your family?
J: Um . . . they stay . . about the same distance from me from the beach. Um, but they stay in South Carolina down there in XXXXX. It’s about 8, 9 miles from me.
H: OK, and how does your family feel about you going to school then?
J: My, my mother loves it. You know um
H: She making biscuits for you to make you keep going?
J: yeah I um. I didn’t tell her um, I didn’t tell her I was in the GED program when I, because we thought . . . I thought I had . . . at the end, I went to um, I went to OryTech. And um, OryTech had me doing college courses and getting my high school diploma [mhmhm] So I went there and I was sure I had my high school diploma there. So when I left out and then when I went to enroll in here, they said I didn’t [ahhhhhh] so then they
H: So you didn’t even realize you didn’t, you had to do that extra step.
J: Yeah so when I went to enroll in here for the fall semester [mhmhm] they said I didn’t, so we had a problem. And like, they
said if you know if you do this and this, you know
H: So you did like a prep course and then took the test.
J: Yeah but until it was over I had help coming here for um June,
July, about a month or so. Then I left.[mmhmm] and came and
enrolled out here. Um, I was able to pass the test and all and wished
it was a whole lot easier.
H: And you didn’t tell your mom because
J: I, I told here
H: Didn’t want her to be mad?
J: No I didn’t want her to be. I told her, I wanted, cause I was telling
um during that time there was so much stuff. I was trying to, I just
wanted it to be. I wanted it to be a surprise. [mmhmm] you know so
when I get it she opened up the package [mmhmm] you know what
I’m saying. So I told, the day I found out I went and told her, and
she was like disappointed. You know, cause I was supposed to be
the first child [mmhmm] you know to ever graduate [mmhmm] I’m
the only son, cause I have, 4 daughters, 4 sisters, and all that so I
wanna be the only one to graduate you know imagine looking in
your mother’s eyes [mmhmm] my only baby didn’t graduate [yeah]
the only one I thought had graduated. So, so many years we thought
so. When I um, go to get my GED here, I took it back and I like,
“here I need you to open this.” “What is it.” And she opened, she
looked, she like “AHHHH” [mmhmm] “Oh my god” I said “Yeah
I finally got it, and now I’m enrolled in school. And she was like,
she was like, don’t let nobody tear you down. [mmhmm]. “I’m not
mom.” I’m gonna make, I’m’a make it. yeah.
H: So how does your . . . . your . . . . having five kids and your wife,
how are they reacting to your going to school?
J: Ahhh, They like it. Um, my wife tell me I’m about the smartest
person she ever know, which . .
H: What does she do?
J: Um, she’s a substitute teacher. [ok] and all that. So I’m about the
smartest person she ever known [chuckle] and all that, which I can, I
can confirm. I’m about the smartest [laughter] and all that.
H: So she supports you coming here?
J: Yeah. She supports me, um . . my kids love it . . because um . .
kids love cause it lets them know that if you think about something,
and what I always teach, if you think of something, you wanna do
something, It’s only up to you to do it. [mmhmm] You know. No
matter how much you say, oh I should do this, or I should do that.
It’s I’m going to do this. And you go ahead and do it.
H: So you think going back to school shows them that they should
also go to college? That it will help them [yeah] make that choice.
J: Yeah and I, I tell em . . you know . . it’s no longer, it’s no longer a
high school diploma, or as I say it’s no longer a middle school
Intellectual pride?
Different labor expectations in education

diploma [mmhmm] It’s a college diploma. When we was coming up, tobacco fields was everywhere [mmm] and you could go out and work in the tobacco fields and make just as much money you know . . . it, it wasn’t really harder at the McDonalds. You could go to the Burger King and all that [mmhmm]. Now . . . the farmers they are going away, and you’re pretty much high school diploma to do anything. And what I tell them, you know what I’m saying, you need a . . . computers are, are, the most fascinating things in the world. [mmhmm] um . . . you pretty much use computers for everything. And to get that knowledge, you have to come, cause they always changing something, they always doing something different. [mmhmm] and all that, and then, you know what I’m saying. If you got a diploma and whatever, and go to school and whatever, take up any kind of trade you want. You have something to fall back into, you know what I’m saying. Begin to go to school. Find something you like, something you wanna do [mmhmm]. Um, one of my sons wants to be a professional quarterback . . . and I tell him, but have something to fall back on.

H: How old are they, the kids?
J: Um, my oldest is 17.
H: Oh, so he’s [ahh] is it he or she?
J: A girl [it’s a girl]
H: So does she want to go to college?
J: It’s a he, I’m kidding you. (laughter) Yeah she wants to be a registered nurse [mmhmm]
H: That’s a good career. Is she thinking about coming here?
J: Yeah she, She said she wanna to um [to go here] go here.
H: She gonna ride to school with you?
J: Yeah (laughter). She gonna ride to school with me and ah
H: Is that next term then that she’s gonna start? [yeah] next year?
J: Yeah, next year she’s, she’s gonna start, so that . . . that, that, “I talk to you every day of my life so you know you wanna better yourself” [mmhmm] I say that “at least that way I know where you’re at anyway” [mmhmm]. You know. And so she’s goin, she’s gonna better herself. Um, become a registered nurse, um I think is 2 years. [mmhmm] or so and [that’s good] she’ll get out, she’ll probably um . . .
H: So do you have some little ones too you then, that are staying at the daycare?
J: yeah, my youngest one is um . . . um . . . you’re trying to get me in trouble . . .18 months.
H: That is tiny
J: Yes. 18 months.
H: Oh my goodness
J: He’s 18 months. And ah, I have one that’s 5 years old, who’s
smarter than the world. And I ah . . ah . . then I have a son that’s 12, who say he’s 14 [laughter] And I have a son that’s 10 that says he’s 12. [unhun, yeah] yeah
H: Those boys are tight? The ones that are closer in age?
J: yeah. They tight. [ok] Um we, we all, we all have fun. You know what I’m saying? We um . . I’m not the not the Joneses, [mmhmm] but we um, we do pretty good.

H: Yeah, but it’s a hard decision then to decide to . . because when you come back to school you’re forgoing some income to focus on [yeah] those terms [yeah] especially when you were used to working for 14 years at Fuddruckers [yeah] You had established yourself there [yeah I was]. Those are big changes.

J: Yeah when I worked at Fuddruckers, cause I tell people, when I worked at Fuddruckers . . . . I didn’t . . before, before all the kids and that really, you know you really don’t think of that. I had to leave because of the terms and to prove to them I could make it on my own. [mmhmm] And then, and that’s what I’m doing. But, then I know what you’re saying. You get set in your ways after 14 years working. I mean my paycheck was $560 a week. [mmhmm]

H: That’s so much different from what you’re making now right?
J: (laughter) yes (laughter)
H: yeah

J: So um, you get, you get set in your ways, you know what I’m saying. You’re making right at 24,000 a little more, um, depending on overtime, stuff you get in an all that. But, you know, you get set in your ways and after I left that and started doing home health, well it wasn’t, it wasn’t as much, [mmhmm] but you know what I’m saying. I started liking home health, and I like home health. So I like the working with the people and all that [mmhmm]. But then, I come in here and I’m seeing a better way to provide for my family at the same time [mmhmm] you know that and um . .

H: Yeah, immediately, it hits your income [yeah] but you’re hoping that the long term

J: yeah I’m hoping . . . like you know we sacrifice this right here, you know what I’m saying. I know this video game come out and you can’t go to the movies and all that, and but it is. As I stated before, you put, you always putting back on gas, you know what I’m saying [yeah]. I got this gas pocket stash that I got by saying “this is gas.” Put that in there you know what I’m saying and all that.

H: So you think it’s hard on them? Your kids . . . that adjustment [u . . .um] you know to have seen . .

J: Well my daughter could tell the difference . . .[mmhmm] you know cause “Dad give me 5 dollars, dad give me 10 dollars, dad give me 20 dollars” [mmhmm] And now I gotta have gas. She like “ever since you go back to school you gotta have gas.” [mmhmm]
Why don’t you stop goin to school so you can have gas . . I’m like . . no. [yeah] I mean, it gets to be a struggle that she can tell the difference. My sons, they really can’t tell the difference right now because they get . . ah a bag of Doritos and a Soda on Friday always has been the thing, so as long as Doritos and soda come on Friday [they’re ok] yeah. That’s the one sacrifice you have to make. You make a guideline and stick with it until, you know, you begin to do better. [mmhmm] So that’s what, that’s what we have done, you know. And I advise anybody that’s trying to do it, make a guideline, you know what I’m saying [mmhmm] Cause the majority of the people here have children, whether they’re male or female. [mmhmm] Make a guideline. If you got something going with children, start a new tradition. And I say, well I get the soda and Doritos when my mama got paid. We found out . . later on, when I got older, when she lost her job at Stones, when Stones closed down, and ahh she started working someplace else, she wasn’t making the money, she was, she used to make. But she still instilled that everything was ok anyway cause every um Thursday she brought, um Doritos [mmhmm] and soda. Doritos and soda, well I picked up on it cause the sodas wasn’t cold no more. (chuckle) Like “Ma . . this soda aint cold” you know what I’m saying. She like “Put some ice on it” [mmhmm]. Then so, like one day I, I seen her, and that, that was every Thursday, so I found out she started getting paid that Monday after she started working that new job. She would get paid that Monday, and so she would have to buy the sodas and Doritos and sit em in the trunk [mmhmm] you know what I’m a saying, and wait, wait you know. And regardless of what [mmhmm] you know what I’m saying that Thursday H: Right, she kept those patterns J: Yeah she kept the patterns all the way up until we got old enough and she was like “ok, no more sodas” [laughter] “Yall old” H: Yeah right, go get your own Doritos J: (laughter) Go get a job. And so, and I said you know. You know, If I don’t get that pay on Friday, and you know, [mmhmm] the sodas and Doritos must be a must. What kinda sodas you drink? You know, and, and this is your thing so [mmhmm] when I get home on Friday, the kids know, sodas and Doritos are somewhere, you know. If they not in the car, they in the house. Somewhere you know [yeah] we got sodas and Doritos. And so, I try to keep that image up, you know what I’m saying. No matter how hard we’re struggling, keep the image of soda and Doritos on so [mmhmm] the image a little more so they can [a comfort] yeah. they won’t know, so they think nothing aint changed. We, We can have sodas and Doritos today, you know what I’m saying? It’s a disappointment when it’s not delivered. [mmhmm] you know and . .
H: So you’re talking about these traditions and you’re talking about . . . you mentioned giving other people advice. You said if I would give anybody advice it would be to give these patterns. So what is some other advice that you would also offer to people like yourself transitioning back into school. What are some ways that you suggest, or some things that you suggest they do to succeed?

J: Um, one of the more foremost is ah . . . ah sit down and write a list [mmhmm] of priorities, and what I mean by priorities like um, you got a lot of young gentlemen and some females, I say don’t know what their income is that’s coming to school to try and make a difference in their lives. You know you got child support and you got to worry about an all and so . . . your, your first priority need to be your child [mmhmm] so if you on child support, you need to try to find a job. [mmhmm] And what the, what the deal is, when you come here . . . if you could do early registration all that and get your classes tied up, and then go out there and find a job that can live by those guide [match up] yeah match up those guidelines and keep that same track [mmhmm] You know. If you need to be done for school every day at 3:00, then you need to get a job that start at 4:00. That should be on track, [mmhmm] and don’t let nobody . . . you know, stick with that job. Whether you like that job or not [ok] If it pays . . . it . . . let that be it [mmhmm] um . . . I’ve . . . I’ve learnt from my uncle, who’s wise. But . . . silly, um (laughter) I’ve learned from my uncle . . . he said um . . whatever they set up for child support and this man has to pay child support. Take whatever it is they pay for child support and pay it yourself. And what that means . . . it takes . .(cough) the first day you work and um say that goes to child support and then they pay out your check. And then you say, If Monday, every Monday go out to child support, then Tuesday Wednesday, Thursday, that’s my money. [mmhmm] and you don’t have to, you’ll never fall behind with that cause you’ll work 4 days for yourself and 1 day for that child.[mmhmm] Whatever the, whatever the government says, whatever the government sets outside your job then match the child support so they can pay that and then you base your income off 4, a 4 day week work schedule [mmhmm] and you don’t go

H: So already factor that out?

J: Yeah. You don’t go above your means, and you don’t go under [right] your means.

H: So be responsible with your money [be responsible] and plan [plan] for gas, for [everything] for the Doritos and the coke [yeah] get all that planned.

J: Whatever, whatever, whatever plan, and I do it, I do it to day . . . there are 4 weeks in a month, and the money that we got, if we get close to the limit that we supposed to have for that month, [mmhmm] then we have to change something up and all that
[mmhmm] and evidently was gas gets up, go up and down
[mmhmm] so you wanna take that in as a factor. Um, it’s a must in
my family, one day a week se spend family time. Well we had to
change family time up and find something else to do with the family
because of the gas expense [more affordable, mmhmm] so, so you
know if you plan out and the guidelines plan out there too, you base
on that income your projects you set [mmhmm]. Ok, we only got 2,
let’s say ah . . . let’s say a 1000 dollars a month [mmhmm] So you
planned out your light bill, your rent and your water bill . . ah if you
got a car payment take all that out right there and stick with that
 guideline.
H: A budget, yeah
J: Yeah stick with that budget all the way through. Don’t deviate
from that budget none. Um . . that means
H: And if you save any put it in the gas part (chuckle)
J: Put it in the gas part yeah. You, you have to have a gas budget
[yeah] you have to have a gas budget you know, and please guys, all
of you don’t let your wives get it. Because, although, and not
picking. I love my wife, and I give her everything I have, everything
I got, but all that that goes in the gas budget stays in the gas budget
[yeah] you know [yeah]. It’s no piece for her. (laughter) [right] I
don’t wanna fuss [yeah] that’s why I go to the . . . you know . . and
we have, we have to do those things in order to make it through.
H: Has that been hard? the tightening of the budget . . .[ahh] . .
family?
J: Yeah the tightening of the budget . . has been hard cause my
wife, um, she love to spend money. and . . not just per se, but she’s
um in the field where if so and so needs something or “I just stay at
sister so and so house, I don’t think they have no rice, I don’t think
they have no food [mmhmm] ahhh . . let’s give em something.”
Like, ok, we can give em something. I say, “you can buy em a pack
of meat.” “No I gave em something out of the refrigerator” wait a
minute. (laughter) [mmhmm] . . you know, but you know, she, she,
she’s a big helper [mmhmm] You know what I’m saying, and you
know she’s a big pillar in the community so I love her for that
[mmhmm] And all that. You know that type of our budget, and I
will expand the budget if you know somebody need help of
something [mmhmm] I will expand the budget to help them out
cause I’d rather cut down you know on a video game and all that.
But what I do is . . um . . I take like penny wrappers and all the
pennies I find lying around [mmhmm] I save, you know. When I get
20 dollars of those pennies [mmhmm] so I go and buy a video
game [mmhmm] That’s me, you know. Quarters and that goes into
the gas budget, you know so
H: But, you get the pennies.
J: Yeah I get the pennies. I keep all the pennies. And I told her and
she said “ok Baby” but I found 5 cents. Alright, put it right there.
You know what I’m saying. Once we get 50 we’ll buy them up and
all [right]. you know, but all the quarters and nickels and stuff you
find goes in the gas budget. And you’ll be amazed then toward
Thursday or so, cause we already out of gas on Thursday
[mhmhmm], which is good cause we don’t go to school on Fridays
(laughter). [alright] So like today’s Thursday, [mhmhmm] we have
eough gas to get to get to school and get back home, which is OK
cause I aint got to go nowhere [you don’t have to go anywhere]. I
aint gotta go nowhere til Monday, or Sunday, you know [yeah]. You
know really Sunday.

H: But you probably, can you get . . . goin to church on Sunday, it’s
closer so you don’t have to drive really far do you?
J: Oh yeah, um . . . that . . . let me tell you something. I’m a pastor at
a church.
H: Oh. You are a pastor
J: Yeah um
H: Alright. Are you having service in your house then?
J: Um, I have a church down in Xxxxx South Carolina, which is
about an hour from me.
H: My gosh . . .why are you so far up here and your church is so far
sown there?
J: Because they needed somebody in Xxxxx, and I had a lot of
people that were looking for a church in Xxxx [unhun] who
couldn’t find a pastor and they knew me when I had a church down
in Xxxx [mhmhmm] when I was free
H: Are they helping you out with the gas I assume?
J: Yeah um, well I preach out of Paul, you know they . .they, they
give, they give me some but I don’t really [mhmhmm] cause while
we in a depression, a lot f people don’t have the money to give
[mhmhmm] and I’m against people that give pastors so much money
and the pastor don’t give em nothing [right]
H: Yeah but, you can get some gas money to get down there and up.
J: yeah they offer
H: So every Sunday you’re driving down
J: yeah, they will help out with that
H: your whole family
J: Yeah. They, they will help out with gas. You know they like
“here pastor, here’s 5 dollars” know what I’m saying, . . . and that
goes into the get to school fund.
H: Let me just recap here. So you have a wife and 5 children [yes].
you have a job as a pastor [unhun] You have a job as a home health
person [unhun] and you are going to school full time [unhun].
Anything else that’s gonna come up in the inter . . . anything else
that you also do? (laughter)
J: (Laughter)
H: Are you also a midwife perhaps or something (laughter) wow.
J: I used to be a fireman
H: you used to be a fireman, a volunteer fireman?
J: Yeah for 11 years [oh my goodness] I was a fireman for 11 years
H: You’re a giver—that’s what it is. That’s why you are going into
that career.
J: And all, but so . . . it, it’s a whole lot of fun, and here I get to um,
talk to so many people [mmhmm] and all that and you know. There
are a lot of problems that are going on [mmhmm] and . . you get to
help people out and work with, and I try to put . . I have put a lot of
people on the budget that I am on now. [mmhmm] And they are like
“Wow, If I had known this.”
H: You’re helping people in that way too.
J: My budget plan seems strange
H: It doesn’t seem strange at all
J: If you go . . Well there’s a lot of people that haven’t heard of it
like, “man you can just . .” you know, You can’t live on 1000
dollars, you can’t live on 1200 a month [mmhmm] I’m like, “If you
know what you’re doing” [right] I mean you get everything you
wanna get [mmhmm] You know what I’m saying you get
everything if you goin by my house, I have a big screen TV. I have
um, I have the . . . the Playstaton. You know what I’m saying. I
have all the equipment, you know what I’m saying. And like, “man
you can’t be no pastor man, look how you live” and all that. You
know what I’m saying? I’m the coolest preacher you wanna meet
[mmhmm] and if I didn’t tell you, you never would have known
[mmhmm] but I tell some people and you know I tell people, I tell
people because I let em see. You know what I’m saying. You can
live your life and do everything you wanna do [mmhmm] and I’m
one of them pastors that don’t make a lot of money. [mmhmm] I
don’t make a lot of money , but I live my life you know to the fullest
H: As you need to [right] your don’t need any more
J: And I go on my budget and I won’t go off over my budget or
nothing. You know. I stick by my budget, and if that means I can’t
get this, this week, I don’t worry about it. I’ll wait because my goal,
my goal really is to find that word and get to school.
H: (Laughter) And become a lawyer
J: yes, become a layer
H: And help people.
J: Cause I know, I, I got this feeling he say that word cause he knew
in order for me to find that word, I had to become a lawyer.
[mmhmm]. . . And that’s it . . .
H: Well that’s good. It’s divine intervention there.
J: it is
H: So what are some ah transitions and changes that you’ve made during this time. So I mean obviously your life has changed a lot and you have changed a lot in a few different steps you whenever you, each time you have a child things are changing a lot, and then each time that you shift careers, and now you’ve decided to shift into college. So what are some changes that have happened unique to coming to college. . . [um] . . . In your life in your relationships.

J: In my relationships I’m, I’m having to be more open . . . because . . um as I said earlier, you’re dealing with the struggles of the real world, and then you’re dealing with the struggles of college [mhmhm] and you’re trying to keep those separated because you don’t want a problem that goes on on campus and trying to get the homework done and trying to get this math problem or trying to find this English problem, or whatever problem it is that you have goin on in school that can conflict with the problem that you havin at home, or the problem that you have you know what I’m saying. If, if the light bill’s not due and you got the final notice in the mail,

H: You got to leave that at home

J: yeah, you gotta leave that at home, instead of saying “I can’t. I gotta figure you how to pay the light bill” [mhmhm] know what I’m saying. Your main priority is going to school cause um going to school is longevity [mhmhm] Um meaning that once you get your degree, you be able to extend it further [right] So ok 3 years ago you would never pay your light bill, and so and so laugh at you. But now you making 50,000 a year or more and you got your light fill paid up and you go the hop on the beat that you wanted or you got the house right here and you not worrying about it no more. [mhmhm] When I begin to struggle I need, I need some, some money here to help out [ok] and so, and that . .

H: So you’ve had to sorta set up a cushion for money. .[yes] ok, what are some, some other transitions.

J: um other transitions other transitions is ah . . ah checking your surroundings, you really have to be keen sense. Ah make sure the transportation [mhmhm] Is it reliable cause it doesn’t matter if you got a 100 dollar or 200 dollar, if the motor go in your car [mhmhm] or something, it . . it shot. ah . .

H: Do you have a plan B? So what if the motor goes in your car?

J: My plan B?

H: What if something crazy were to happen to your car?

J . . . . I got 2 mopeds. Me and my nephew be side by side (laughter)

H: Alright
J: Um . . . If the motor goes . . . if the motor goes in my car . . I . . my first option would be, I’m always, I always listen at the swap shop [ok] and trying to find a cheap car sold for 5, 6 hundred dollars.

H: So you feel as though you can negotiate whatever happens to you?

J: Yes, if you plan ahead of time. If you plan ahead of time. [ok] And that’s one of the things I say about your aid money. For those who have a car and already got a car and all that, if you take and put your money up with somebody you can trust or something, so when you come back and you need it right then, ok. If the motor go in my car, I know I need it and say and here and you need to get, have, have it straight, Um, I know if on Mondays . . I get up in the morning and crank up the car [mmhmm] and it don’t crank, call my mom on Mondays. Tuesday I have to call my sister [ok] Wednesday I call my cousin.

H: You’ve got somebody to call any day.

J: I got someone to call every day [OK] And I tell them ahead of time. Yo, I got to go to school Monday through Thursday so you off Monday right, you sure you off this Monday, ok. If I need you to take me to work, can you take me to work? yeah. And keep that guarantee cause you never know. And a lot of times I try, I leave with enough time so if the car break down . . I can get on the side of the road cause somebody’s coming to school.

H: Yeah, I’ll catch a ride, yeah

J: Yeah and ahh. have a, have all your priorities decided ahead, instead of just waking up and saying I’m goin, going to school and all.

H: OK. I think we’ve covered all, all but one questions, and I think I know your answer on this, but I still wanna hear it. How confident are you in your completion of your goal?

J: I’m real confident. I believe I can succeed . . and all.

H: Ok and, and what do you base that on?


H: seeing how far my mind has expand . . um my my, and to hear my wife say it, you know the confidence of my wife or, you know, she’s always like, “what that guy just did?” and I tell her “Law says this and law says that.” You know what I’m saying, and so I got a partner who’s helping me [mmhmm] know what I’m saying. “What just happened right here” and all that so she’s still that, she don’t know what he’s done so “did he do something wrong?” “yeah he did this and that” and all that [yeah] And we’ll watch the news and I get the book and like, “He deserved that” [laughter] and like “You got it on one” and like “he’s going down for this right here.” We be watching COPS you know and we sharpen my skills and all. I’m like
H: So you’re actually integrating school into your life all the time, cause your wife is bringing it up while you watch TV.
J: Yeah, . . . and I’m like, and . . . she’s like ah “Oh you, what would you do?” and I’m like “Oh I’d let him off” she say “Why” “Because see what the cop did here see what the cop did there. If that woulda been me, I’d’ve got him off because of this thing.” [mmhmm] I say you can argue and you can find your loopholes and so I’m very successful, I’ll pass. All I need to do is keep my head in it and make it to school [ok] you know. And the good, the grades will come with it and all that.
H: How are your grades now? . . Do you feel good?
J: They’re good [yeah] They’re real good, yeah. Real good, I can’t complain.
H: OK. . . good means Bs? . . . Cs?
J: High C’s, wanna be a B [ok] Which I’m disappointed in that, but then criminal lay, criminal justice is so hard [yeah] It’s, it’s amazing to get a C in there [yeah] You know. It’s amazing to get a D, you know. But you have so many people that’s struggling in it to the high C, where I’m at, I’m satisfied. (laughter)
H: Yeah no, I understand
J: I’m satisfied
H: Ok then before we ah, end the interview, is there anything you want to add that I didn’t cover. That you’ve experienced as a college student, that you think is important for me to know . . or . . .
J: Um . . . the most thing that I’d stress to the college student that is important for anybody to know is to interact with your college. Find something that . . . that um . . . some kind of activity that you could be a part of at you college [mmhmm] to get to get to know people that really that stretch
H: Have you done that?
J: Yeah, um . . . I um, I’m in a PE class (laughter). That is action
H: So use your classes to connect with your peers
J: yeah um, use your class to connect with your peer anytime they give a function or whatever, try to participate cause the more you spend on campus the less worries you’ll have and all that. And a better relieve of stress [yeah] If you around a lot of people that laugh and have a good time, [mmhmm] you relieve a lot s stress and don’t have to worry about the world basically
H: Yeah, I think that the most interesting thing that you said today was that it makes you feel young to be on campus. It does.
J: it does
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name: Holly Smith</th>
<th>October 29, 2009</th>
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<tr>
<td>Interview 6 (L)</td>
<td>Community College A library (10-11am)</td>
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1. H: OK, so the first few questions are just to get us warmed up talking about school and I wanted to know what classes or how many classes you’re signed up for this term.
2. L: Um, 4. I’m signed up for 4 classes this semester.
3. H: So, what classes are those.
4. L: CSI 11, Math 60, Reading 70, and PE and physical education, PE.
5. H: OK, so the CSI, is that a computer science class?
6. L: Just um basic PC literacy class.
7. H: So you’ve got a PC literacy class, a math class, the PE class . . what was the other one?
8. L: Reading
9. H: Reading. OK. So . . when did you sign up for your classes?
10. L: Um, . . I think it was , when the, the first day I came out here was in the um . . . ah . . . like the middle of August.
11. H: Ok . . so about the time that classes started then?
12. L: mmhmm
13. H: OK. Did you have any trouble signing up for classes? Were there courses that you wanted that you couldn’t get into?
14. L: mmm nah, No Ma’am.
15. H: Ok. And at that time did you take the CPT test or some type of placement test.
16. L: Yeah, I took a placement test.
17. H: OK. And that’s what gave you your scores for your reading and your math [noding] OK . . . . . . What do you think about that testing? Does it seem accurate? Do you feel like you are in the right classes?
18. L: yeah I feel like I’m in the right courses and um . . . cause um . . . I want to major in business, so . . . it’s some courses I want to take next semester.
19. H: OK. So you’re gonna start taking some of those business classes next term?
20. L: yeah
21. H: Have you signed up for classes yet?
22. L: No . . I haven’t signed up yet. I’ll probably be back out here next semester.
23. H: Ok. When are you going to sign up for your classes? . . . . next term . . .
24. L: I’m thinking about coming out here in the summer.
25. H: OK . . so you’ve got spring and summer still coming [mmhmm]. . . ah do you have an adviser or a counselor that you work with?
26. L: Yeah XXXXX. [ok] I work with XXXXX in the XXXX building.
27. H: Have you . . set up an appointment with her yet to . . figure out
Concerned about the simplicity of the answers—with slow speech pattern and lack of eye contact, could be a sign of a larger cognitive issue.

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<th>Line</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>what you need to take?</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>L: (inhale) . . n . . no . . not yet.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>H: Ok. Is that something that you are going to do soon?</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>L: Yeah . . . I’m’a do it soon.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>H: ok . . . I’m just wondering what the time frames are . . ok. So you mention that you want to be a business major. [yeah] . . and . . so . . do you, what is your final goal for your education? What do you want to do with that degree?</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>L: . . . Um . . . become a like, traveling business man. Travel here, there . . maybe start my own business . . and that.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>H: OK. What kind of business are you interested in?</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>L: . . . . . you know like um . . people, people that sell things and stuff . . like the, like the market, so.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>H: Ok. And you mentioned traveling sales stuff [yeah] . . . so travel is something that you are interested in?</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>L: Yeah I like to travel</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>H: Ok . . . and so when you think of yourself as a business person do you think of yourself here in this community or someplace else?</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>L: I think like someplace else.</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>H: Ok. What kinda place? . . . out of state?</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>L: yeah out of state</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>H: where?</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>L: ah New York, New Jersey . .</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>H: So a big city?</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>L: yeah a big city.</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>H: Ok. What about a big city interests you?</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>L: . . . lights . . . ah . . night life . . um . . things of that nature . . . . . . People hustle here, there . . stuff like that is int, is interesting.</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>H: Ok . . . so . . what is motivating you to go to school?</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>L: . . . man . . . What motivated me is um . . wanted . . to be a business man so, I . . . I decided to come out here and take a few courses and next semester I take um . . the business courses . . well I was um gonna hold off on the business for next, for, for a while and take, take some courses while I’m out here and then I would work, was gonna work on my um business um, my business major. That’s what motivated me.</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>H: Ok, so the idea that you’ll be a business man motivates you.</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>L: Mmhm, yeah.</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>H: What would you be doing if you weren’t here in school?</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>L: I’d be home listening to my MP3 player, on the computer searching the internet, playing video games, ah . . . going for walks around, around my block . . and stuff.</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>H: Do you have a job?</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>L: mmm no.</td>
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H: If you didn’t go to college, what kind of job would you have here? What kind of opportunities would you have?
L: ... I do like little odd jobs for people. [ok] ... make a few bucks here or there ... like ... you know like do some yard work for people. Clean their house, you know, take out their trash ... you know like do some babysitting or what not.
H: OK. So that’s the kind of jobs that you would have available to you?
L: Yeah
H: ... Is that part of why you decided to go to school?
L: yeah ... yeah. It’s why I decided to go to school, cause I was tired you know of not doing nothing. Tired of staying home ... ahh ... not ... having nobody to talk to besides my sister and what not. SO that’s why I decided to come out here.
H: Ok ... so would you say maybe then that you were bored?
L: Yeah I was ... getting bored. yeah.
H: Ok. And so, tell me a little bit about high school. How did you get from high school to here?
L: um, as soon as I graduated high school, I stayed home for a few months, and my sister decided she ... well she was gonna come back out here. She was gonna sign me up for ah college. So that’s um high school, that’s how I got here.
H: So you just graduated last term. In the, the spring ... this year?
L: No I graduated 3 years ago.
H: oh, 3 years ago [yeah] so what have you been doing for those 3 years.
L: Ummmmm ... for 3 years I was dong nothin. Just staying home and what not. ... [ok] ...
H: So your sister, is she a few years younger than you?
L: no, she ... 2 years younger than me.
H: 2 years ok. So did she just recently graduate, from high school?
L: She graduated in ... 2 years ago.
H: o, ok. And ... what is she doing here?
L: Um, she wants to get into the nursing program, and um, she wants to become a nurse, a pharmacist, and a doctor. She taking um, some classes. [ok] to become a nurse.
H: Do you ride with her, to and from school?
L: yeah [yeah] yeah
H: ok. Does that make it easy for you to come out here then? That she’s here.
L: yeah it makes, it makes it easy. yeah
H: Would you have come out here if she wasn’t coming out here?
L: Yeah, I come out here. ... it she wasn’t out here.
H: ok ... so tell me then, a little bit about your family and their
L: Well my mama, she went to um . . she went to high school. My grandmother went to high school. My aunts, they went to high school . . wheth . . whether they graduated, that I don’t know, but I know they, they went to school. [mmhmm] My uncles, I think he went. My uncle, he went to school . . and ah . . my cousins they, they went to school . . um . . . that’s about all I know.
H: OK . So your mom, you don’t know whether or not she graduated.
L: Whether or not she graduated.
H: OK, what does she do? What’s her job now?
L: My mother isn’t. My mother don’t have a job [ok] My mother’s like 60 and um, she can’t work.
H: Ok . . do you live at home with your mom?
L: I live with my mom, my sister, my grandmother, and that’s about it.
H: So your mom, your sister and your grandma?
L: yeah.
H: Ok . . so 4 of you in the house, so
L: mmhmm. There was 5 of us. My grandfather, he died.
H: Was that recent?
L: Mmhmm, it was like . . like 2 weeks ago
H: oh, I’m so sorry
L: a week ago
H: . . . . I’m so sorry to hear that . . . . so right now there’s the 4 of you in the house [mmhmm] and how are you guys . . ah able to pay the bills?
L: See by my sister working and um . . her getting her check, and um . . she think . . she pays half, and she pay her part. My mama pay her part, and my grandma pay her part. That’s how um, it pays like that.
H: So your grandma and your mom, they get like a check, maybe a disability check, or a retirement . .
L: My grandmother get SS, I think both of em get SSI.
H: Ok, social security help. Ok . And that’s enough to . . do you feel like there’s enough money coming in? Do you feel ok about that?
L: yeah. yeah.
H: Does that have anything to do with you coming to school?
L: no
H: no
L: No not at all
H: ok . . . . um . . so you’re not sure if either your . . are you sure that . . did they do any college? Anyone in your family?
L: . . . I’m . . . not sure. [ok] I think one of my aunt did, but I’m not sure [ok].
H: So you and your sister right now would be the only people in your house currently [in college] that have ever gone to college
[yeah] ok. And um . . so how does your family react to that? What do they think about you going to school?

L: . . . um . . . they say I’m doing good for myself and what not . . . um . . . they think I got a good head on my shoulders and what not. That I’m like smart . . and um . . and um . . they’re like proud that I’m goin to college. So ah . . that’s about it.

H: So how do they show you that you’re, that they’re proud of you?

L: (exhale) . . . um . . . I . . . My grandmother, she, she compliments me on when I come home do my homework. When I come straight home from school, I go to the table, do my homework. And they’re like proud that I, that I’m goin to school doin my homework.

H: Ok, so when you bring your homework home, they say good things about it?

L: Yeah

H: Are they interested? Do they ask you what you are doing in school? Do they

L: yeah. They, They ask me what I be doing in school [ok] I tell em.

H: Does that make you feel good about going to school?

L: yeah

H: Does that help you then keep going

L: mmhmm yeah

H: Ok . . . alright . . . so let’s talk a little about your friends then. And ah . . do you have any friends here going to school?

L: . . . not none from my graduating class, no.

H: Ok. Have you met any new people, made friends ?

L: yeah I met some kids in the early college. Made friends with them.

H: Ok the early college would be the high school kids that come out here and take classes? [yeah] is that right [yeah] . . . . . so you made some friends with them [yeah]. How many friends do you think you have that are new here?

L: sschh . . I don’t, I don’t even know . . . . I think like 10, around that.

H: Ok. And what do you do with these friends?

L: We talk and laugh and jump around, what not.

H: Oh campus?

L: mmhmm, yeah

H: Do you hang out with them outside of school? [mmhmm] And what do you do outside of school?

L: schhh . . . ah . . . I go home . . ah I think the, the rest of them go home. I’m not sure.

H: So you’re not hanging out outside of school?

L: unhunh, nah

Direct contradiction.
you say “hi’ and stuff.
L: Yeah
H: OK. What about friends that you grew up with? Do you have any of those . . right now?
L: (exhale) . . . . . . some of them ah . . I’ve seen around here. I’ve seen maybe 3 or 4 of em, but I never see the rest of em.
H: So you haven’t had a lot of
L: I had a lot
H: you did have a lot? [mmhmm] Ok. But you don’t now?
L: nah
H: Ok what, what do you think happened?
L: As soon as we graduated, we all went, we all went our separate ways . . .We lost touch.
H: Where did they go?
L: Some went this way, some went that way. Some nev . . . some never was gonna go to college . . mmm . . the rest I don’t know.
H: Some, Some of them still around here in XXXX.
L: Some went this way, some went that way. Some nev . . . some never was gonna go to college . . mmm . . the rest I don’t know.
H: OK. So some friends of yours from high school did go to college. [mmhmm] right out of college [yep]. Did you talk with them about that? When, when they were making that decision?
L: mmmmm . . . not . . . not that I know of. [mmhmm] I mean we talked, but we never talked about school or nothing like that.
H: Ok. So when you hang out with your friends, in the past and now. You guys don’t talk about school much.
L:mmmm nah.
H: Ok. Do you have friends that you study with?
L: mmmmmm, nah I study by myself
H: Ok, so just by yourself.
L: yeah just by myself.
H: Ok. So how much do you study? How many hours do you think you spend in a week?
L: I study like maybe an hour a week and ah . . . . I study about an hour and I, I get through studying I do whatever I got to do for my class, and I get that out of the way so I have time to do whatever I want. Have some, something . . well if I get my work out of the way I have time to do what I want in my spare time.
H: You do your homework here on campus or do you go home and take it. Take it home?
L: ssss Sometimes I do it out here. That way I get home I have whatever I want to do. I do it out here and then I go home and pretty much do what I want, and um . . that’s about it.
H: Ok. So . . . let’s talk about your math class. Ahh, cause you have your book here. Um, how much time do you think you spend on math a week?
L: . . maybe like . . um I’m pretty . . I’m like half, I’m like fair in
math, so... it'll take me like... 10 or 15 minutes to do it.

H: 10 or 15 minutes to do the homework?
L: yeah
H: do you ever do more than just the assigned homework?
L: just the... um, just the assigned homework, that’s it. [ok] and
after I get done with that, I do the online part.
H: Ok, So you have some online stuff that you have to do for your
math too [mmhmm] Is it like practice problems.
L: No its like... the, the homework. Some, it’s like the homework in
the book and then like homework online.
H: Ok, so you have a little bit of homework in the book [mmhmm]
and a little bit online each week. [mmhmm]. Ok. And you spend
about 15 minutes on the homework in the book. How much do you
think it takes for the homework online?
L: It don’t take me long at all to um do the one online.
H: Ok. How much time is not long at all?
L: Maybe like a minute.
H: a minute? (chuckle)
L: Yeah
H: So how many problems do you think there are online for
homework?
L: Sometimes be like 25, sometimes be like 30. Sometimes a couple
more than that.
H: ok, so a minute each problem? [mmhmm] So we are looking at
an hour of homework for math class each week? [yup] Ok. How are
you doing in that class?
L: I’d say... not good.
H: ok... what’s not good? ... Do you think you might not pass?
L: I might not pass.
H: Ok
L: my re, my other classes I might be passing.
H: you might be. Have you gotten any midterm grades?
L: mmm
H: To let you know how you are doing?
L: mmmm, no, not yet.
H: But you feel ok about the PE, the reading?
L: yeah I feel OK about the PE, yeah... and the reading part.
H: OK so let’s talk
L: At the start of the reading class I wasn’t doing too good, but now
I learned how to study for me reading class. I’m good at reading.
H: So what did you change then? You said you found out you
weren’t doing so well, but now you are doing ok in reading. What
did you change?
L: Um... I... I go ahead do my work in my reading class... and
then... when, whenever we got a test in reading I go home and
study.
H: OK, and what do you study, how do you study?
L: um . . whenever we got a vocabulary test, I write the words and
the definition, and do the, and then do um . . sentences, write
sentences with them and then I have somebody call out the
definitions to me.
H: Ok. Who’s somebody? Somebody at home in your family?
L: Yeah [ok] yeah my little cousin
H: Ok. They come over and help you study for that?
L: Yeah
H: Ok. So that’s what you do for the reading. [mmhmm] and you
think that has helped you with the class, that kind of studying?
L: Yeah
H: Ok, and then let’s talk back about math then. Is there a way,
since you feel like you may not be passing this class, is, are there
things you tough about doing differently?
L: Yeah, ah whenever I need help I get my ah sister to help me.
H: Ok. Your sister helps you with the homework?
L: Mmmmm
H: Ok . . . [yeah] . . . have you thought about working with anybody
in the class . . . on the homework?
L: . . . . . nnnn, no not really . . um, I wish I could do that.
H: Ok, You wish you could? [yeah] What would make it easier for
you to do that?
L: um . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . I don’t, I don’t know . . . um, be easier if um
. . . somebody showed me like a simpler way to do the problems and
what not . . . . ah . . show me a shortcut . . that might, might make it
easy.
H: OK. Do you do any group work in your math class?
L: nah . . never
H: Do you think if you worked in class in groups it would make it
easier to make friends to work on your math?
L: Yeah
H: Ok, so if you worked in a group this week in your math class,
would you then ask that person for some help on the homework
afterwards?
L: yeah
H: Ok. Have you asked your teacher for help, in math?
L: mmhmm.
H: Ok, What did you ask for help on.
L: Well we on chapter 5. I asked him how to um do proportions and
what not cause that’s what we working on. I asked him how to um, 
do the problems.
H: mmhmm. The homework problems?
L: Yeah.
H: OK, so in class, you ask questions for help. Have you asked for
help outside of class like in his office or her office?
L: nah, unhunh
H: ok. Have you thought about talking with that professor about your grade? . . . . and how you’re doing in class
L: . . . . . . mm . . . . He tell me I’m . . . . . tell me I need to go back to the online part and change some things on the online part.
H: Ok, change some things, what does that mean?
L: Like change my score, change my score for the first 3 chapters cause I didn’t do good, and he . . . wasn’t doing good on the um first 3 chapters.
H: So how do you change your score on there? Can you retake the test?
L: um . . . . you could, I could go back and correct the problems and get it right, you know get close to 100% on them. Try like to get a 100%.
H: Have you tried that yet?
L: I tried
H: And what happened?
L: It was like . . sch . . . getting hard . . . but I . . . . . . . I rushed through it and um, didn’t do good.
H: So it started to get hard, and then you rushed through it [yeah] and then it didn’t help any [yeah]. Ok . . . . so when things get difficult you try to just get it over with as soon as possible?
L: yeah
H: ok . . . alright . . . so . . . are there ways then . . to . . to improve in math without rushing through it? I’m just wondering if there are some other things that you can do.
L: yeah I could take my time. Take my time required to do it, do it right.
H: So why aren’t you doing that now?
L: (exhale) . . . . just . . . . sch . . . sometimes I just, I just do it. Just go ahead do it get it over with so . . . . just rush right through it.
H: Ok, so, if you wanted to not rush through it, if you, if it gets hard and you don’t just rush through it, why aren’t you slowing yourself down yet?
L: Getting like a fast pace down. I like to do things fast. Get, get it over with, get it done as soon as possible and go on to the next thing. And um . . . that’s how, that’s how I am.
H: Ok. Let’s talk about some obstacles that maybe you’re facing while you’re here. And it sound like math may be one of those obstacles, right?
L: mmmm
H: So, what happens if you don’t pass this math class?
L: . . . . ah . . . . I could take, I could take, um . . . . I might take, I might take reading 70, or not reading 70, math 70, I might take that course again. If they offer it, I might take it again.
H: So you’ll have to retake this class.
L: Yeah
H: And do you think that that would help you?
L: mmhmm . . . . yeah it would help me, help me a lot.
H: Are you at a point then in the math class where you feel like ah, you can’t understand where you’re going? . . . That it’s not . . . it’s, it’s not easy, and, and the time you put into it is not helping?
L: Sometimes I feel it’s not easy and sometimes on the other hand it is. Things like that and um . . . it’s . . . just something . . . well, I’ll say it’s me cause um . . I feel it is easy, but I just don’t put, just don’t put my mind on it.
H: Ok. So how could you put your mind on it? What could you do differently?
L: . . . . I could, you know, try to work out some of the problems without using the calculator. You know, try using my brain and what not, and um . . . If I didn’t have a calculator, I’d use my um, use my brain and what . . . cause um . . that’s, that’s the . . sometimes I take the easy way out. If I didn’t take the easy way out by using the calculator, I could actually figure it out on my own . .
H: Have you, have you thought about doing more problems, spending more time on the math?
L: Mmhmm, yeah
H: And why haven’t you?
L: . . . . I find I just, don’t have the time.
H: What are you doing if not homework?
L: ahh . . . if not homework . . . be outside playing, what not. Joking around.
H: So you don’t have enough time for the math class because you’re hanging out, joking around?
L: yeah. you could say that
H: ok. . . . Ok. And how does that make you feel then as a student?
Do you feel that you’re a good student?
L: I feel like I’m a fair student.
H: A fair student?
L: yeah
H: ok. So what are your goals then in these classes? Are you a student who strives to get A’s, B’s, C’s, just pass it, get to the next level?
L: Well I’m striving to pass it
H: Ok. Striving to pass it.
L: Yeah
H: Ok . . . so as long as you pass it you feel like you’ll succeed?
L: mmhmm, yeah
H: And get on to that next level
L: yeah
H: Ok. . . so math, it looks like is going to be an obstacle . . . Um,
what else do you think is giving you a hard time with school?

L: Just math. That’s it. The reading is easy. Reading is easy cause I love, I read everywhere I go. I’m in the store, and if I’m in the store with my grandmother and she’s at the line, I’ll go to the magazines, pick up a magazine and read it.

H: OK. What about focus on school. Do you feel like you struggle with that?

L: . . . mm . . I say no cause ah . . . I love school. I love going to school.

H: Why? What do you love about it?

L: um . . you get to meet your friends and hang out, try to learn something new, um . . try to teach others what you know, and what, try to teach others what you know.

H: Ok. So what’s so great about that?

L: It makes school, It makes me feel confident about myself, and um know that I’m smart . . Um . . make me proud of myself, be, be a good student try to, try to work hard, work harder.

H: . . . ok . . . . . . so you, you mentioned a little bit about it making, that school could make you feel confident in yourself. [yeah] have you noticed a change that you feel more confident since you started school?

L: Yeah

H: ok, tell me about that feeling.

L: Since I’ve come, coming out, coming out here I’ve been more ah, I’ve been more open, active, ah . . . Not, not like shy or anything but um feel more empowered by myself.

H: You feel empowered [yeah] so what does that translate into? What does that mean to you?

L: I feel pretty good about myself, like me for me . . . . it’s . . . about . . . being who I, being who I wanna be. My own person.

H: Ok. And you think you’re getting closer to that by going to school?

L: yeah

H: So who do you imagine yourself to be once you graduate? What kind of person are you at that point? . . . [ah] . . . what will your life look like?

L: Like aah . . . Like I said be like a business man you know, traveling here and there out of state, cross country what not. Um, that’s what I think.

H: Do you think you might still want to live with your family, or do you want to move out?

L: I wanna move out.

H: So do you think this degree with help you move out?

L: Yeah

H: Ok. What else could it help you do?

L: It’ll help me . . know more, get to know people better . . . know .
be more social, socially active. . . cause ahh, that sort of thing . .
H: Is that important to you?
L: yeah . . [ok] . . yeah
H: So, having a good social life is important to you? [yeah] And right now do you feel like you have a good social life? . . . do you want more friends?
L: yeah I’m trying, trying to make more friends.

H: Ok . . so what makes a person a friend to you?
L: . . ah . . . if they like the same things I do . . . That’ll make them a friend to me . . .
H: What do you like to do?
L: I like playing video games
H: Which ones?
L: Ones for the X-Box, 64, Super Nintendo, Game Cube.
H: Do you have all those systems?
L: yup
H: wow. Ok . . . so how much time do you think you spend playing video games per week?
L: ohh about 6 hours
H: 6 hours a day?
L: yup
H: ok, so, that’s almost like a job. A full time job.
L: 24 hours a day
H: If you could you’d play 24 hours a day?
L: If I could I’d play 24 hours a day.
H: Have you thought about going into gaming then as a career?
L: That’s what my family want me to do, go and be a game designer. [mmhmm] cause they say I like games so much I should be a game designer [mmhmm]
H: So what, what do you think about that?
L: . . . I . . . I’d go for it.
H: So why did you choose business instead of something like a game designer?
L: . . . Well I wasn’t sure which one make more money, a designer or a business man, so I figure I go for a business man first.
H: Ok . . . so making money is an important thing for you [yeah] and how much money do you think you would need to make to feel happy?
L: I mean like a lot, a lot of money
H: I need to know what that is, like how much
L: Like a million
H: A million dollars? You need to be a millionaire to be happy?
L: A millionaire, yeah
H: Are you unhappy now?
L: nah I’m not, nah, I’m happy.
H: So what will that million dollars bring you?
L: . . . sch . . . . . you know . . . . bring me joy and what not. Give some to my mom, help her out, some to my grandma, give some to my family. Help them.
H: ok . . you wanna give some money to help people [yeah] in your family. ok
L: And like help the people out in like China, Japan
H: you just wanna help people
L: Yeah, help people
H: Have you thought about a career where you help people, like a teacher, or a nurse, or a doctor . . or something like that?
L: (exhale) . . . .
H: Cause they don’t make a lot of money, well doctors can.
L: I couldn’t be no, I can’t see myself as a doctor.
H: Why not?
L: I’d probably kill somebody
H: (laughter) you’d kill somebody
L: yeah I’d make a wrong mistake and probably kill somebody.
H: that’s too much pressure then [yeah] to have somebody’s life in your hands is a lot of pressure. [yeah] Ok. What about a teacher?
L: I couldn’t see myself as a teacher either.
H: Why not?
L: I’d see myself in some handcuffs
H: Handcuffs? Why?
L: Cause I’d hit another child
H: you’d, you’d hit a child, that’s what you said?
L: yeah
H: Ok. So children get on your nerves?
L: Some children get on my nerves. [ok] But I like children.
H: Just not crazy kids
L: Not crazy kids
H: (laughter) you want to discipline them.
L: yeah
H: Do you . . are there a lot of kids around you now, like your nieces and nephews coming around sorta getting on your nerves?
L: This, my 6 cousins, they get on my nerves [ok] There’s one that’s 9 years old. There’s one that’s 14. One that’s 10, or 11. One that’s 11. One that’s 13, he’s autistic. One’s 15, . . . and ah . . but all. That’s all I can think of.
H: That’s a lot of nieces and nephews. Do they come around a lot?
L: yeah
H: yeah. cause you said that one of your nephews helps you out with your homework right? the vocab homework
L: One of my cousins [cousins, ok] they help me . . . The 15 year old help me [ok] . . .
L: yeah
H: Ok. Are you close with that person?
L: oh yeah
H: It is a boy right . . a guy?
L: It’s a girl
H: A girl, ok. Is she thinking of going to college too?
L: I haven’t even . . . I don’t know. I haven’t asked her [mmhmm] if
she wanna go to college . . . and . .
H: So you think she should, if she wants to?
L: Yeah, she should go is she got the chance, she should go.
H: Ok. If she has the chance, what does that mean?
L: Mean if she get get an opportunity like I did, go ahead and go for
it. And um, . . just don’t wait around too late and um
H: What kind of opportunity did you get?
L: . . the opportunity I got was when . . the day my sister come back
out her register for her classes . . I . . she I think . . said she was
gonna help me . . . said she was gonna bring me out here when she
came out here to um that’s the first thing getting me signed up out
here . . .
H: So if your . . ah cousin has the opportunity to get to and from
school she should take advantage of that?
L: mm yeah
H: Ok. Do you think that was the biggest factor that mad you decide
to come out here, that your sister said ‘hey come with me,’ we’ll
sign up for classes together. We’ll do this . .
L: well . . my sister was tired of me not doing nothing, so she . .
decided she was gonna bring me out here
H: ok . . . so would you be here if it weren’t for your sister?
L: I wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for my sister.
H: And you would be at home playing video games . . you think?
L: yeah . . . yeah [ok]
H: And how do you feel about that?
L: . . . . . ssss . . I feel good about that cause . .
H: You would be ok with that [I’d be] If you were at home playing
video games
L: No, I wouldn’t be ok with that, I’d just be bored . . not having
work to do [ok] . . you know . . . wouldn’t meet new people
[mmmhm] that sorta thing . . .
H: Ok, . . .so one of the good things about going to school for you is
just getting out of the house?
L: yeah
H: Ok, . . . are there other things you could do to get out of the
house? Have you thought about . . have you thought about getting a
more regular job?
L: . . . nnnn no
H: No?
L: no
H: Ok, why not?
L: Cause . . . when I was born . . . I had this condition with my hands I was born with no muscle tone in my hands [mmhmm] So I can’t, can’t, I can do a little stuff with my hands, but I can’t do a lot.
H: So you have some problems with gripping things [yeah gripping] and you think that helps, or hurts you from getting a job?
L: Yeah
H: Ok . . . alright . . . . and how do you think that’s going to affect you as a business man?
L: . . . ah . . . well . . . I . . . . don’t, I don’t know. I don’t know . . . like um . . . schhhh . . . I really don’t know [ok] . . . . but . . . . I could see that it stop me . . . I mean, I still . . . I still go for it, but . . .
H: Do you feel that that has stopped you from doing some things that you would want to do?
L: Yeah
H: Like what?
L: you know like um . . . . schhhh . . It um stopped me from . . living like normal, like normal people would. that um, you know lifting heavy things and what not. Stopped me from doing that . .
H: So you said it stops you from living like normal people, do you not feel normal?
L: Yeah I feel normal. With this thing, with my condition I . . . . people . . . my mother . . . um I go take out the trash, my mother probably have my sister do it cause if the trash is heavy mama won’t, my mother won’t let me take it out cause. [ok] she says, she says it be too heavy. I can’t lift it.
H: But you can do, so you are able to hold a video game controls and play video games [yeah] so you use your hands if it is not heavy.
L: Yeah if it don’t hurt for a moment I can . . . do that.
H: Ok, so can you also do ok on a keyboard, and a mouse, stuff like that . . computer stuff?
L: Yeah . . I can you know type and stuff [mhhm] yeah I can do that . .
H: So perhaps then, this thing that you were born with, perhaps you can’t do hard physical labor, but you might be able to do a desk job .
L: yeah
H: Ok . . . ok . . . . um . . . . I wanna talk some more about friends that you have, and family, because it does seem to be pretty important in terms, your sister’s role seems pretty important to you. How do you think of your sister . . . . she’s . .
L: Like worrisome . . . like a nuisance, well sometimes she’s like a nuisance to me. [ok] Sometimes she like my sister, like my friend . . [ok]. . .
H: So, when is she a nuisance?
L: When she get on my nerves, and she do stuff that mama knows
that I don’t like [ok] and um
H: What kinda stuff does she do?
L: . . . (sniff) . . I mean picky stuff.
H: Pickin on you?
L: yeah
H: Ok. and what kind, when are the times when she is a friend to
you?
L: . . . when ah . . . when somebody else’ll do something and I get
blamed for it, she’ll take up saying I didn’t do this , that , and ah,,
that’s when she like my friend.
H: So she stands up for you?
L: yeah
H: So she might pick on you, but she won’t let anyone else pick on
you? [yeah] Do you like that? [yeah] It’s almost like a bigger sister,
a little bit [yeah]. ok
H: So your sister is going to school and wanting to move out and
start a career and stuff [yeah] of her own . Have you thought about
that, what you are going to do once she moves on.
L: I’ll probably do the same
H: What’s the same? Move out on your own?
L: yeah
H: ok . . . and then that would leave your mother and grandmother
in the house together.
L: yeah
H: Do you feel an obligation to take care of them?
L: . . . My sister do that. My mother and grandmother take care
of me.
H: Ok, and what happens if . . um . . . they’re not there to take care
of you? Do you think your sister will take care of you?
L: yeah
H: ok
H: Um, I wanna talk a little bit about transitions you’ve gone
through, changes you’ve gone through since you started going to
school. So I want you to think about and new or different things that
you do now.
L: Ahh . . not . . I don’t have nothing new . . . um, but I do see a
lot of changes . . . a lot of new changes . . .
H: Ok, what are they.
L: um . . I talk to my family more . . you know . . being like a
social butterfly . . um . . don’t, not . . . schhh, I’m not um . . . like
I was when I was in high school, slacking, what not.
H: So you were a slacker in high school [yeah] you thought.
L: I was a slacker.
H: So, how are, how are you a different student now? How are you not a slacker?
L: Trying to work hard . . . um . . . trying to pay attention in class . . . and . . . trying to you know, to keep up with what the teacher’s talk, what the teacher’s teaching and that sorta thing.
H: So you said trying to do things things, are you successful. Have you managed to do them? . . . Do you pay more attention?
L: yeah I pay attention, sometimes I find myself getting sleepy [mmhmm] and sometimes I have to put my head down on the desk, take about a five minute nap [in class?] yeah.
H: Have you thought about getting up and moving around to wake yourself up? Going out to the bathroom and getting a drink of water and coming back?
L: yeah
H: Ok . . . what are some other changes that you noticed? You said that you talked to your family more. What do you talk about?
L: Sometimes they ask me how my day is, or what, I tell em it was good. They’ll ask me if I had a hard day, I tell em no. And um, it was easy, or what not.
H: Do you tell em about the stuff that you are studying in class?
L: yeah
H: Do you think they are interested?
L: Yeah
H: ok . . . so you have something new to talk about because you went out for the day
L: mmmmm . . yeah (yawn)
H: Ok . . . um . . . what about changes in you. Do you feel different?
L: Yeah I feel different . . I’m not the same me I was . . .
H: What’s changed?
L: . . . well . . . I’m not as grumpy as I was . . ah . . I was always grumpy in a bad mood, but since coming out here, not no more.
H: Why do you think . . you’re happier out here, or you’re less grumpy.
L: . . . I find people I can relate to . . talk to people, you know . . .talk to the high school kids and what not . .
H: So you said you had made some friends with the high school kids [yeah] more than . . .why, why do you think it’s easier than, or why do you think you’ve made friends with them and not older kids, older students.
L: . . . um . . . I like them cause I can relate to them. They think I’m like the funniest person they ever met . . . ah . . . I keep them laughing like . . . um . . I’m like a clown to them. I always keep them laughing, what not.
H: So it makes you feel good when you are having a good time with them?
L: yeah
H: When they laugh at your jokes
L: yeah
H: Ok . . . so the older students don’t think you’re funny (chuckle)
L: Nah, I like the older students, I just like the high school kids.
H: ok . .um . . . . . . . . Now I want you to think about . . advice that
you would offer people like yourself, students like yourself. So
based on what you’ve learned about school in this semester so far,
are there things that you would offer, maybe your friends in high
school, some advice you would offer them about school?
L: Ah . . if you get the chance you gotta go, go for it. Don’t wait. Do
it now . . cause . . time ain’t, time is short. Go ahead and get your
education while you can, and ah . . . that’s really about it.
H: Well once they do decide to go to school what some, what is
some advice that you would offer them about the classes and things
like that . . . school itself?
L: um . . . find what you wanna major in, take the courses. If it gets
hard, ask for help . . . if you can’t find help, try to figure it out on
your own . . . and um . . . don’t take the easy way out cause the easy
way out is like cheatin and you don’t wanna cheat, you wanna win . .
. That there’s about it.
H: Are there some times when you feel like you’re taking the easy
way out?
L: Yeah. When I use the calculator in math
H: Ok . . . what else makes you think you’re taking the easy way
out?
L: . . . when we behaving those tests in reading, I have my notebook
right there in the chair, have it open . . [yeah] . . . like the
vocabulary test we had back in Sept . . back in September. Nobody
was sitting right beside me. I just had a notebook right there, in the
chair open to the words, definitions, so I copied, I copied it down
and made a 100 [ok] It was like I was the only one in the class that
made a 100. The rest made like a 90, some failed. I was proud of
myself for making that 100.
H: You were proud for . . having the notes out?
L: No, I was proud of myself for having that 100 . . But I did study
that day before the test . . [ok] . .
H: So, would you say that if there are opportunities for you to take
the easy way that you will, still?
L: If there are opportunities to take it . . I ain’t gonna take it. I’ll take
the hard road, you know. You know try, try and use my brain more
often . . and um . . . like I said taking the easy way out, like cheatin,
I don’t wanna cheat. You know disappoint myself and that . . that’s
pretty much it.
H: But you just said that you were proud of y yourself for
L: Making that 100
H: For cheating to make the 100.
L: I’m not proud of myself for cheating, I’m just proud of that grade I got.
H: ok . . would you do the same thing again?
L: no
H: to get the 100
L: no
H: Why not? You said you were proud about it.
L: Because . . . it . . . . I um . . . cheating is like um . . . . Man if I cheat again, I’d probably disappoint myself . . . and I don’t wanna do that.
H: you would disappoint yourself? Are you the only one who knows you did this?
L: I’m the only one that knows.
H: mmhmm . . so the teacher didn’t notice anything different or unusual, didn’t say anything?
L: nah
H: SO you feel like you got away with it, and you go the 100.
L: Well everybody else is in there doing it, so I figured I do it too.
H: So everybody, there were other people doing it also?
L: A few students was
H: ok . . . so when you see somebody else sorta with a short cut, you want that short cut too?
L: . . . . . . I’d say yeah . . . . somebody’s doing it [mmhmm] I’m like a follower.
H: Ok. Do you feel good about that?
L: Nah, no. I don’t feel good about that. Following, like following somebody if they cheatin, doing something wrong and I follow them, I don’t feel good about that . . . . not at all . . . .
H: ok . . . . . . ah what other advice would you offer other students? . . To not take the easy way you said . .
L: well . . . winners never cheat and cheaters never win . . . . and um . . . . don’t take the low road, take the high road. the high . . don’t, don’t take the low road cause the low road is like easy, but take the hard road . . cause if you go down the hard road . . you now . . . you might win . . . . . .
H: So, I want you to think about your end goal . . . your goal to be a business person, or um . . . we talked possibly gaming perhaps . .
How confident are you in getting to that point?
L: I’m pretty confident, you know, I might actually go for it, do it.
You know I got my mind set on it . . and ah . . it’s always been my dream, you know trying to reach my dream, and um
H: So you’re, it’s always been your dream to be a traveling salesman?
L: yeah . . . it always . . . to be . . . yeah. I might be both, you know.

I might be a business man and a game designer.

H: What has been your dream? What, what do you imagine for the future for you?

L: My future you know, is like becoming rich . . . well my future is I want you know to be like a musician, a rapper, what not . . . . . . . . .

. . .

H: That’s what you would hope?

L: yeah

H: Have you ever worked for that dream?

L: No . . . . too like . . . was too scared to do it.

H: Too scared? [yeah] What are you scared of?

L: schh . . . . . mess ing up you know. Forgetting the words, what not, . . . and um . . .

H: Are you scared of failing?

L: Y eah

H: Are you scared of failing here . . . at the school?

L: . . . Yeah, I’m pretty scared of failing . . . .

H: Why? . . . .

L: Cause . . . cause I think negative. Don’t think positive. I think negative about myself . . . .that, that type of thing . . .

H: When you are thinking negative about yourself, what are you thinking?

L: Well, I can’t do this, can’t do that. I might fail ain’t gonna pass it. that sorta thing . .

H: Ok, and when you succeed, when you think positive about yourself, what do you say?

L: I think I did a good job . . . so I didn’t take the easy way out. I’m proud f myself for doing, for not following the crowd, being . . .

being a sheep or what not . . .

H: Are you afraid of being a sheep? Do you not like that about yourself?

L: . . . Sometimes I like being a sheep. Sometimes I like being a leader.

H: Tell me some times when you’ve been a leader.

L: Ah . . . I can’t think of any times when I’ve been a leader, but I like, you know to be a leader.

H: You would like to be a leader.

L: I would like to be a leader.

H: What do you think makes a leader a leader?

L: Um, like a good role model . . . Someone who’s like positive, has a good influence on people, one who would do, I ain’t saying they like perfect, but, one that never do any wrong . . . One that won’t take, take the easy way out . . that sorta thing.

H: So you would like to be that kind of person?

L: yeah
H: Do you think you are a good role model then?
L: (inhale) To my nine year old cousin, I’m like his big brother . . . .
um, like his, like his role model.
H: So do you think you are a leader with him?
L: Yeah. Sometimes I get him to do some things . . . that’s wrong.
Sometimes I get him to do
H: You’re leading him into trouble?
L: yeah
H: (chuckle) What kind of trouble have you led him into?
L: Oh . . . . Like outside . . . playing ball, the ball go in the ditch . .
you can’t get it, have to get somebody to do it . . . Sometimes we
walk, don’t come back for 20, 10 or 15 minutes. They start to worry,
They be worried . . . that we like dead or something, or something
happened. [ok] That sorta thing.
H: So you ah, the two of you guys sorta buddy up and go off and do
your own thing?
L: Yeah
H: And people worry about you
L: yeah. Yeah sometimes we argue . . . which ends up leading to fist
fights.
H: Oh no
L: oh yeah
H: (chuckle) What kind of trouble have you led him into?
L: Someb – somebody go tell my mother that they back there fighting . . .
Such and so and so, who hit first, who hit second. Who’s passing it.
H: So you get in a fist fight with your 9 year old nephew?
L: Yup . . . if it comes down to it . . . but we start by calling each other
names, then we get in each other’s face. He push me, I push him
back, and end up . . end up coming to fist fights.
H: What kinda names does he call you that makes you wanna hit
him.
L: . . . fatso . . . gorilla . . . . . that sorta thing. And I call him bean
head, Jimmy Neutron [chuckle], dumbo, them sorta things.
H: Ok. So you guys pick on one another?
L: Yeah . . my mother don’t like it.
H: yeah . . . . . . . Would you say he’s one of your good friends?
Your 9 year old nephew?
L: He’s not like a good friend, like an enemy.
H: He’s a good enemy?
L: Yeah
H: (laughter)
L: But he like my little brother. [ok] My grandma calls him my little
brother. She, when she goes somewhere, she tells me to watch your,
watch your brother [mmhmm]
H: Do you like that responsibility or do you want him just to go
away?
L: I, I like watching. I like that responsibility, watching him.
H: Ok. Why?
L: . . Cause I like watching over him, and my 13 year old autistic, my 13 year old autistic cousin . . [mmhmm] . . . because kinda, we like . . . we’re like the Three Musketeers. We’re like all for one and one for all.
H: Ok . . so you like that responsibility them?
L: Yeah
H: You like feeling responsible?
L: Yeah
H: Ok . . would you like more of that in your life
L: yeah
H: More responsibility . . . ok . . . do you think going to college will help you with that?
L: mmhmm, yeah
H: Ok

H: . . I wanna take this last questions to talk about um . . what it means to be at risk. So research shows us that African American males withdraw from college, once they start, they drop out at a higher rate than other students. And I wondered why you thought that was. I just want your opinion on that. Do you see people here that might not be here next term, and why do you think that might be?
L: I think that some people not here because some people got, got low self-esteem. Some people don’t feel pretty good about themselves. Some people always negative, talking down, down about themselves. You know, not caring how, you know some people don’t have no parents you know that don’t talk positive, or have to think positive you know, stuff like that.
H: SO you think that those are good traits then to get through? To think positive, to have a support system at home.
L: Yeah
H: ok. Do you think that you will make it to next term, even if you fail your math class?
L: Yeah . . [you] gotta think positive, yeah.
H: So it’s ok, um, when you think positive, is it ok to have some failures in there and to still think positive about yourself?
L: yeah . . .
H: What are you going to tell yourself that’s positive?
L: I can do it if I put my mind to it. you know . . . don’t worry . . It can be hard, but I can do it. I just take my time, don’t rush through it.
H: Ok. I want you to think about some things that you are proud of, that you have succeeded in doing this term . . related to school.
L: Making it to my classes . . . not skipping . . . [ok, good] . . .
.making friends . . . . . . . that sorta thing.
H: Ok, so have you missed any classes at all?
L: No
H: That’s pretty awesome, you should feel good about that.
L: I do, I do.
H: Ok, alright. So at this last questions, it’s just opening it up to you.
Do you have anything that you would like to add about college that I
haven’t covered? Stuff that you think about when you think about
school, or some things you’ve gone through as a student that I
haven’t asked about?
L: You know college can be hard, college was hard at first, but as
soon as I got deep in it, you know, I found it to be easy. You know,
taking my time, you know Don’t rush. Got, I got tests you know.
Don’t rush through it. Take my time, plan and sorta see. That sorta
thing.
H: OK. Are there any things the school can do to help you succeed?
L: . . . . . . No. If I wanna succeed, I gotta do it on my own.
H: Ok. Are there things the school could do to help you do it on
your own?
L: Yeah I could, you know. You know get a tutor to tutor me in
math and what not.
H: Are there any tutors her on campus to help you?
L: mmhmm, yeah.
H: ok, so using that resource. What else do you think you could do
to use the college’s help?
L: I could do my work online see if that’ll help me, you know help
me on the tests in math. You know, that sorta thing.
H: So take advantage of that online system. ok
L: Mmhmm
H: What about financial aid? Are you receiving financial aid?
L: Mmhmm, yeah
H: And it’s enough?
L: Yeah it’s enough
H: So you don’t have to worry. You’re not someone who worries
about having to pay for books or gas or anything.
L: no
H: ok . . . Ok XXXXX that is the end of the interview
REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Holly Smith is a first generation college graduate from Southeast Missouri State University, Illinois State University, and the University of Florida. She focused her studies on English and literature throughout her Bachelor of Arts degree and her Master of Arts degree. While working as an adjunct professor and a tutor at Northern New Mexico Community College in Espanola NM, she became interested in higher education administration through her work in the college student success center.

After moving to northern Florida and securing tenure at Lake City Community College (LCCC), Holly applied to the University of Florida graduate program and began a five year journey in the College of Education. While she progressed in the graduate program, leadership opportunities at LCCC presented themselves, and she became a Coordinator of Liberal Arts as well as the Chair of SACS Accreditation Documentation. After seven years of teaching at LCCC, and after successfully passing her qualifying exams, she decided to pursue leadership positions at community colleges in the mountain west.

Currently Holly Smith is the Instructional Chair of Liberal Arts at Colorado Mountain College: Alpine Campus in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. She continues to teach a course in English each semester, and is active in the leadership opportunities in her community. She is a firm believer in life-long education and the importance of community colleges to our society, so whatever the future may hold for her career, community colleges will be at the center of it.