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EMPLOYED, RURAL HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS, MANDATORY
ATTENDANCE, AND SENIOR ENGLISH: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL
EXPLORATION

A DISSERTATION

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

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By

MARGIE SMITH BLAKE

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AND SENIOR ENGLISH: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP
AND ACADEMIC CURRICULUM

BY

Michael Angelotti, Chair

John Chiodo

Neil O. Houser

Mark Letcher

Courtney Vaughn

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DEDICATION:

To the memory of my father.

His passion for learning and living sustains me.

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Without the energetic contributions of my participants, this work would not be possible. I am grateful for the time concessions they made during the interviewing process. I could not ask for a more understanding and professional committee with which to work. Their warmth and scholarship have guided me well during the coursework and completion of this endeavor. Dr. Courtney Vaughn opened wide the qualitative research door. Dr. Michael Angelotti has tirelessly been a shepherd; his passion for metaphors has made possible too many gifts to express on this page. Likewise, my husband Bud has given me limitless patience and care. His unconditional love is a sweet thing. I also appreciate the many instances when Carl, Tina, and Tonya gave of their time to help me with computer angst. My colleague Kathleen Lehman has been indispensable. Last, but only in terms of position in text, my out of state family and dear friend Joy supported me long distance; I warned them not to call and interrupt my work, but many times they phoned anyway. I am thankful they did.

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ABSTRACT

Employed high school seniors in rural schools do not always have the class scheduling options of their counterparts in larger geographic areas. In particular, many are faced with mandatory attendance of six hours per day as required by state law. A non-college bound student, for example, must have only three credits of science, history, and math for graduation. As such, many will spend their senior year in electives throughout the day with English as their last and only graduation requirement.

This phenomenological study examines the lived experiences of seven employed high school seniors to explore the research question: How do rural, employed high school seniors approach learning in English, their only required course for graduation. Through in-depth interviews, their emerging themes of frustration, values, personal growth/identify of self, and academic growth are explored through a situational triad of employment, mandatory attendance, and fulfillment of their last graduation requirement, English. Their candid recollections of gain and loss indicate that grade 12 fails and succeeds in meeting their educational needs. Their voices reveal that senior English accomplishes its goal of preparing them for college, but overall, they expose a sense of missed learning opportunities, many of which are directly linked to employment. They continue to work, despite the compromises to their health and relationships with others, even often adding more hours of employment, because their class schedules are not strenuous. Findings from this study suggest that English, as the only graduation requirement for these graduating seniors, did more harm than good.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and Design

“Under the circumstances of my fieldwork, I must get permission to conduct my study. In the course of doing so, I may incur obligations with implications for my interpretive process—for these obligations can lead to unexpected boundaries, directions, emphases, and the like. Responding to such obligations promotes a more symmetrical relationship between researcher and researched, while, possibly, imposing unavoidably complicating perturbations in the researcher’s plans.” (Alan Peshkin, 2000, “The Nature of Interpretation in Qualitative Research” p. 6)

Introduction

The above quote serves to accentuate the internal on-going conversation within a qualitative researcher’s mind. Peshkin (2000) captures the deliberate uncertainty that accompanies the state of simultaneously knowing and not knowing, seeking and not seeking. Such a state is necessary for the emergence of what develops in a situation where one truly travels toward a destination not thought of before. For this reason, his selected quotes open each chapter within this dissertation. They describe my own experiences with self-judgment throughout this study, and they eloquently offer segue from one phase of the phenomenological process to another.

I open this chapter with the research question. My reason for doing so is that I must begin at the beginning. This study emerged through process, and for that very reason, the arrangement of chapters and content within each, shadow the steps taken

toward formulating a conclusion. Likewise, the design of phenomenology is also discussed in Chapter One rather than in the usual Chapter Three. Chapter Two presents a framework of researchers and significant figures whose ideas referenced and inspired this study. Chapters Three and Four present, in order of process, the data which resulted from the research question and subsequent phenomenological exploration; Chapter Three addresses the description phase of phenomenology and Chapter Four addresses the interpretive phase. Chapter Five represents the resulting analysis of all phases, arriving at a final synthesis. Appendix A provides the horizontalizations for all seven participants and is explained in further detail on page 41. Appendix B illustrates the process of reduction and the elimination of horizontalizations to determine invariant constituents. Appendix C is an outline arrangement of horizons expressed as themes and sub-themes. Finally, Figure 1 is a visual representation of the themed constituents.

Research Question

This qualitative study involved in-depth phenomenological interviews which detail individual responses to the often crowded world of work, socialization, mandatory school attendance, and senior English in answering the research question: *How do rural, employed seniors approach learning in English, their only required course for graduation?*

For the purpose of this study, rural will be defined according to The National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) 2006 revision (in conjunction with the Census

Bureau). Under the new classification system, major locale categories include city, suburban, town, and rural. The subcategories of fringe, distant, or remote for rural schools further pinpoints definition based on the school's physical location using latitude and longitude coordinates, as well as its mileage to an urbanized area or urbanized cluster. As such, the rural high school in this study is categorized as remote by a distance of seven miles. It does not exist within an urbanized area or urban cluster.

Purpose of the Study

This researcher will explore the experiences of seven rural, eighteen-year-old students who feel compelled to be gainfully employed while also adequately performing in senior English, their only required course for graduation.

Phenomenological in design, the study will focus on the students themselves as they reveal, in their own words, the meaning they attach to employment, school, and senior English. We find that the actual voices of those who are part of a phenomenon under study are able to provide a depth of understanding that can be trusted as relevant data.

Past research has explored the impact of high school employment on students regarding aspects such as their mental and physical health, academic enhancement or impairment, and influence or lack of on subsequent educational pursuits. In addition, research also has examined the possible exploitation of young workers by employers eager to capitalize on inexperienced and energetic youth. The research on employment alone is well positioned in the literature; however, this study highlights

senior English as another component in examining participants' situations of employment and school.

Rationale

Carr, Wright, & Brody (1996) analyzed the long-term effects of high school work experience using findings from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. Their results indicate a positive effect on labor force outcomes, but little to alter earlier research, widely accepted after years of study, that entering the work force in high school does not encourage the continuation of higher education. Of interest to this study are their questions raised for further research: "Do teenagers get more involved with work because they are less involved with their education?" and "Why, in short, do high school students choose to work in the first place?" (p.79).

While the assumption that money motivates them may partially answer the question of why teens work, focusing only on that possibility limits the discovery of other reasons. These questions are explored in this research and also motivate the asking of additional sub-questions specific to this particular research study: What factors in their educational experience have contributed to these seniors finding it more beneficial to enter the work grind so readily? What is (are) the effect(s) of these work hours on senior English learning? How is it that so many seniors have only one core course (English) to take their senior year? What sacrifices do they perceive as necessary to manage both employment and academics? The answers to these

questions elucidate a phenomenon that continues to garner research interest in educational and sociological discussion.

Though numbers may crystallize the ratio of hours spent in employment against hours spent on English, and clarify the relationship between hours worked and grade point averages, they do not explore the satisfactions and frustrations students experience in their academic and employment lives. Therefore, “perception of the reality of an object is dependent on a subject” (Moustakas 1994, p. 27). The focus of qualitative research, according to Wolcott (1994), is a recipe of description, analysis, and interpretation (p.49). Though not all three are always required, this study will utilize each as part of the blending of participant/story and researcher/synthesis.

By listening to the stories of employed seniors who must remain at school for six hours each day but who only need senior English for graduation, this dissertation may provide insights into the deeper complexities that motivate the merging of money with academics. As part of phenomenology, the in-depth interview has at its core “an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (Seidman, 2006, p. 9). Even more, “At the heart of interviewing research is an interest in other individuals’ stories because they are of worth” (9).

The students themselves are our information; as Moustakas (1994) writes, “In phenomenology, perception is regarded as the primary source of knowledge, the source that cannot be doubted” (p. 52). Furthermore, Marshall & Rossman (1999, p.

61) validate the decision to use only in-depth interviews as data collection because, “A study focusing on individual lived experience typically relies on an in-depth interview strategy...” As such, no other method of data collection was involved in this qualitative research study. Analysis of transcribed interviews, the voices of the participants themselves, constitutes all data.

Overview of the Problem

One of the tenets of National Board Certification is “Knowledge of Students,” a broad category that potentially covers everything from birth order to learning style preferences. This KOS, as it is referred to, serves as a foundation by which all other pedagogical decisions are shaped; it is impossible to meet the educational needs of students if we do not know the students themselves. Aside from the communicative value of inquiry into the lives of those we teach, the better we understand our students as complete individuals, the more informed and effective our instruction becomes for them. This includes knowing something about how they spend their time after they leave the school building. As a National Board Certified Teacher, this researcher has learned, first hand, the value of KOS.

Employment during the high school years has become more the rule than the exception as increasing numbers of students balance the demands of school work and work/school. On the most simplistic level, students work because they wish to make money. They constitute a viable market as empowered consumers and they are exposed daily, just as adults are, to products and services which offer them

enhancement, ease, and security. As more students become wage-earners, researchers continue to track the effects of this phenomenon.

In February of 2006, Oklahoma Representative Rebecca Hamilton introduced House Bill 2439 which would limit employment of teens under the age of 18 to three hours on a school day, eight hours on a school day which precedes a non-school day, eight hours on a non-school day, and 18 hours during a school week. High school seniors who are over the age of 18 determine their own hours of employment during a school day. They frequently elect lighter loads their senior year, selecting electives that demand less study time, so that more hours are possible for employment. For many, their only core class required for graduation is English.

According to the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NYSY):

...almost two-thirds of high school juniors are employed at sometime during the school year and that the average junior with some employment works in 71% of the school year's weeks and for 18 hours per week in the working weeks. The numbers for high school seniors are even higher: three-fourths take employment of some kind during the senior year, and the average senior with employment works in 76% of the school year's weeks and for 23 hours per week. (cited in Oettinger, 1999, p. 136)

More recent numbers reported by a University of Washington study (Jayson, 2005) indicate "Fifty-six percent of 2,184 high school seniors had jobs when surveyed in 2000 and 2002, in the last few months of their senior year." Additionally, "The study,

presented at the American Association for the Advancement of Science meeting in Washington, D.C., did not ask why students worked.” Of interest also is that this phenomenon is limited to American culture (cited in Lillydah, 1990), (Kablaoui, 1992), though a longitudinal study of Australian youth (Vickers, 2003) indicates that more youth are working in that country than they were in 1990. Bachman, Safron, Sy, and Schulengerg (2003) suggest that the consumerism of American youth may be spreading across the globe; though they report that little is known about student employment preferences outside the United States, it can be speculated that research interest in this area will continue to grow.

Over twenty years ago, culture critic Neil Postman (1982) spotlighted the increasingly blurred lines between children and adults. His thoughts appeared in the appropriately titled work *The Disappearance of Childhood* whereby he illustrated the shrinking space between the two in terms of dress, language, sexual activity, criminal behavior, diet, entertainment preferences, and the like. Some 17 year later he wrote:

Yes, as always, we have young, small people among us. But if, by seven or eight or even eleven and twelve, they have access to the same information as adults, how do adults guide their future? What does a forty-year-old have to teach a twelve-year-old if both of them have been seeing the same TV programs, the same movies, the same advertisements, the same news shows, listening to the same CDs and calling forth the same information on the Internet? (1999, p. 125)

His questions are compelling and mirror those of this researcher; they have served as partial volition for the undertaking of this study, as I have ruminated over what a fifty-year-old English teacher might offer, academically, an eighteen-year-old student of today.

Three years ago when I accepted a position of high school English teacher in a rural school, I became increasingly perplexed by seniors who were, for lack of a better word, inaccessible. It was tempting, at first, to question my own pedagogies as possible explanation for the failure of student engagement. To address this I kept a reflective teaching journal for that first year. The resulting conclusion was that some other factor might be as much accountable, if not more so, than the English instructor. Thus I began a quest to uncover a possible root cause, so I might later return to the scrutiny of instructional practices. Again, I cite Postman as he ponders his own earlier posed question:

The answer comes back to us in the form of another theory whose practical expression is easily seen in America. Children are neither blank tablets nor budding plants. They are markets; that is to say, consumers whose needs for products are roughly the same as the needs of adults. There may be some differences in the types of toys and other amusements adults and children are enticed to buy but, for that matter, there are differences between what one might sell to the rich and the poor, irrespective of age. The point is that childhood, if it can be said to exist at all, is now an economic category. (1999,

p. 125)

It goes without saying that Postman's thesis regarding youth culture is valuable to mystified, twenty-first century educators. From an educational standpoint, others, particularly those concerned with the pressures on schools to cope with the growing needs of changing student populations, have also pointed out the haste with which our young students seem to inherit the problems of their older counterparts. To go back in history, we have continuously reformed our educational system to accommodate student needs. Take for example the idea of the junior high school which was intended to be

...a structural and pedagogical solution to the problem of attrition and 'waste' ... When young people dropped out or were pushed out, those who did find work usually ended up in repetitive, mind-numbing, dead-end jobs. Academically talented students experienced another kind of 'waste' as they marked time academically in the standard pace of the grades until they qualified for entrance to high school. (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 70)

Is this happening again? Is it conceivable that the freshman year of college might replace what has long been accepted as the necessary senior year of high school?

Sometimes the assessments made about our educational system can seem harsh at first glance. Take for example the words of Gates (2005), "Our high schools are obsolete. By obsolete, I don't just mean that they are broken, flawed and underfunded —although I can't argue with any of those descriptions. What I mean is that they were

designed 50 year ago to meet the needs of another age” (B6).

To return to Postman, though he did not examine employment, his missing chapter might well be writing itself today. Are our students speeding past their senior year in an attempt to grow up faster and enter the adult world of work, or as consumers do they just need money? Osterman (2000) poses another possible explanation:

Although there is relatively little research on student’s [sic] sense of belongingness within the school community...they do not sense their own importance, and cannot rely on other members of the school community, whether teachers or peers, to meet their needs. While they may have a shared emotional connection and recognize the group’s importance to them, their needs to experience relatedness are not always addressed. There is clearly a need for descriptive and analytic studies that focus on this phenomenon in schools. (p. 360)

Perhaps he is right; perhaps the connectedness of place and loyalty to classmates experienced by seniors generations ago has been consumed by employment commitment, a result of the shift in employed students from minority to majority within student body population.

Or do they feel their senior year is just a waste of time, a year built around their need to satisfy one last graduation requirement, that of English? A study conducted over 70 years ago (Garrett, 1934) found that “the pronounced tendency for

marks in the Baton Rouge High School to fall off sharply in the final year” (p. 195) further justified “that the average for the three years of senior high school is fully as reliable as the four-year average in predicting success in the University” (p. 196). Does an isolated research observation about the relevance of the senior year made 70 years ago bear any relationship to our seniors today? Is year four of high school, particularly year four of English instruction, serving our students adequately and thereby justifies English’s role as the only subject mandated by the state of Oklahoma to require four units for graduation? Possibly, Newkirk’s (2003) picture helps us to consider another perspective:

. . . There is an image of high school that is embedded in the minds of all who went through them: It has a particular architecture, a system of bells, seating charts, wall posters, subjects, tests, grades, proms, athletic events, that is both maddeningly and reassuringly familiar. For all the criticism of schools, the public is quite resistant to major tampering with this picture (e.g., the suggestion that trigonometry may have undeserved prominence). Yet, it is a system where a majority of students fail to develop the habits of mind central to reflective thought. (p. 402)

Sizer (1992 ed.) offers a disquieting follow-up to Newkirk’s observation: “The academic pressures are limited, and the accommodations to students are substantial. For example, if many members of an English class have jobs after school, the English teacher’s expectations for them are adjusted, downward” (p. 82). As a teacher, I can

fully attest to the validity of his words. Though I have made efforts to be accommodating, more in English IV than in AP Literature and Composition, doing so has never been comfortable.

As English educators scramble to meet the demands of accountability in testing and requirements in curriculum skills, absenteeism in the classroom creates new challenges for educators, particularly in the realm of homework. A study by Xu (2005) of 920 students in grades 5-12 indicated that approximately 75 percent of the students reported that doing homework helped them with responsibility, independence, study skills, and reinforcement of school learning. Yet these findings only minimally support my own teaching experience with English homework. Many students willingly admit that they do not have the time to complete it (e.g., reading responses intended for small and large group discussion) and often copy from other students when they do attempt it. In a pilot study before beginning this dissertation, students were candid in disclosing the small number of hours spent on homework compared to other activities such as employment and athletic ventures.

Researcher Harris Cooper (2001) “widely recognized as the nation’s leading expert on homework” (xiii) suggests mandatory guidelines for grades 10 to 12 of “four to five assignments per week, each lasting 100 to 120 minutes for all subjects combined” (p. 69). That equates to 24 minutes per assignment; but even at that rate, it would be questionable to assume employed students would consistently block two hours of study time, on at least four nights a week, into their hectic schedules. My

research does not support such.

Some teachers have given up on homework and have instead moved toward assignments that can be completed in class, such as timed writings. Research by Kralovec and Buell (2000) would salute this decision:

Children are not asked to learn to read until they are five because we believe they are not ready to read before that age. Unfortunately, most of us don't apply the same logic to older students. How often have we told our children that they can't talk to their friends until their homework is done? But the real work of adolescence is learning how to relate to others socially. (p. 57)

The aspect of socialization emerges in this study as an important consideration for seniors; it is closely tied with the time constraints employment creates for them, especially concerning homework.

Buell (2004) elucidates the relationship between time, homework, and work:

In the course of many interviews and debates, I have noticed it comes as a surprise to many that the practices and policies regarding hours of both work and homework have displayed considerable variation over even the past half-century. Some of the more informed homework advocates now acknowledge that homework has waxed and waned as an educational practice in the twentieth century, but even they fail to recognize or acknowledge the connections homework bears on the practice of and ideals about work in a larger society. Two related, long-standing cultural tendencies are at play in the

homework debate. More than those in any other advanced industrial nation, U.S. business and educational elites have treated work as an all-encompassing, absolute good. The salience of homework reflects not merely pedagogical concerns but long-standing battles about how much time parents and children have, how work is compensated, how time is conceived, and who controls that time. (p. 32)

Whether emphasized through a cultural filter or not, issues such as homework (and attendance) cannot be ignored when examining the phenomenon of employed seniors. A study of 100 Nebraska seniors (Crawford & Mayer, 1935) revealed that both male and female students averaged two to three hours of work or chores (outside the home or inside the home) on weekends. Less “work” occurred during school days. This was a period in time when “work,” in relation to students, had little if anything, to do with employment. It is quite possible that for today’s seniors, employment replaces whatever “feel good” satisfaction students several decades ago might have associated with “finishing their homework.” And if current students no longer allocate time for homework, then how do these same students fulfill English curriculum guidelines and mandates such as the reading of novels and the writing of research papers?

Implications and Relevance

The value of this study lies in its ability to provide a unique glimpse into student perception, through their words, as an additional supplement to previous

research. It provides potential insights for those interested in formulating curriculum programs, as well as the educators responsible for implementing them. As defined by Maxwell (2005) this study does not have direct practical intentions; the research herein does not attempt to set administrative or policy goals. Rather it seeks to *understand*, to explore the deeper reasons why students feel motivated to put in so many more hours on their jobs than they do on their school learning. As such, it is hoped that this study will inform those who teach seniors in a comparable setting. Even more, this study may well inspire future practical studies that indeed seek to alter the current expectations of rural, senior students in similar situations.

As expressed in an article published through the Education Commission of the States (2007), senior year students need available class offerings which are rigorous and will prepare them adequately for higher education. ECS notes the tendency for students who have already been admitted to university or those who have passed their graduation exam to enroll in less challenging classes, later resulting in remedial courses at college. To this, I would add another consideration—employment.

The senior year is the last opportunity for public education to serve its young citizens, thus leaving them with a lasting impression that will inform their future attitudes and decisions regarding public education in general, and their own experiences in particular. They will become the school bond voters of tomorrow. How well we serve them in this last effort not only affects the futures they choose for themselves, but the futures they influence for generations of other students.

Their voices may very well be the best possible light we have in understanding and defining the appropriateness of graduation requirements and other educational policies which currently affect them. It is also possible that through this phenomenological study their voices will raise more questions and interest.

Procedure

The first step toward initiating research was site permission from the high school where participants were enrolled and where interviewing would take place. A private room within the high school library was reserved as a location for interviewing. The second step in this research study was obtaining approval from The University of Oklahoma's Institutional Review Board (IRB) which took approximately one month to complete. Approval was granted on May1, 2007 and interviewing of participants began immediately.

While awaiting approval and with the aid of our school's guidance counselor, an invitation was announced to seniors who might be interested in participating. They were informed that in order to participate they must be employed, be 18 or older, and be enrolled in senior English as their only core course. They were informed that upon approval of the study, they could obtain a consent form from the counselor's office. They would be able to read the form and ask the counselor for assistance if questions arose. They were also permitted to consider participation over a three day period if they so wished. Signed forms could be returned to either the counselor or the researcher.

The decision to involve the high school's guidance counselor served two purposes. One, she was familiar with students' course schedules and knew who met the participant criteria, and two, she served as a protection against any chance of coercion regarding participants since the researcher was also their senior English teacher. This is a small school whereby I am the only senior English teacher.

Participants

Number and Selection

As an inexperienced researcher, I initially grappled with sample size. Merriam (1998) in addressing the question responds, "... for those with a low tolerance for ambiguity, there is no answer" (p. 64). The appropriate number of participants for a study such as this one should, according to Seidman (2006), meet two criteria: saturation and sufficiency (p. 55). However, particularly for doctoral research, other factors such as time constraints and money also come under consideration. For this research study, seven participants fully met the participant criteria. There were many students who met two of three criteria. For example, a few students were 18 and also employed, but were also taking another core course they had previously not received credit for, in addition to the English class.

As interviewing progressed, I felt confident that the research topic would be sufficiently represented by the seven participants and that for the purpose of this study's specifics, saturation would occur. I also relied upon Seidman's guidance that "The method of in-depth, phenomenological interviewing applied to a sample of

participants who all experience similar structural and social conditions gives enormous power to the stories of a relatively few participants” (2006, p. 55).

More specifically, in terms of sufficiency, the participants were involved in both regular English IV and AP Literature and Composition, either of which satisfies their English graduation requirement. Their employment ranged from fast food, to banking, to family ranching, and so forth. Four were female; three were male. The financial status of their families ranged from comfort to concern. They resided in a variety of home situations such as single parent, grandparents, and nuclear family. Some were honor graduates, others not. Most “owned” a car, one participant did not. Some students had at least one parent who had either attended or graduated from college, while others indicated their parents had formally stopped education after high school. Some students insisted they “had” to have a job; others indicated they “chose” to work.

Their circumstances were varied and added texture to the sample. By the completion of the seventh transcription, I was satisfied that I was “no longer learning anything new” (Seidman, 2006, p. 55) and saturation, for this particular study, had occurred. The sample size of seven met both the researcher’s manageability and time constraints as well as qualitative phenomenological research appropriateness.

At the outset, participants understood that they would be interviewed on three occasions and that the three sessions would address the following: their stories of becoming readers, writers and thinkers; the detailed daily experiences of employment,

mandatory attendance, and English class; and the significance or meaning, if any, they wished to share upon reflection of their experiences.

The decision to interview my own students was a measured one. Seidman (2006) warns against the potential problem of researchers and “easy access” (p. 40). When convenience of sample and setting take precedence over the integrity of the research study procedure, the respect of its participants, and the objectivity of data analysis, credibility and validity are compromised. Because this study was neither personally sensitive nor psychologically invasive, I was not concerned that students would withhold honesty because of our previous student/teacher relationship. After careful consideration, I determined that there would be no intrinsic motivation on the part of participants *not* to be objective in their responses. They understood that in no way would their participation, or their interview content, affect their grading in English class.

While verbal assurance was emphasized, as well as written into the consent forms, it also should be noted that the majority of interviewing occurred after grades were already averaged and made available to students. Participants understood that no compensation of any nature would be involved and that their participation was completely voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time. As much as is humanly possible, protection against bias and data contamination remained a priority throughout all phases of this study.

Age of Participants

Following the guidelines of Moustakas (1994) regarding essential criteria: “the research participant has experienced the phenomenon, is intensely interested in understanding its nature and meanings, is willing to participate in a lengthy interview” (p. 107), I determined that participants 18 years of age and older would best represent the voices I wished to represent in this study. By age 18 these participants consider themselves to be adults; they have reached the age where they may elect, on their own without parental permission, to withdraw from school and choose an alternate route for graduation such as the GED. Though this was not a question relevant to this particular study, the fact that these participants had reached an age where they felt they had more control over their lives, provided the researcher with confidence that they were capable of presenting their voices with genuine conviction and honesty.

Interview Practice and Procedure

This qualitative study of student experiences with employment, mandatory attendance, and required senior English is a natural fit for open-ended interview practice. Less formal and structured, open-ended questions are designed to liberate discourse between researcher and participant, allowing topic responses to emerge naturally, rather than artificially (Schwandt, 2001, p. 135). In-depth interviewing generates its own questions (Seidman, 2006, p. 92) or as Strauss & Corbin (1998) indicate, questions are not used “to generate data but rather to generate ideas or ways of looking at the data” (p. 90).

Following the three-interview approach as outlined by Seidman (2006), each participant met with the researcher on three different occasions. Interviews were tape-recorded to assure that responses would be accurately portrayed. To preserve anonymity, participants were asked to select a pseudonym which would be observed throughout interviews and during all treatment of data. Interviews were anticipated to last between 60 and 90 minutes. This proved true in all but limited instances, whereby some interviews only lasted approximately 45 minutes. No rigidly specific time expectations were discussed. As researcher, establishing a relaxed atmosphere was important to eliminate feelings of pressure or pre-conceived outcomes. In addition, interviews were prefaced with the assurance that long pauses, even silence, were acceptable and that researcher intrusion would be limited as a safe-guard against coloring their responses.

An attempt also was made to follow set guidelines of three days to a week apart to accommodate connectedness while allowing limited distance for thought (p. 21). However, the third interview required more scheduling considerations and few were conducted within a week of the second interview.

The first interview generally focuses on the past, with the participant providing “context” for subsequent interviews (p. 17). For this study, and in consideration of their experiences with English, the one class required for graduation, participants were asked to tell their stories of becoming readers, writers, and thinkers. In doing so, they revealed their earliest successes and disappointments with issues such as reading

strategies, their growth as writers, and the formation of opinions about themselves as learners in general. As context, this interview served to further characterize the senior English students they had now become.

The second interview brings the participant into the present. The second open-ended question asked them to recount a typical day including the details of school, English, socialization, work after school, homework, and the like.

The third interview asks participants to reflect on their experiences. The third interview asked students to construct meaning, as they understood it, of their work, English, and school world. In all but one instance, the third interview took place after graduation. Though not consciously planned, the timing proved advantageous since participants were already in a mode of reflection.

Preliminary Phenomenological Processes Prior to Data Collection

Role of Researcher

In phenomenology it is essential that the researcher remove self from all assumptions and biases before interviewing ever begins. Without this objectivity it becomes impossible for the collected data to purely reflect the pristine experiences of participants and maintain the integrity of the study. Moustakas (1994) in borrowing from Husserl (1970b) proposes epoche, defined as “setting aside prejudgements and opening the research interview with an unbiased, receptive presence” (p. 180), as the first step in accomplishing this cleansing of consciousness. In writing out on paper an autobiographical accounting of the experience, the researcher is able to put aside or

“bracket” the conscious ideations and recollections which might penetrate the interviewing process. The researcher’s awareness of self, accomplished through the writing process, alerts the mind to beliefs that must be ignored and remain out of reach.

For example, I was not employed during my senior year of high school; it was my parents’ philosophy that school was my job until I graduated. To interject this information into participants’ interviews would have contaminated their responses. In addition, my own senior English class left little lasting impression on me; experiences during my sophomore year were much more invigorating and elicited specific recollections of novels read and assignments written. Drafting my own autobiographical description before I began the interviewing alleviated, I believe, the temptation to steer participants, whether consciously or otherwise, in any particular direction.

Checking of Data

After transcriptions were completed, all participants were provided with printed copies and asked to verify that what appeared as language on paper actually reflected the voices that were tape-recorded. In all instances, participants agreed that this was accurate. Later, when textural and structural descriptions were constructed, participants were mailed copies of each and again invited to reply if discrepancies occurred or if they wished to add another perspective different from the one expressed on the day of interviewing. A postage paid envelope was provided for each

participant. None of the participants sent back alterations, except for one who wanted to correct some of the ranching terminology the researcher had unintentionally confused through a spelling error. As such, I accepted that the written descriptions truly reflected the ideas represented in speech. As Vygotsky (2000) clarifies, "... the meaning of every word is a generalization or a concept. And since generalizations and concepts are undeniably acts of thought, we may regard meaning as a phenomenon of thinking" (p. 212). As researcher, I trusted that the participants had expressed themselves honestly and that I had done justice to their renditions of experience.

Conclusion

This chapter introduces the question of how seven rural employed high school seniors approach learning in English, their only required course for graduation. It establishes the purpose and rationale of this study which is to utilize phenomenology as its design in exploring why students feel compelled to spend so many hours on work and thus create issues with time spent elsewhere (with family/friends/self, and on English study). It establishes the usage of in-depth interviews as a vehicle for giving voice to the participants' stories, told in their own words. Referencing the work of state legislation, educators, researchers, and culture critic Neil Postman, the problem statement evolves as support meriting this researcher's concern that high school employment, mandatory attendance, and senior English as an only requirement, create a problematic mix. At the very least, a look at the world our students live in has the potential of educating teachers and students alike.

Furthermore, this study provides a step-by-step look at phenomenology in process.

CHAPTER TWO

Conceptual Framework

“I was determined to study the phenomenon of dual identity...I imagined that I was, relatively speaking, truly open to learning. However, when I name the phenomenon of my study as “dual world identity,” I have already begun my interpretive journey. This naming points toward a relevant literature; it identifies the existing work that I must take into account of in some defensible way. Generally less consciously known to researchers, the phenomenon as named and conceived is probably associated with personal perspectives, dispositions, and feelings—in a word, their subjectivity—that also will bear on the interpretive process. We are not indifferent to the subject matter of our inquiries.” (Alan Peshkin, 2000, “The Nature of Interpretation in Qualitative Research” p. 5)

Introduction

A review of current literature indicates a variety of quantitative data which often offers contradictory results. Previous studies have attempted to explore short and long term results of student employment on a multitude of dimensions such as academic success and failure, future economic attainment, school performance (homework and attendance), television watching, alcohol consumption, and substance

abuse, to name only a few. What is seemingly absent is qualitative research which chronicles the lived experiences of employed students as told from their own perspectives. Surveys and questionnaires can produce concrete “facts” which may then be deemed as evidence, even interpreted as “truth”; however, in distinguishing “hiddenness and truth” Sokolowski (2000) remarks, “Evidence brings things into light, but every evidence emerges out of absence and vagueness, and the focus on one aspect of an object usually means that other aspects lapse into obscurity” (p. 165). It would seem that a complete look at this phenomenon, through the lenses of the students themselves, might well qualify as valid research to enlarge the existing body.

Though all research serves to illuminate the topic, this study concentrates on a combination of employment and educational aspects—those of rural seniors who attend school all day but who only need one course for graduation, English. As such, the literature to frame this study is minimal, at best. Though it might be tempting to dismiss the importance of the study based on this limitation, it also would be remiss. The very complexity of the students’ positions warrants research. Slavin (1978) commented some 30 years ago that “What is needed in education is more, not less, research directed at the improvement of instruction and of the schooling experience for children” (p. 17).

The participants in this study are situated in a relationship of employment and education whereby they either spend 15 hours minimum or upwards of 40 plus hours working each week. In many cases, comparing time spent in both endeavors reveals a

puzzling equation where education is concerned; 30 hours (*if* attendance is perfect) at school each week, 30 to 40 or more on the job, and few, if any, hours spent on English class (or any other subject) at home.

In presenting the aforementioned literature, I will begin with research that situates, if only generally, the relationship between students and employment. In canvassing research interest regarding students and employment, I found that the years with the most publication occurred between 1979 and 1987. Few articles were published after that, with a slight spike in 1990. Noteworthy also, articles written following the recession in the early 1980s took a more negative stance regarding youth employment. Database searches included EBSCO Collection, JSTOR, PsychINFO, Eric (EBSCO), and Dissertation Abstracts. What follows is an overview of research mainly covering the last 16 years with inclusion of relevant selections from the 1980's.

Students and Employment

Kablaoui (1992) investigated the academic achievement of 554 employed New York students. His data, taken from student and teacher questionnaires revealed that employment does not overtly affect academic performance; instead, it manifests itself covertly in absenteeism, increased tardiness, and an aversion to homework. The study also indicated that teachers tend to assign less homework because of employed students. By doing so, their lowered expectations result in lowered student performance. Kablaoui suggests that students need help from parents and school officials in assessing the effects of employment on their education.

Winkler, Dewalt, Rhyne-Winkler, and Dewalt (1994) surveyed 240 North Carolina juniors and seniors who self-reported the number of hours they worked per week and the courses they took, focusing on grades and absenteeism. Their assumptions regarding student employment, which they perceived to be high (59%) included vehicle ownership, clothing purchases, independence, and a desire to help their families during an economic decline in the geographical region. Results indicated that employed juniors who worked more hours had lower GPAs. Seniors revealed little effect of work on GPA; however, researchers attributed this to the possibility that many of these seniors had class schedules dominated by electives surrounding their one core course for graduation, English. Absenteeism, on the other hand, did affect their GPA.

Steinberg, Greenberger, Garduque & McAuliffe (1982) targeted the immediate effect of part-time employment, in the private sector, on school performance and attitudes toward school. Their sample of 531 10th and 11th California adolescents answered questionnaires and took a timed test that measured business/consumer knowledge. The results of their quantitative study found that “working leads to more frequent school absences and to decreased enjoyment of school” (p. 370). It might also be appropriate to interject here that “little direct evidence demonstrates a significant effect of high school attendance on intellectual development” (Stipek, 1981, p. 134).

As hours on the job increase, school involvement decreases, resulting in

lowered academic performance. While working seems to increase practical knowledge, this advantage mainly applies to lower functioning students; higher functioning students need to experience very little work, if any at all, to acquire the same level of knowledge. On the opposite end of work context, Hansen and Jarvis (2000) found that students working in a family business, as opposed to employment in the private sector, reported greater academic success, among other benefits.

High and Collins (1992) looked toward higher education to assess the impact of high school employment. They explored the relationship of hours worked, class ranking, continuation of work into college, and the saving of money for college. This sample came from 9 colleges or universities in New York. Six hundred and eighty six anonymous surveys were returned from professors of undergraduates. Their findings indicate that students employed during high school are less likely to be in the top 10 percent of their graduating class. Slightly over half of students surveyed were financing no more than 10% of their tuition. Also, their statistical data points toward an even greater decrease in academic performance for students who possess lower aptitude. In the end, they question the overall value of high school employment and conclude, “Additionally, fewer of them might work while in college and this, too, may lead to better academic performance in college” (p. 93).

Marsh (1991) using the High School and Beyond (HSB) study, conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 1986), concluded that working during the junior year created more negative outcomes than did employment during

the sophomore year, though employment during this year has direct bearing on dropping out of high school. Working during the senior year was “negatively related to social self-concept” (p. 179). Sophomores appear to benefit from the independence of work but by time they becomes seniors, this gain is offset by the loss in “commitment to the school” (p. 186); Marsh stresses that this bond between school and student should be fostered in the “apparent antagonism between working and traditional academic goals.” He also indicated that “not enough attention has been paid to job-related circumstances, the reasons why students work, and attitudes about work” (p. 174).

Also touching on the subject of connection to school, Reaves (1992) concentrated on students who worked more than 15 hours per week in his study of 1422 Texas juniors and seniors. He determined that employment above 15 hours per week negatively affected grade point average and students’ connectedness caused by less participation in activities and reduced study time.

D’Amico (1985), using data from the 1979 through 1982 waves of the National Longitudinal Surveys of the Labor Market Experience of Youth looked at, among other things, student employment’s relationship to study time, free time at school, and class rank. Results showed that between 70 and 85 percent of all students worked at least some during high school. Grades 11 and 12 showed a steady increase in work experience and work intensity. His evidence can be appreciated as a footnote to the work of Schoenhals, Tienda, and Schneider (1998) who proposed “no evidence...that

work during high school destroys students' academic careers, on average" (p. 749), but they also added, "at least through the tenth grade" (p. 750).

A quantitative study conducted by Warren, LePore, & Mare (2000) satisfied a perceived need for testing the "reciprocal" relationship between student employment and grades. Their research began with data from the 1988 National Education Longitudinal Study of 25,000 randomly selected U.S. students. Students' senior grades were "their primary outcome variable of interest" (p. 951) using data compiled after the 1992 NELS88 follow-up. Particulars to their study included distinguishing between whether interviewed students were currently employed as opposed to ever having been employed. They also were concerned with the immediate effects of employment on schooling rather than the long term effects, for example two years down the line, where most research has been centered.

As such, they highlight the value of measuring the "now" since eventually it impacts the "later." They conclude that the precept of employment lowering grades is not clearly proven; however, they raise the question of whether employment may affect other educational outcomes (achievement test scores, attitudes about work, as examples). They suggest that those concerned with student employment, such as teachers, should "focus more on the mechanisms through which some students come to see work—and not their education—as the most fruitful way to spend time and energy" (p. 963).

Following this research, Warren (2002) published findings from an empirical

study using new data collected from 118 students in grades 10-12. He pinpoints two empirical questions driving the discourse on high school employment as beneficial or detrimental: 1. Does working teach students to become better adult workers? 2. Does employment diminish school performance? Focusing on question two, Warren argues against the “zero-sum theoretical model to account for the association between employment and the intensity of school performance” (p. 370). He expresses issue with the less of one thing means more of another approach because it leaves too many aspects unexamined; in particular, the theory fails to account for the decision-making process—“When grades suffer, students may cut back their work hours; when grades improve, students may again alter their work schedules” (570). He indicates that though the employment world may affect the school world, it is equally possible that the school world affects the employment world.

Therefore, Warren shifts toward a social-psychological approach: students who value their education do so regardless of whether they work or not. Amount of hours worked only becomes problematic for students who place less emphasis on education. He concludes: “Students who work more intensively enjoy less academic success” (p. 387), but he also further asserts that students who place less value on education “seek out employment as an activity that (at least in students’ minds) carries greater rewards” (p. 389). His most interesting assessment is that our educational system “sorts” students during their twelve year progression, creating viewpoints that eventually result in one of two choices for the individual after high school—more

work or more school. If the notion of more paid employment is the picture students see earlier in their education, they will naturally work as much as they can while waiting for their high school diplomas.

The research emphasis of Barling, Rogers, and Kelloway (1995) was not so much the quantity of hours students work, but more so the relationship with “school performance and personal functioning” (p. 144). They hypothesized that the quantity of hours worked would be negatively associated with school performance and personal functioning and that these associations would be offset by job quality. School aspects included homework, cutting classes, and overall grades. Functioning meant looking at self-esteem and time structuring.

Their sample consisted of 533 completed questionnaires from one Canadian high school. Findings from the study proved that no relationship exists between employment quantity and homework. Conversely, work quantity does affect skipping classes, possibly as a solution to dealing with poor time management. In turn, self-esteem diminishes as more personal failures are realized. Effects on personal outcomes were more pronounced than grades, homework, and class cutting. One area cited for further research included is that of examining student conflicts other than time, such as values and extracurricular activities. They suggest that schools addressing possible avenues for helping employed students should consider time management and study skills programs.

Also exploring time were Safron, Schulenberg, and Bachman (2001). Their

study detailed the relationship between work intensity and factors which could, over time, lead to negative behaviors such as substance abuse. For the relevance of this review, however, I will only summarize their findings in relation to social activities and health behaviors. Questionnaire forms given to 8th, 10th (18,000-19,000), and (15,000-16,000) 12th graders, as part of the Monitoring of the Future Study, provided data. Of the senior sample, “43 percent of males and 38 percent of females worked more than 20 hours per week” (p. 432). Results showed that for these twelfth graders, students with higher work intensity spent more time on social activities, especially dating and riding around, than did non-working students or students who worked five or fewer hours per week.

Sports participation was examined in two categories based on whether it was a school sponsored activity or an informal gathering with friends. Again, seniors revealed the highest negative relationship between work intensity and team sports; however, the students most inclined to participate in sports are those who work at least minimal (1-5) hours rather than no hours at all. In other words, this latter group seems disconnected from everything. Regarding health habits, correlations with work intensity were moderate; employed males were more likely to have breakfast and sleep adequately than employed females. Again, those who work 1-5 hours achieve healthier behavior (sleep, exercise, breakfast) than those who do not work at all. Work intensity has only minor impact on homework, activities, and time spent alone. Their suggestions for future research include examining the timing of work shifts and how

those shifts impact student time scheduling and time spending.

How adolescents spread their time across school, workplace, family, and peer group became the focus of Shanahan and Flaherty (2001). Using data from the Youth Developmental Study (YDS), they studied students' time use from ninth through twelfth grades investigating whether time patterns would differ over the high school years. Surveying 1,010 freshmen students through yearly administered questionnaires over a four year span, they provided results that were generalized through appropriate comparison of census populations.

Students reported weekly time use on employment, homework, extracurricular activities, and family/friends. Paid work, for seniors, increased yearly; "over 20% of the students worked about 20 hr per week, but did not engage in extracurricular activities" (p. 392). Some of their generalizations include: work often increases as school dissatisfaction increases, students are inclined to limit the categories by which they spread their time, and the greatest predictors of how students use their time are grade point average and future educational plans. The researchers recommend the "use of a person-oriented approach to time devoted to multiple domains of activity" (p. 398) to fill the gap created by previous research.

Some studies are notable not so much for their findings, but rather to highlight an oversight. Concerns regarding the early employment of 14 and 15 year olds (Michael & Tuma, 1984) raised questions that empirical studies of young workers had ignored this age group and had instead focused on students 16 and older. As others

(Warren, LePore, & Mare, 2000) have noted, the inception phase of any topic under investigation informs the ending circumstance, the immediate focus of curiosity and attention. Using figures from the High School and Beyond survey, they cited 20 or more hours per week as not being unusual at all for “25% of male sophomores and 12% of female sophomores” (p. 466). In my own phenomenological study, several participants reported “working” and being paid before they reached their sixteenth birthday; for several, the sophomore year marked the beginning of their employment lives.

Bachman, Safron, Sy, and Schulenberg (2003) explored student employment within the context of educational disengagement, among other less relevant areas to this study. From their findings they propose that students who are less academically involved in their school worlds may seek their identities in the workplace. They highlight the role of consumerism in students’ lives and comment that “...students seem to get the message that their value is measured, in part, in terms of what they can spend and what they have bought” (p. 302). Briefly, their testing of six hypotheses reveals that students actually “wish” to work more hours than they actually do, that work intensity increases with educational disengagement, and that the manifestation of employment by senior year has its seed (as thought, desire) planted much earlier. Of significance is their question: “Does it follow that instead of trying to dissuade students from actually working long hours, we should try to dissuade them from even *wanting* to do so? (p. 313).

The work of Tannock (2001) resulted in a book from his dissertation entitled *Youth at Work : The Unionized Fast-food and Grocery Workplace*. Though his angle is to consider the legal protection these young workers need, his book offers a clear look at students' working lives and the atmospheres of their workplace, often interspersed with interview excerpts from the students themselves.

Students and Mandatory Attendance

The website for the National School Center offers a myriad of articles which are of interest to teachers, parents, and administrators. The Education Commission of the States website supplies numerous other links within its site which detail specific areas of education. One such accessible site is the National Commission on the High School Senior Year, which offers preliminary reports studying the last year of high school. Additionally, they provide quick access to the graduation requirements of every state and their projected changes. As example, Oklahoma is one of the few states who will not be mandating four units of required study (English, math, science, social studies) for all seniors. As example, Texas will do so by 2011, Arkansas in 2009, and Idaho in 2013. The National Center for Educational Statistics provides a link to the Navigating Resources for Rural Schools which focuses on changes taking place in them.

Students and senior English

Research for this particular study, which links employment, senior English and mandatory attendance, is rarely visible. Sweeps occur within others' work, however,

and give hope that more will appear in the near future. What I have done is to generalize from the research on employment and school, adapting that literature as applicable to English class.

The next chapter offers an overview of phenomenology as research process and introduces the first collection of data, the textural descriptions of the participants. These are the descriptions which are narrated through the participants' language (from the interviews) without researcher interpretation.

CHAPTER THREE

Presentation of Data: Textural Descriptions

“In the course of my research, I ask: What is going on? What have I seen? What do I, can I, will I learn about what I’ve seen? And what does it mean to the actors and to me? ...Answering these general questions depends upon my skills of inquiry, including what specific questions I develop to ask and how I ask them, as well as who I can locate to interview and with what depth of rapport. Such skills are not equally distributed among researchers. Given other researchers with other levels of investigatory skills, the shape and substance of interpretation is likely to vary. As will there be variability given other researchers with other ideological leanings.” (Alan Peshkin, 2000, “The Nature of Interpretation in Qualitative Research” p. 6)

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore, explain, and describe the lived experiences of 7 rural, employed seniors who attend school all day while only needing English to graduate. This chapter introduces the verbatim examples which illustrate the collection of data and its analysis and synthesis as part of the phenomenological research method. A modification of the Van Kaam method of analysis of phenomenological data as outlined in Moustakas (1994, pp. 120, 121) was

employed. Data appears, except for horizontalizations, (explained p. 42) in the order in which it occurred; doing so gives life to the interlocking steps and subsequent emergence of the meanings and essences of the participants' experience. What follows is first, an overview of the phenomenological process, and second, the detailed textural descriptions of all 7 participants, and the composite textural description which combines all 7 descriptions into one, representing the participants as a whole.

Horizontalizations, which are a listing of every relevant expression taken directly from the transcribed interviews of each of the seven participants, are the first step. The process of compiling horizontalizations takes time. After taped interviews are transcribed, read, and studied, the interviews are highlighted for meaningful phrases and any responses which relate to the research topic. Every response is given equal value. These are then typed and numbered for each participant. In this study, the number of meaning statements varied; some participant horizontalizations were as brief as 19, others as extensive as 59. The total for all participants was 241. The seven participant horizontalizations appear in Appendix A.

From horizontalizations come the invariant constituents, through a process called reduction and elimination, which means removing expressions that do not meet certain criteria or that overlap or occur multiple times. These invariant constituents are the horizons of the experience. This process necessitates that every expression on the list of horizontalizations meet two criteria: 1. The expression must capture "a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for

understanding it” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121) and 2. The expression must lend itself to being pulled out and labeled. If the expression meets these two criteria, then it is considered a “horizon” of the experience.

The next step is to label each of the numbered horizons. Any statements that are repetitive or cannot be satisfactorily labeled are omitted. Of 274 horizons, 122 were eliminated. What remained were the 152 invariant constituents. These were then given initial categories of identification; twenty-four constituents were deleted because they were repetitive or not fully represented in the interviews. These appear in Appendix B. Strike lines through constituents show which were eliminated. Finally, after checking again to make sure interviews and constituents match, the constituents are themed. The results appear in outline form in Appendix C. The categories which comprise the core themes are represented as Roman numerals. Sub-themes appear beneath core themes as capped letters.

Step three involves writing a textural description for each of the seven participants. Each textural description contains the exact words of the participant as taken from the transcribed interviews. At this point, the researcher narrates the participant’s account but does not analyze it. The checked constituents guide the inclusion of verbatim participant language as evidence in supporting the validated themes. Textural descriptions for all participants appear within this chapter. They constitute the “what” of each participant’s experience.

Following the construction of textural descriptions for each participant, they

are looked at in whole, and a composite textural description emerges representing the combined experiences of the participants. This appears at the end of Chapter Three. The next step is the construction of structural descriptions; these are the “why” of the textural descriptions. At this point the researcher does more than simply recount what the participant has said in interview; it is the beginning of evaluation. Structural descriptions appear in Chapter Four. Likewise, a combined structural description was also constructed and appears at the end of that chapter. Finally, from the composite constructions of each, both textural and structural, a synthesis of the experience representing the group as a whole can be formulated. The synthesis appears in Chapter Five.

While the overview of this process may seem mechanistic, the swelling of participant meaning increases as each step is completed and another begins. As researcher, when moving from one phase to another, an *understanding* that is difficult to articulate as definition occurs. The existing constructs explain themselves. In the end, the lived lives of the participants breathe on their own. Below and on subsequent pages are the textural descriptions of the seven participants: Sarah, Rocky, Bobby, Allie, Chloe, Jenny, and Eric.

Sarah: Textural Description

Sarah’s experience with school and work generates mixed feelings. “There’s two different---like I’m glad I’m here all day to see friends but there’s a point where I

could be making a lot more money by just going to work and then leaving and coming to school for English IV. And then going back to work. There's ups and downs to it. Of course I like to be at school to see everybody but that's the only thing---I didn't have to be here for anything else---just that one class. It took money out of my pocket." Yet she also sees value in attending school all day "... because if I didn't go to all these classes I wouldn't learn all this stuff. I wouldn't have the opportunity to get the solutions manual [referring to her calculus class] to help me for college. I'd rather come the full day because if I didn't, without these classes, I wouldn't have known anything." Making the transition from school to work sometimes creates frustration, "If at school I've had a bad day and somebody's made me mad then I'll take it to work and I'll be mad that whole day and it's hard to wait on customers and we have to be nice to everyone, even if somebody's standing there yelling at you because their insurance doesn't work, you have to be nice and say 'I understand'; it's kinda hard but you have to do it because you don't want to get fired or anything like that. . ."

In addition to her own fatigue with balancing school and work, she acknowledges that others who work share her situation and that she is not alone. "Probably kids look at it as if they could be doing something better than coming to school. If I weren't at school, I could get all the stuff done that's on my lists. People don't realize---of course we need school, but as seniors we get that senioritis and it's like we're just ready for it all to end. But we're going to college so it's going to

happen another four years. We're just hurting ourselves doing the not-paying-attention. We're going to be doing this for awhile after high school. I don't like it. I don't like that I do this. Others do it too. I'll see someone holding their pen on the paper, but it's not moving. They're just looking at it. These are students who work. I understand that; I know that a lot of people have other things to do besides school work. It's power lifting or working long hours and it's hard to focus because we're tired." She explains the anxiety of her busy days and how her mind is filled with keeping up with all she has to do. "I have ten million things to do in a day. Of course, if you have a boyfriend, you're worried that you'll get into a fight that day. I just get to where I think about the next time I see him at school or after school what kind of mood he's going to be in. Whether we're going to argue or not. Thinking about how work's going to be. What I'm doing that night. If I have a lot of stuff to do that day then I'll run that over in my head. I have to plan out what time I'm going to be there; I always have to be somewhere; and I have to be everywhere at least 15 minutes early. Sometimes it's 30 minutes; on time is late for me. I don't want to miss anything or leave out anything; I forget more things now than I've ever done. I'll write things but sometimes I lose the paper so I try to get it in my head, holding the list and going over it, trying to see it."

She clarifies how these mental ruminations interfere with her concentration at school and cause her mind to wander, "I should be interested in reading and learning, which I do enjoy learning new things; I don't know why, but I do get bored really easy

and I picked up the reading problem and of course, you know, you've got all the things going on at school and you don't want to think about school work---it's 'what's going to happen after school or lunch' and I think that tied into it and I should have been more focused. And wanting to read more to comprehend better.”

In evaluating the effect of concentration issues, she describes both successes and failures in her English IV class. “With the research paper you had a list of dates where everything is due. You let us know what days we had to turn things in to you, even though I didn't always have it. That list was good to have. The check list helped so I could check off when I finished something. I keep coming back to the research paper, but this year I finally understood what to do with it. . . My senior year I really wanted to know; I guess it hit me because I'm going to have to know this for college. I knew it was my last shot.” In addition to the research process, Sarah gained from the experience of standing before the class “teaching” and was able to link the experience to a fuller benefit, “With the whole teaching part that we did, you can even do that at home with yourself. We got a lot out of that because we looked up all that research. You need to know the material so you can teach it.” Reading the novels was a different story. “. . . even in 1984 I stopped [reading] after 19 pages. I just was not into that. I do love, well, I don't *love*, but I do like love stories and kind of mysteries. . . But not anything like government control or anything like that.” Yet she indicates her mind wandered less in English than in other courses: “I don't think I ever got lost. Just mainly when you would read a book. If we read books that I wasn't interested in,

I would wander off. We were usually doing something---but even if the worksheet bored me or whatever we were doing, I would just stop. I have to be organized, so if I get bored in a class, then I'll use that time to organize myself. I shouldn't do that. School should be my first priority. I just get bored really easily."

Of concern to Sarah is her inability to remember things; her faulty memory is often a source of perplexity for her. She was able to glean from English IV, through vocabulary study, the value of mnemonic devices: "That was easier for me---if words looked or related together it helped me remember. Because any time I'm going to take any kind of test that has that type of thing it will be helpful. It's hard to memorize a ton of words and definitions but if you link a word to a word in the definition, if you can put two---if you match up a word in the definition with the word. . ."

Besides a poor memory, Sarah is equally worried about not sounding intelligent when speaking before others. Daily Language Practice helped to build her confidence in volunteering answers. "At the end of the year I would read a sentence and know exactly what was wrong every time. It made me feel good by knowing that I knew what to do; I didn't have to wait for you to put up the corrections. I'm scared to death for someone to ask me a question and I don't know the answer. . . That would make you feel like you're stupid and you don't know anything. I would always hide behind people if I didn't know the answer. But knowing the DLP makes you feel good and not feel stupid." She points out that her expectations of herself and what she thinks she should know bear heavily on whether she will volunteer an answer in class,

in contrast to work where she is never afraid to ask questions and therefore make public that she doesn't know something. "... in school you are expected to know because you've been taught earlier on---like punctuation---you're supposed to know that stuff. But at work, some things you aren't expected to know because they're too difficult. With the whole punctuation thing, you've been taught for however many years and it should come easy to you. But insurance---there's more kinds of insurance than punctuation to keep up with. Insurance I've been shown for only about two years. I don't usually do that stuff on a day-to-day basis." She attributes an ability to be more patient with herself since participating in group work in English IV. "It was helpful because everyone will see something in a different way and be able to help you see their way, like if you don't get a context clue and they see that clue, but you don't---that's helpful because they can help teach you how they saw it. Being in group, getting different opinions, they'd be a question like I couldn't find it; if you can't, someone else can because you're picking stuff out of everybody's minds. We're not saying, 'Okay, somebody find that answer and give it to me.' In our group we never really did that. They wouldn't tell you what it was, but where it was. Then we'd read it for ourselves and see if we could figure it out. And then we'd compare answers."

Sarah's experience of attending class all day, while only needing English IV to graduate and yet maintaining employment, contains six core textual themes that account for her polemic internalization of work and school: 1) a desire to make

money; 2) a desire to learn; 3) a need for socialization at school; 4) an inability to concentrate and remember; 5) boredom with school; and 6) a sense of preparedness for both future work and English in college.

Rocky: Textural Description

At the end of our interview when I asked if there was anything I should have or could have asked that I didn't, Rocky's response was rather telling and reveals his to-the-point nature. "I'm glad you asked anything. Because if you just told me to talk I wouldn't have anything to say." He describes his internalization of school and work in bare-bones fashion. "I think I've always put my work before school; I know that. 'Cause I was always a little more interested in working. I guess because I'm more interested in doing stuff outside and work was kind of fun to me because it was stuff I was interested in. Riding horses and moving cows and doctoring. Things like that; the books and study wasn't appealing." Yet he somewhat connects the self discipline acquired through ranching to school success, and English in particular. ". . . it's helped with my work ethic some---whenever I was putting my mind to something, when I tried to focus on something I really knew I needed to do, but I don't know. It's kind of yes and no. I didn't really put---I would work on my homework and school work whenever I wanted to, but I don't know. It's just that whenever I put my mind to something, I can do it. To an assignment or like a term paper. . . I wouldn't stay hooked with my homework. I'd just try to get it done. I knew I was going to be okay

with it; I wouldn't try to make it flawless. I got by."

School time is mainly social time, though Rocky is an attentive student during class. "I hated coming to school until about 9th grade. I used to not [enjoy school], but here in the last couple of years I have. Just because of the social events, girlfriends and go hang out." All day school attendance doesn't distress him, for the most part, because he also wanted to take chemistry (for college preparation) and to interact with other students. "I don't know if I would have wanted to graduate last year just 'cause I wanted to come see my friends." Regarding emotional connections from his senior year the focus is once again social. "I made emotional connections, but I don't know if they were all that meaningful. I learned stuff like I told you. Social things I learned. Well, I think I'll miss school a little bit. Most people are just ready to get out. I kind of like it---just being around friends. My senior year was---what did I get from it? Well, it was what I already told you---more comfortable talking before groups. I'm sure I sharpened my skills in all of the classes I took, cooking and biology. I learned chemistry. Mostly just social. When asked to look over twelve years of public education his response is equally succinct. "I can read and do arithmetic. I'd say communication. If you were just with your family all the time you wouldn't feel confident to speak in front of people. Social skills."

From English IV he describes success with pride. "Speaking in front of the class. If you give me an assignment, and you know you're going to have to speak in front of the class, so you're going to do a good job, so you feel confident in what

you're talking about and Mrs. Blake's not like 'well, that ain't the way it really happened.' You don't want to look like a fool up there, so I tried to work thoroughly whenever I'd do something up there. I got up there and I was confident and I knew what I was talking about. So I could answer any of your questions or any they had. Preparation. I felt like I'd learned something, bettered myself. I've gotten a lot better now at getting up in front of people. I used to not want to do it at all. I'm not gonna say I enjoy it, but it's kinda fun. I'm more confident in all of my stuff from that class. Term papers and stuff. It's no big deal because I can do that now."

He is also able to connect his English IV skills with teaching others in the rodeo world. "I definitely got more comfortable speaking aloud in groups. If I'm trying to break something down, like in a run, like with horses if I'm trying to get the point across to somebody else that I'm teaching, it has broadened my vocabulary and maybe I can paint a better picture to them if I'm trying to explain that."

Time is important to Rocky. "If I don't get up before 8 in the morning, I feel like I'm behind. I've already wasted enough. I don't know where that comes from. That's been a routine since seventh grade when I started getting up in the summers. I'd get up with my dad about six and go over and start putting out hay and feed and stuff. It establishes a good work ethic. I don't know if it helps me during high school, but once you get out and you have to enter the real world. . ." Even time away from school or work is filled for Rocky. "We usually rope every evening. We rope for two or three hours. That's free time. I'm still at the farm."

Rocky's experience with mandatory school attendance, though only needing English IV to graduate, and working each day after school reveals five core themes: 1) school as socialization; 2) a preference for ranching over academics; 3) dedication to filling rather than wasting time; 4) a desire to better himself; and 5) a sense of preparedness for both future work and English in college.

Bobby: Textural Description

Bobby's internalization of work and school is colored by frustration. He works for money but has negative feelings about it. ". . . I'm not trying to get political, but just about everything is about money. People beat their mamma for money. It's not a good thing." In part, he ties his need for employment to image. "I would have been riding the bus. As a senior not many ride the bus. That's a pretty profound statement that either I'm lazy and don't want to work or I'm too poor to afford gas or a car." But there's another reason he works; he currently helps his parents during a period of financial strain. ". . . to show how much of a situation we're in, I've got a savings account from my grandpa and my dad's had to borrow some money. . . Two days ago I had to make a house payment out of my savings account." Though his job at Wal-Mart isn't labor intensive, it has other drawbacks. "At Wal-Mart there's a new shipment every four days and it's just the same stuff over and over. It's almost maddening. It's so monotonous that you---draw this little bit of money. It's an easy job really. The hardest part I have is moving the dog food from a pallet to the shelf. Not very strenuous at all, but it's so disheartening because you don't see any progress

out of it.”

In addition to not seeing progress from his work, he sees little monetary benefit either. “My parents pay for my insurance and my car payment. All I pay for is my gas, but out of a 250 dollar check, and I have a small car, it’s costing me 43 to 44 dollars a pop to fill up. I do that once a week so that’s almost 100 dollars out of my check, and I pay for all of my own meals. . . my healthy lifestyle is going down the tube as well. You work ‘til ten o’clock at night and the only thing that’s open is a burger joint. And eating that late is completely unhealthy. I don’t feel good anymore and I don’t sleep, which I’ve had that problem a lot this year.”

Being at school all day was not a pleasant experience for Bobby. “The only core class I needed was English. It seems like I could take a college class instead of coming all day and take a full time job and receive the same amount of benefit. It’s almost monotonous to come every day and have to pass classes that are an absolute breeze that don’t challenge me at all. The more I work, the more my grade slips little by little in English; I finished this year with a 79 which is the lowest I had all year. I could pass art with an A; I could pass vocal with 100% average. No problem because you do your work in the class, nothing to take home, nothing to occupy your time unless you just have a desire for it, but it’s not mandatory. Yeah, some of those classes push you, but not outside of the classroom. So I’m probably going into shock when I go to college. I’ve got the whole term paper bit down, but studying outside the classroom, I’m not completely prepared for that. It’s a little scary, but it seems like I

could have taken a full time job and benefited the same level.”

Not having enough time for study showed up in his English class, particularly the reading of assigned novels. “There were certain books that I did finish and certain books I’d fall behind on and catch up with *Spark Notes*. But I got the main gist out of all the books; the only book that I didn’t finish was *Tess* and that was sprung at kind of a bad time for me. I’m not making any excuses for why I didn’t read it; there just really wasn’t any time.”

He admits that it may be possible that he’s lost something this year. “Probably my work ethic. I wanted a light year, but I didn’t want a ridiculously light year. I didn’t want to just drift aimlessly. I come to second hour [AP English], then I would go to family and marriage class first semester, and child development second semester, which mostly I knew, so it wasn’t very strenuous and everything was straight out of the book. No complex thinking at all; word for word verbatim out of the book.”

Conversely, he indicated there were some rewards from his English class. “I read some amazing things. *Beowulf* was awesome. I absolutely fell in love with *Macbeth*. Term paper wise I was clueless. I’m not sure I would understand the quality of work that is required of you [in college]. Understand that a term paper is one of the most frustrating things to do, but I’m definitely going to need that next year. If I didn’t have the foundation I have now, I’d be completely screwed. And not just necessarily literature papers, but a basis for other papers. PIE, you know. Yes, I learned how to work off other people’s ideas. If L. said something interesting to me, then I can put in

my two cents and everyone benefits because no one is going to get the same exact thing from one novel. . . Bouncing ideas off each other just like you would in college. ‘This is what I have, what do you have?’ I think that prepared me for my higher education.”

Through drama, Bobby found an acceptable social outlet for displaying his comedic side. “I’m the biggest ham; anything to get me on stage. If it means playing the drums, dancing on the gym floor, doesn’t matter what I’m doing; I love entertaining people.”

Bobby’s story illuminates four core themes: 1) frustration and boredom with all day school attendance; 2) frustration/boredom with work; and 3) a frustration with time management; and 4) a sense of preparedness for college English.

Allie: Textural Description

Allie’s response to senior English and all day school attendance while also consistently employed is, for the most part, a positive experience. Through a job shadowing program offered within an extracurricular club (Business Professionals of America), Allie determined that she did not wish to major in business finance as she had originally thought. She shadowed at a local pharmacy and decided that was the right career for her. “I had always thought about pharmacy, kind of, but then I would tell myself that’s too many years of school, and I don’t want to go through that.” Experiences her senior year, made possible through all day attendance, resolved those

conflicts and she is now certain of her future goals. “I just like helping people, I guess, and I used to think that I wanted to be a doctor. Then I realized that I didn’t like blood or needles, so I don’t want to do that. I also like chemistry and science. It interested me like how one pill can make you better. I don’t like sitting at a desk doing paperwork. The pharmacy that I went to job shadow is a good environment. I want to work in a small town, not as small as this one, but where you know your customers pretty much.”

Though the combination of work and school helped to crystallize her future, there were other advantages and disadvantages to her situation. Working at a local bank helped her with punctuality and overcoming a shyness she had been aware of since childhood. “I had to balance perfectly every single day and if I messed up I had to own up to it. . . we had to write out a teller report and tell why we’re off and what we did to try to find it or fix it. I also had a problem with being late a lot and working kind of fixed that because you have to be there or you don’t have a job...it helped me with my people skills and being able to talk to talk to people. You have to be friendly to them. I didn’t really like talking to people I didn’t know, and now it doesn’t bother me. I think I will be able to open a lot more in college.”

However, she had to make some changes regarding sports at school in order to accommodate her work hours. “I quit playing sports for the most part. . . I was going to play basketball again this year but I decided not to...but I did play golf. I would get off of sixth hour and go out to the golf course until three. Then I would be at work by

3:30 and get off at 5:30 and go back out to the golf course and finish whatever it is that they did that day. That's what I did every day for about 2 or 3 months and it was chaotic. It was hard to make myself go back out to the golf course because I was so tired after I got done with everything. It was hard to make myself do my schoolwork." Keeping up with class assignments posed problems and Allie notes that this is common with students who work. "The kids that do work that much don't do their schoolwork because, I think, for the most part---I don't personally know, but I think that they have to work. They have things they have to pay for themselves. That's more important to them than school is. If they're not going to go up to college, why would they be trying so hard in high school?"

Her time is filled, with the exception of about 8 at night until 10. "Usually I'm in town from 8 to 10 and then I come home. But then I would just get on the phone. Or get on the computer. That's when I do my homework, if I still have homework---most of the time I don't. We pretty much just lecture out of the book and I guess that's why I don't have very much homework anymore. After I got into high school is pretty much when all the homework changed. For me I can kind of get it in class, but I like to figure stuff out on my own. I can go home and try to do it and I can come back and if I didn't understand it, my teachers can help me. When I get homework in high school it feels like it's all coming at the same time and I can't get everything done that I need to do. It bothers me."

Regarding time, Allie is adamant. "There's not enough of it. And I probably

don't get as much sleep as I should because I start doing stuff and like during school sometimes I get to bed around 2 because if I could make myself stay up and do my work, I would stay up and do it. The majority of it was English, probably about 80 percent of it was and the other 15 percent was calculus and the rest of it was a worksheet in science here and there." Procrastination has been another issue because teachers so readily accept late work. "That's how it is in my calculus class pretty much. I know I can turn it in at the end of the nine weeks. I'll still do some of it, but I may not have it finished. I don't work all hours of the night because I know I can turn it in later. It's not good [for teachers to accept late work], but it saves me sometimes. Not really me, but others. There'd be a lot less honor grads if it wasn't that way. In English we would finish one book and I would say okay, I fell behind on this book, but I'm going to catch up on the next one. And I would end up doing the same thing all over again. It's just getting caught up in everything around me. It was overwhelming. And I wish I would have stayed on top of my work but I didn't."

Allie expresses a firmness regarding the harder courses she chose her senior year though she only needed English to graduate. "All my classes this year have been tough at one point. Math comes pretty easily to me so it wasn't too bad. Trig was pretty easy, but this year it was a little overwhelming. My science classes are honors biology and honors chemistry. That will help me with my major of pharmacy. I just did it so I could stay where I need to be. People ask me why didn't I take a blow-off schedule. 'Why didn't you get in English IV instead of AP English?' It's so I can get

ahead. And that was a personal choice. My parents didn't make me. Nobody actually made me. I've always tried to work harder or be ahead of where I need to be."

Yet despite her academic ambitions, there were disappointments as well. "I tried to take classes that would help me and there were kids in there who could just care less and it didn't hardly help me at all...I don't think they realized a few of us did want to get something out of that class [referring to her two honors science classes]... the boys would listen, but they would only listen so they could try to come up with some kind of funny comment. She got to where she was spending more time getting onto them than she was actually teaching. So it almost became pointless. That's how every day I pretty much dreaded going to those classes. Toward the end, they got a little better but not much...she just kind of gave up; I don't think we even had semester tests. The last two weeks of school we worked on prom stuff."

On the other hand, Allie was able to express connections between her senior experience in AP English and her world of work. "English kind of prepared me for work because I was expected to do something and I had never really been expected to do anything...with the vocab, I can, those words---you do see them, and I never realized that helped me. Like in the DLP, the correct grammar, I've had to write e-mails to our main bank so I'll go no, this doesn't sound right or no, this doesn't go there." She feels prepared for college English but will receive credit for Composition I because of her AP test score. "I'm very thankful that I've taken a full load this year and I took AP because I think a lot more was expected of the AP class than out of

regular English. I feel that I have an advantage. It foreshadows what is to come. We did that Socratic Circle thing and that helped me to start speaking about what I thought. It prepared me a lot for college because we did have to do a lot more on our own. And you couldn't half-way do anything. It was pretty much all or nothing. You had to work, you had to earn your grade in that class; you couldn't just because you were used to getting all A's...pretty much with all our teachers, if you were getting all A's they'd help you out a lot just to do it and in that class we had to actually study. That will help me out next year because I hadn't studied in I don't know how long for anything."

Allie's description of her experience of needing only English yet filling an entire school day with classes while also working reveals five core themes: 1) self-satisfaction in her decision to take a tougher schedule her senior year; 2) a frustration with what she actually received from several of those courses; 3) difficulty with time management; and 4) a sense of preparedness for college and future work.

Eric: Textural Description

Eric's internalization of work and school, particularly English IV, indicates that he is not only frustrated by his situation, but also resentful. His response to all-day school attendance when he only needed English IV to graduate is decidedly negative. "I think this is completely ignorant. I have to come here five days a week like for six or seven hours and I'm really only doing something in one of those classes. It's kind

of annoying because I could be spending my time reading or working or whatever. It's having one class a day...that bothers me because I get bored." He attributes his dissatisfying senior year as a factor in his decision not to attend college. "Because this last year to have one real class, and by just having only one class, pretty much if you try to go to school after that, it's like having three years of math and then waiting a year and trying to take another math course. It's just going to be extremely hard." He says his flow has been "erased."

He describes his typical school day as non-productive. "My having four elective classes aren't really counted; they count as grades but you don't really get anything out of them. Like second hour which is office/library aide, I do nothing; I go to the art room. I'll work on something; like right now we're doing banquet, so I'll work on that. Third hour is family and marriage and child development, but I like that class because we actually learn in there, a little bit. But fourth and fifth hour---I've got art (again) so work on banquet and sixth hour is democracy and that's a big joke right now. That class is---it's---all people do in there is sleep and talk. That could be another hour that I could work or whatever. If I could just come here one hour a day and be done with it, I think I would be better off. Because for four hours a day I do nothing. Just sit in there."

In a more detailed summary of a typical day, Eric illuminates the sources of his boredom and frustration. "At about 8 the bell rings and I go to my first hour English class---it's one of the better classes, and then about 8:55 the bell rings and I go to the

most pointless hour of the day, library aide. It's just because in my second hour I really don't do anything at all; it's really a waste of time. Third hour gets a little better; we have some interaction going on with the teacher. Like today, I've got to be demonstrating to the class some activities that we did in first grade. Putting an egg on top of a 2 liter bottle and lighting a match and throwing it in there; it sucks the egg in. We're supposed to be teaching a class of four and five year olds, so we got to act like four and five year olds. This is child development; we're showing how the brain develops and how they learn and perceive things that are said to them. Fourth hour is my art class but for the last month we've been doing nothing but junior/senior banquet and now we're trying to go back to normal and it's really hard. What amazes me about that class is for a whole month they [students who were not working on art specifically for the banquet] had a month to do anything they wanted or to catch up on what they had missed and yesterday we sat down and he asked who has completed this, this, and this and like nobody raised their hand. So I just think it's kind of ignorant. Students are lazy; they took that whole month to sit around and chit-chat. Instead of working when they had free time to do their work. Then come back from lunch at 1:10 and I go to my sixth hour; sixth hour is another class where it was pretty good in the beginning but now it's kind of pointless because we have some new students in there who just talk crap and talk back to the teacher...things have just kind of been pointless; I mean I sleep in there now because we don't get anything accomplished. It takes half an hour to take roll in there because there's constant talk

and it's just kind of pointless.”

Eric leaves school at 2 each day to be on the job by 2:30 at a local fast food restaurant. At three o'clock the drive-up window is often stressful. “It gets really busy because school kids get out, but at three---that's when we don't have any employees there, we've got me and maybe two other people and a manager, and we are busy and it sucks. People have to wait in line, and then they'll get mad at you about not getting their crap or whatever they've ordered. It kind of makes you feel bad whenever they're yelling at you.” Work improves when the night crew arrives, but on Wednesdays it never lets up. “At about 8 is when church lets out and we get busy for two hours. Non-stop. And it wears you down. You get tired. And then you have to clean up your station to close the store, and we might get out of there by 12, one sometimes depending on how busy it was. I go to bed probably about half an hour after I get off and get up and do the same thing. Each day. And that's been going on like that for about two years.”

Time is problematic for Eric and he worries about not having enough of it. “If I'm getting off at 12 or 1 o'clock and I have to be at school in six hours, when am I going to do my school work?” Completing his research paper, while maintaining his employment hours, was difficult for him. “I'd work and then come home and do the term paper. I was up 'til three o'clock for four days straight. That's kind of rough on you.” Working 30 to 35 hours a week, Eric acknowledges the effect of work on school during these past two years. “It's hard. It really is. My grades suffered a little bit last

year; and I almost quit work, but I just had to spread time more or less. Stay up until one to two in the morning. Sleep two to seven in the morning.”

Socialization, for Eric, comes from both his school and job environment. “... some of my friends were lazy and didn’t have jobs. I did. So I also made friends who had jobs. They can relate more to how I feel; say I had a bad day at work, and they had one too, so they could relate to what I was feeling.” Eric’s motivation for working is a financial need as well as a social need. He expresses this in describing the difference between his former and current place of employment. “The people are more friendly, like you can even say that out of work. [Before] you get off and no interaction outside of work, which sucked. I was also working to make friends.”

Despite the stress of his job and the resulting time constraints, Eric does realize a sense of accomplishment from what he does. “I’m one of the better people up there. I know because you can see it. Everyone at work can see it. I’ve been there longer, so I just know more; I move faster. I’m a fairly intelligent person and that helps a lot because people who work at a fast-food restaurant are stereotyped as just high school dropouts who flip burgers. And that’s not what it is. I mean if you’ve been there for two years you’re going to know the place inside and out, and by knowing that, I guess I’m just faster at it. You’ve got a speed of service that you’re supposed to meet, so by moving faster and knowing the place you don’t have to ask questions or get help from anybody.”

He also acknowledges the positive aspects of his English IV class. “English

we would come in, sit down, put the projector up, and do daily language practice. That way, at least, everyday you would learn something. That was the whole idea behind that. The work was non-stop until the end of school, meaning that you wouldn't slack off or whatever and so by it being non-stop, you wouldn't get in the mood of being lazy. If you got a little break for a week or so, and then you try to come back to it, all you're going to get is complaints. Since we didn't take a break, it's been one of the better classes because this last semester we pretty much just read books that I enjoyed reading and had quizzes. We read some books I never would have picked up. *A Tale of Two Cities* was one of the better ones...we didn't joke around in there... it was serious...it was school, which has been the only school I've had this year, pretty much. The term paper was interesting; I learned a lot from that, but it was hard on me because of work." Eric specifies three areas where he feels he gained strength. "Reinforcement of reading, self-expression, and vocabulary." He values the consistency of his only required class. "After the first nine weeks, things just kept getting better, because we just kept doing more stuff. I mean time went by fast because you were doing something instead of just sitting around watching the clock. Sometimes it was hard because it was non-stop, but it was good for you."

Eric's description of mandatory school attendance while only needing English IV to graduate combined with almost full-time employment reveals five core themes: 1) boredom with all-day school attendance; 2) frustration with time management; 3) mixed feelings about employment satisfaction; 4) minimal benefit of socialization at

school; and 5) an appreciation for his learning experience in English IV.

Chloe: Textural Description

Chloe's internalization of working her senior year while only needing English IV to graduate reveals conflicting responses toward mandatory school attendance. "I didn't like that very much because I got bored very easily in the other classes because I knew that I didn't need them to graduate." In particular, she almost failed her housing class first semester because she "just did not grasp the concept of how a house is built." As a result, "I would just blow that class off. I wouldn't do the work. Which isn't me because I work very hard in school. I would turn in [the work]...I would get it to the point where she would be happy if I turned it in." Some of her work was turned in five weeks late and even then Chloe would "do it so poorly, you know just enough to where she would give me a passing grade." In another class, students were given the option of doing "an international study of government, or switching the class to psychology because she's teaching psychology next year." The students chose psychology and considered a sleep study, but the goal was short-lived. "We had a lot of kids in there who worked. Once we all started talking about sleep, we realized how sleepy we all were and we'd just fall asleep. It's amazing to look around at how many kids are actually sleeping in classes."

Fatigue and lack of sleep are concerns for Chloe. "...my hardest thing of working and going to school is that I had to go to work right after school. I was also tired all the time because I never got to rest because I was always working, or going to school, or doing something...most of the time I worked at fast food and there's all this stress and pressure getting the food out...where I'm at right now, at the convenience store, it's better paced...that was a good change for me because I started improving my grades. I actually had time to focus on school. It's very frustrating to realize that you're doing so much in so little time because there's only 24 hours in a day. And 10 of that I work and then I get off of school; the rest of it I'm sleeping because I'm so tired by the end of the day. I'm just exhausted." Though she admits that her current employment is superior to her fast food tenure, one week Chloe recounts working 58 hours because two employees at the convenience store quit. "By Sunday I was so out of it that I was falling asleep at work. I don't think I had any productivity that week. I didn't care; I just wanted to go to sleep."

For Chloe the school day is an opportunity for socialization, though she prefers not to talk during class time. "During breaks and lunch is when I'm socializing because I don't do that after school. Actually my peer group is kind of complicated...I think it's a mixture of both [from school and work]." She acknowledges that work has forced sacrifices such as "missing senior get-togethers" and not being able to "meet friends at the lake." Even though she associates with other students who are employed, she still laments a loss of social freedom. "My friends get frustrated

because I never get to hang out with them. I'm always at work. They work too, but they don't work the long hours that I do. They're usually out of work by 9 or 10 o'clock, and I'm still going."

Despite the fatigue, Chloe works because she perceives it as a financial necessity and preparation for the future. She began second semester of her sophomore year working about 25 hours and "realized that I didn't want to go to school because I was so tired." Yet she continued through her junior year under the same circumstances. By senior year she was working forty-plus hours and finally got so "burned out" that she began looking for "another job that wasn't fast food and wasn't high paced where I could actually still think because fast food you don't think, you just do it."

She defines financial need as "stuff that I need because I don't expect my parents to buy me everything. My senior announcements, they help me pay for, but like the everyday things like lunch, car insurance, college funds...I have to work because I have to have money and I have to live." She separates herself from others who work but don't know how to discriminate between the value of work and the value of education. "...they get to be sophomores and old enough to work and they go to work thinking, 'hey, I'm going to make money. Forget school.' Sometimes work is not the most important thing; you do have that term paper due that week. Work can wait...it's amazing how people think that in high school, work is everything...but most of those people still live with their parents, so they're not really living anyways."

She tells of worrying as far back as seventh grade if the household bills were going to be paid. “My mom wasn’t really there, so I was having to do that; then I got to live with my step-mom and dad. Through my high school experience I didn’t have to work, but I chose to work because I knew it was something I was going to have to learn to do sooner or later...”

Chloe’s successes her senior year reside in her personal growth on a social level and her academic preparedness in English. Of her friends she outlines a year of frustration. She stopped interacting with her best friend to chase a more exciting peer group, a decision she later regretted. “...I have my senior year and I have no friends...all my friends dropped me because I wasn’t going to do what they were doing...smoking, drinking, drugs. . .” She ended up with three male “brothers” who complicated her dating life. When her former friend returned and offered her “strong emotional spiritual status” Chloe said she felt redeemed and that she had learned a valuable lesson regarding friendship. She perceived her senior English class as a mixed blessing. “It taught me a lot of my life lessons so I could see why I was there for it, and it taught me a lot of things to prepare me for college. But it kind of frustrated me too because I was there for an hour and then I was there for six other hours for no reason at all. I mean there were a couple of classes that taught me...the rest of them were just like my chemistry class...and that one was just a wash...in child development class taught me how to take care of a child...my geometry class taught me life skills---how to survive outside of the classroom...”

Chloe's experience highlights four core themes: 1) frustration with mandatory all-day attendance; 2) frustrations with fatigue and lack of sleep from employment; 3) frustrations with socialization; and 4) a sense of preparedness for college and future employment.

Jenny: Textural Description

Jenny's experience of employment and English reveals a year of fatigue and lack of sleep. At the end of one interview, she expressed a cursory summation that clarifies her own assessment succinctly. "It was tough. Very sleepy...but it was overall a good year, I think." She began the same interview by pointing toward the value of the year. "I think this last year, even though I complained about it being the worst year of high school or school period, might have prepared me more than anything else for what people call the real world." In the middle of the interview she acknowledged the toll her schedule had taken on her time and enjoyment. "...I've missed some things from my senior year. They say your senior year is supposed to be your funnest year, your best year, your greatest year of your life and so forth and so on, but this year sucked for me. Like it's probably been the worst year of school for me. I've had so many things to do I just feel totally relieved that it's almost over. I've been stressed a lot."

Her reason for working is based upon perceived need. "I guess I never really

had a whole lot of money before I worked. I didn't have the money to buy new clothes and things, so I was the poor girl, so to speak. So I didn't fit in the in-crowd because I couldn't buy everything new." By junior and senior year she had dismissed any concern she might have had earlier regarding her social placement. "I figured they were going to like me for who I was or wasn't, and if they didn't it was their own fault. It's their own mistake because I know that I'm worth knowing." She credits work with intrinsic development of self. "It's given me a lot of responsibility and it's made me more mature, but if I didn't need the money I wouldn't work as much as I do...I've worked thirty, thirty-five [hours per week]. I think I got a quality education, but I chose to...I've learned how to manage my money...once you think about how hard you worked for that money you think more about what you're spending it on."

One of the most important discoveries for Jenny her senior year was her talent for leadership. In interview, she devoted some four pages to this topic. Leadership came through her involvement as president of Key Club. Much of her time was dedicated to this office. "...I had a work release hour, my first hour, which ended up being a Key Club hour. I still came to school most days at eight o'clock in the morning, did all my Key Club stuff during that hour, or tried to get most of my stuff done, and then went to school for the rest of the day." The "rest of her day" consisted of Biology II, Chemistry II, Spanish II, art and AP English Literature. "...a lot of seniors don't take many hard classes their senior year. They take like the one English that they need and a whole bunch of blow-off classes...whatever they can throw onto

a schedule because they need it. But I have...all of my classes except for...one is the required...but it's actual work that I am required to do work in."

Her approach to her English class is expressed with determination. "It was the only class that I had to have to graduate, so I definitely tried harder in it than the rest of my classes even though you may not have been able to tell. My other classes were somewhat difficult, but AP was my challenge for the year. Up until, I guess pre-AP, but really up to this year, English has always been a class that I could fly through without even trying too hard to get an A. This year I realized that no matter how well you think you know something, you can always know more. So I guess the meaning I make of AP is just because I'm good at something doesn't mean I know everything I should know about it. I've always been good at English, and at first, this year, when I wasn't so good at it anymore, I seriously thought about switching to regular English IV. I'm glad I didn't though. AP Lit. showed me that sometimes it's okay not to know everything so long as you're willing to learn more.

Through her English class she also learned something about herself in relation to the behavior of those around her. "I think English...I just learned for one thing that I can't slack just because that's what everybody thinks should be happening...that if there's work that needs to be done, that no matter what, I need to do it. I've realized in English how bad of a procrastinator I am and how bad I need to fix that." She linked her reading of Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* with her own development and maturity as an individual this year. "I've learned that there are some things maybe I

should apply my new theory to, like literature...like maybe I should try to look past some things, but I know that's going to be hard for me because I hated that book. But now that I've realized all this stuff about what people put up a front, maybe I just wanted it to be a certain thing. Maybe I learned I need to think more about the value of the book before I decide..."

Jenny's experience reveals three core themes: 1) frustration with time management/procrastination; 2) a sense of preparedness for the future from employment and her English class; and 3) satisfaction that she took a harder schedule of classes her senior year.

Composite Textural Description

Mandatory attendance for employed seniors who only need English to graduate creates frustrations with their overall educational process and personal lives. In turn, their perceived gains have little to do with academic life. Participants admit that socialization is a bonus for all day school; readily, this is one of the few perceived benefits. Only two of seven participants neglected to emphasize how important it is to see friends on campus because having a job after school diminishes evening and nighttime opportunities for socialization.

Though they frequently mention their school days as providing them with additional learning, the specifics of this knowledge often seem vague. "Life lessons" is a phrase often used to indicate value from a class in the absence of any concrete

subject knowledge. In general, electives are described as pointless and a waste of time, except in only a few instances; furthermore, the apathy created by the ease of the rest of the day negatively affects their interest in the one required class, English. It becomes difficult to respond adequately to a core class's expectations when the others are academically unchallenging and require no work outside of the class itself. This is particularly true for those participants who did not schedule a senior year of more difficult classes; however, even participants who tried to enroll in more strenuous courses were frustrated with classmates who undermined instruction by creating discipline problems or who tempted them to adopt their same "blow-off" attitudes. Only two participants used the descriptor of feeling overwhelmed in explaining their inability to meet assignment deadlines; the others indicated that there simply was no time for homework such as reading assigned novels for English and attributed this to employment demands, not the rigors of their school schedule. Overall, participants found the day a misuse of time that could have been better spent working more hours at their jobs, completing personal errands and activities, reading, or pursuing college credit. Second to socialization, all participants verbalized the year as an opportunity to flesh out their future plans, whether they involve more employment, higher education, or both.

Participants are quick to acknowledge the stress, anxiety, and worry employment generates for them. Health issues surface such as sleeping disorders, staring at the ceiling unable to fall asleep, falling asleep during class, and falling

asleep while attempting to complete assignments during late night or early morning hours. They report erratic eating schedules and diets of fast-food snacks. As a result, one participant recounted numerous illnesses during the year caused by a compromised immune system.

In addition to frustration with a lifestyle they perceive as unhealthy, they also realize the sacrifices employment asks of them educationally. Procrastination in their English class means falling behind in reading novels and writing papers. One participant tells of staying up until four each morning to complete a research paper. Despite goal setting to prevent the repetition with the next novel or essay, students are unable to correct their behaviors. They are unable to continue self-guided enrichment activities such as compiling their own vocabulary lists from class readings or giving additional consideration to assignments not fully comprehended in class. Little study occurs once they leave the high school building.

All participants lament the loss of time with family and friends. In some cases this extends to participation in sports they once enjoyed under the direction of coaches they admire. By senior year they were working too many hours. Getting time off is difficult; most forego senior activities and family gatherings.

Yet despite these limitations, all participants agree that employment provides a plethora of opportunities for personal growth. They enjoy the recognition they receive from bosses and fellow workers as well as the inward acceptance of themselves as being more mature than their non-working peers. They attribute their personal

interactions with the public, fellow employees, and superiors as providing them with respect for others, a sense of belonging, coping skills when encountering disgruntled individuals, self discipline, and self control. They learn to overcome shyness by talking with strangers. They are aware of others whose circumstances are less fortunate than their own. Their self image benefits from the feeling that they are industrious rather than lazy. They learn to be punctual. They realize they cannot run from unpleasant situations and people.

The most obvious reward from employment is financial gain. All participants cite that understanding money's worth and how many hours it takes to pay for an item shapes them in positive ways. One participant used the analogy of beer for a party or gasoline for the car. Gas is more important. They enjoy the feeling of financial independence; some view this as also reducing their parents' money concerns while simultaneously weaning themselves from a dependent relationship that will one day end anyway. Some even find friends at work. All participants prefer to associate with peers who also work and share their values of responsibility and maturity.

Similarly, participants acknowledge personal growth through their one core course and requirement for graduation, English. Out of necessity, they learn the value of peer networking and organizational skills. They speak of accountability in that grades must be earned and assignments finished completely, not half way. Some link the higher expectations of the class with preparing them for expectations on the job. Others note the improved communication they experience in expressing themselves

outside the classroom as well as the confidence gained expressing themselves before peers. They have a better understanding of themselves as learners; they accept that they cannot know everything, yet they wish to learn more. They set goals and persevere.

Academically they stress vocabulary growth through study and reading novels as an asset that transcends the classroom. All participants feel their understanding of the research writing process will aide them in college. They allude to study strategies such as context clues and mnemonic devices as helpful tools to be used again next year. Several participants found the language usage activities in class to transfer to their employment or world beyond school. In all cases they indicated improvement as readers, writers, and thinkers.

The next chapter presents the individual structural descriptions and resulting composite structural description.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION: STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTIONS

“Since I did not stop to definitively verify the students’ self-portrait, I must wonder whether I assembled a group of students who made a salubrious self-assessment for my benefit. Does it belie how students actually evaluate their own capabilities and intentions? My interpretation will differ depending on the extent to which I accept or reject what I am told. To be sure, I am as careful as I know how to be about calculating the degree of trust I should attach to what I hear. Since carefulness and certainty are not perfectly correlated, interpretation is a somewhat tenuous process.” (Alan Peshkin, 2000, “The Nature of Interpretation in Qualitative Research” p. 6)

Structural descriptions are different from textural descriptions in that they look underneath what exists, underneath the “what it is” that the participants are describing. In textural descriptions, we have what the participants are thinking, feeling. In structural descriptions the researcher tries to understand the supports (the structure, foundation) of their “what it is.” What follows are the structural descriptions of the seven participants.

Sarah: Structural Description

The structures that comprise Sarah's experience with school and work are evidenced in her priorities and expectations. In tracing her early learning experiences, she described herself as an average reader and a strong writer. Her mother read to Sarah while she was still in the womb and she entered elementary school feeling more prepared than many of her peers, who unlike Sarah, attended day care and received less one-on-one educational instruction and nurturing. But by sixth grade, reading had become a chore. By high school she was fully aware that her mind was "wandering" and unless she were presented with material that truly interested her, she would simply give up and daydream or talk to friends in class. As a sophomore she worked about 30 hours over 5 days per week at two jobs, "My junior year I worked over 30 hours as well. This year I work 21 hours; I only have one job this year. I didn't actually need a car [referring to her reason for working so many hours]; I've always wanted that kind of car [Mustang GT in OU crimson red] since I was little. I drove my mom's minivan to school; we had plenty of vehicles." In reflection she states that she shouldn't have been that "picky" and that as the only girl in the family, the daughter her parents prayed for, she might be "spoiled." With Sarah, "Everything has to be a certain way. I just am very---I like material things." Typical of adolescence, it matters to her what others think. And without surprise, it is noteworthy that she expressed a frustration with all day school attendance hampering her earning power before she acknowledged the day as an avenue for socialization, and finally as an opportunity for additional learning.

Her interview transcripts reveal a young woman who is aware of what her priorities should be, yet there exists an inability to act upon them. The arrival of her own daughter has made school even more viable as an outlet for socialization. She is not able to “hang out with friends” after work the way she once did. She still prefers to visit during free moments of class time when others are either completing assignments or are able to chat while they work. She tells herself she will finish her homework later that night, but there are other distractions such as the noise of foster children in the home or the care of her daughter. She would like for school work to be a priority; but in reality, it simply isn’t. Instead, school time functions as a time to rest and collect her thoughts so she can be prepared for the demands placed on her after school.

One of her strongest motivations is to be as smart as her mother and her older brother. She admires her mother’s punctuality, organization, and general knowledge of “so many things.” Her brother made straight *A*’s in high school; this has frustrated her because no matter how much she has wanted to emulate him, something has always stood in her way---boredom, poor memory, fatigue, social distractions. Despite her failure to excel at her brother’s level these past four years, she is confident she will attend college and succeed in her goal. Though all family members have either attended college or vocational school after graduation, Sarah is determined to be the first in her family to complete a college degree program.

Sarah maintains that work enhances her life by preparing her for her future

world of work. English IV has provided confidence in her ability to edit and proof, the comfort to speak more freely before others without fear, skills to improve her memory, and an understanding of the research process---all of which will be useful in college. In addition, she is better able to assist her family, who is very important to her, with technology now that her mother is returning to college through on-line courses. Overall, Sarah indicates an awareness of what she has gained from her senior year. What is missing is the luxury of time, time to reflect and assess. On several occasions during interviewing, she was not able to answer *why* questions that spontaneously arose during conversation. Often she would repeat the question to herself as if she genuinely were seeking an answer to a mystery she was startled by, yet found intriguing. In short, her school days are filled with social drama, her evenings with work, and her nights with her daughter. That leaves little time for Sarah to spend on herself, to spend on the homework/reading/learning that it would take for her to achieve the academic goals she desires.

Rocky: Structural Description

Everything that impacts Rocky's world is in some way driven by time. The faster, the better. The structures within his experience of work and school are all bound by the element of time.

Rocky began his school experience as a youngster who read signs on the way to school with his grandfather, and practiced spelling them, but he doesn't think he

could read before he went to school. His later taste in reading, not surprisingly, centered around the outdoors---hunting stories, horses, dogs, survival; he freely admits that if the topic doesn't interest him, his mind wanders. Encouragement from his mother to read more and his grandfather's admonition to pay attention in English have helped him to achieve academic success in English IV when the subject matter and reading selections were not his fancy. This ability to remain focused originates from a strong work ethic where getting the job done, regardless of distaste, is a family tradition.

Up until his senior year, when he began to go out some on week nights and weekends, school was his only avenue for socialization. Even at his church on Sunday, there were few young people his age in attendance. He would like for friends to fill half his time; but in reality, he knows they only occupy about a fourth. The majority of time is spent with family, whose importance is premium to him, combined with the endless chores and attention necessary for maintaining a ranch. He will become a third generation rancher, not because he loves the farm but because, "I kind of feel tied to it like I have to keep it running. I know that. I mean because my grandpa's worked hard and it's all established. It's all right there. It's worth something." From an early age, the farm has been a priority. School is secondary in importance and mostly valued as a social outlet. The one area that matters is communication. His interview is peppered with references to speaking before others and valuing language, listening to a teacher who speaks concisely and effectively

without sounding grandiose. These are the skills Rocky admires. His desire is to uphold the work ethic his father and grandfather have laid as example, while also presenting himself as an articulate speaker. Not one for wordiness and wasting time, Rocky's brevity in interviewing is indicative of his preferences---he would rather be at the farm. "Well, I don't like to sit around and have somebody tell me a long, long, thing about something that you can explain pretty quick. I'm short-winded."

Bobby: Structural Description

The structures underlying Bobby's experience center around dissatisfaction with elements beyond his control. As an early learner he was not happy with his initial reading experiences in elementary school. "We had telephones and stuff and I thought reading was obsolete." At first he had no desire to learn to read and doing so was "very unenjoyable." Later, after discovering Stephen King in the fourth grade, he became more engaged with the "real fear" and more challenging vocabulary he found between King's pages. "It wasn't so bossy and 'the boat is red.'" His frustration with early reading lay in the length of time he was forced by teachers to stay on simple sentences that did not make sense to him because he did not perceive them as part of a larger whole. Finally, an eighth grade social studies teacher, who was also a fan of King, made learning interesting for Bobby and it was no longer "the same public school blur" and "Oh, you read that right, now you get a piece of candy." This new love of reading transferred to writing, which pleased his family until his parents

realized that he was “writing horror stories and Stephen King knockoffs.”

He began working alongside his dad in their construction business when he was only seven. By age 16 he was making nine dollars an hour. However, setbacks within the family business and the overall building slump have forced him to seek employment outside the once lucrative construction business. The downturn with the family business also created another frustration for Bobby. During the years when he could have qualified for OLAP, his family made too much money. He qualifies now in his senior year, but the cut-off year was tenth grade.

Bobby has increased his hours at Wal-Mart, despite his boredom with a mundane job that does not reward him with the fruit of his labor as construction did. He took pride in driving by buildings he and his father had constructed. “I’ve helped to build these amazing buildings and at Wal-Mart I’m making four dollars less an hour moving dog food.”

He took a light academic year, in part, because he felt the school had changed some of its courses from honors or AP to regular. As such, the motivation level dropped for him; the classes were not challenging. For the most part, his day was filled with electives that did little in the way of preparing him for the rigors of college study. He wonders if he’s lost his work ethic, though he self-corrects and says he doesn’t think that’s possible for him. He awaits his freshman year in college with quiet anxiety.

The only consistent challenge he experienced his senior year was his AP

English class, but it too suffered because of the demands on his time. “If I have a novel to read, my focus on that is completely hindered because I’ve got to go make money. I’ve got to stay employed. If you get fired in such a small town, they tell your previous boss, and say, well, this was the reason why he’s not working here anymore. So your next job choice is really spanked.” Not surprising, Bobby did not achieve college credit for his time in AP English. And time was critical. During this year’s drama production he spent many hours building sets and reading through scripts. A sacrifice regarding his English class, he also expressed dismay that his time on the production kept him out of his art class with a teacher he truly admires for both his professional knowledge and the wisdom he imparts to students. “So I don’t have any idea how to water-color, which I regret because that’s something I was really looking forward to.”

On the other hand, Bobby acknowledges some reward from his English class. He truly feels prepared for freshman composition and states he “read some amazing things.”

Overall, Bobby’s reflection upon his senior year indicates conflict. Though there were events that resulted in satisfaction and pride, the transcripts reveal a young man who also voiced a great many “disheartening” experiences.

Allie: Structural Description

The structures that support Allie’s internalization of her experience with

English, work, and all day school attendance illuminate conflicts and frustrations. She began in first grade with a strong desire to learn to read and an imagination that fueled her curiosity for the written word. Her recollections of specific book titles such as the *Child Called It* series provided her with a window to a world that was the opposite of the safe, caring environment she knew. She “looked forward” to her mother reading to her and “couldn’t go to bed” without a story first. The home preparation resulted in little effort required at school; by then reading just came naturally. Encouraged by her parents to learn as much as possible and always do her best, Allie spent much of her time after school reading and did not have a television in her room until her senior year.

Her transcripts reveal a young woman whom she considers to be responsible and respectful. Yet, her comments suggest frustration regarding procrastination and over-socialization when she “could have read more in-depth and I could have gotten more out of it that way, but that just goes back to where is my time. I hardly have any time for anything, and I don’t need this on top of it when she’s giving me everything I need in class. So if I could have made more time...if I would just not gone out every night with my friends, I would have been a lot better off too.” Here Allie accepts the blame for her not getting all she could from her science classes; yet other transcriptions note her frustration not with herself, but with her teacher for not being able to control students who undermined the class environment and prevented her instructor from teaching. In which case, it would have been necessary for Allie to

make up the lost instruction at home through independent study. For all of her parents' attention to curfews and consistent dialogue regarding the value of an education, Allie did not always live up to their, or her own, expectations. In the end, the desire to spend time with her friends was stronger.

For Allie, the decision to take harder courses did not always result in success. She expressed regret that much of her class time was "pointless." As an example, "she'll [her science teacher] say it's problem 15 on this page and I pay attention, for the most part in that class, and she'll be going over the problem and one of the kids will be like what...what are we doing...what's this? And that would get on my nerves." Not shy with individuals she's known for years, Allie would reprimand the student for the behavior. However, when it comes to speaking before adults and teachers, Allie is more guarded in her responses. It matters to her what adults think of her; with people her age, she feels she can speak firmly and peer pressure holds no power over her thinking and decision-making.

Though she took steps to manage her time, such as working only 15 hours per week and relinquishing basketball her senior year, time management was still a problem. Despite her maturity and ability to resist peer pressure regarding drinking, all it took to break her down and take her away from studies was an invitation to the movies. "I value time with people around me and with my friends too. Like I wouldn't do my school work just so I could go hang out with my friends...there's some times that I slack off, and I did more this year than I ever have. I'd say I can

finish reading that book later that night and then I would get home and I'd fall asleep trying."

One of the highlights of her senior year was cementing her plans for the future. By working in a bank, she determined that finance was not what she wanted to do the rest of her life. Job shadowing in a pharmacy changed her view and made the all day attendance requirement easier to reconcile, despite the resulting disappointments. For Allie, a long-term commitment toward doing her best somewhat carried her through the year. She relates that her AP English class prepared her for college; however, its lesson in illustrating the value of independent study came too late to serve her during the school year.

In summary, the knowledge of self that Allie presented in transcript statements did not always support the experiences she described. In comparison to other students, she is aware of the efforts she executed; it is her own expectations of herself that hold the most frustration for her.

Eric: Structural Description

The structure underlying Eric's internalization of employment and mandatory school attendance, while only needing English IV to graduate, suggests a downward spiral. He refers to preschool as "the thing that got me going." He began his learning process with confidence, "I was actually smarter than 90% of my friends" and joined the academic team in intermediate school; however, low scores in math forced him

out.

Though Eric doesn't "have time" for reading anymore, through fifth grade he was in the top ten percent of accelerated readers. "...I read a lot of animal books, and I always thought it would be cool to change into an animal. So I would relate myself to characters; it became an actual thing to me." Writing was more difficult, particularly by seventh and eighth grade, and his grades dropped "because we were supposed to write in a journal and I couldn't write anything. I couldn't force myself to fake it." He also links this time period with the death of an uncle who was "really good" to him. "I couldn't say what I wanted to say about him or how his death affected me, or how I felt about it."

The desire to improve his grades made it possible for him to correct his writing deficiency in later years. By ninth grade he had made more friends and attributes his new-found ability for self-expression as an outgrowth of talking "more freely among them. If I could talk about it, I could write it down." Finding a peer group had previously been difficult because Eric was "kind of seen as an outcast" at school; he was not appreciated as a "good hearted person" by "bullies picking on kids who were disabled or mentally challenged" and when he stood up for those students "their attention [the bullies'] would turn to me."

Despite the progress he made with his writing and peer group, one of the shadows hanging over his high school experience stems from an event that occurred during his freshman year when a teacher "lost" several papers belonging to him and to

a number of male classmates. As a result, he failed English I and had to go to summer school. He expresses the episode as a loss of both trust and self-esteem. “My life was affected because to me teachers are supposed to be people you can talk to, who you can trust, who care about you as a person, as an individual. By doing that [losing his papers], I was kind of lost. I lost my faith in teachers, somewhat, because I was criticized along with many other students that year. I was very disappointed in myself because I thought that I could be good enough for what I thought she wanted.” His statement defines the value he places on education; success at school has always been important to Eric because his father “didn’t graduate high school and my mom didn’t go to college.”

He credits his mother with his caring nature because to him she is “the most caring person in the world that I know.” By age four, Eric’s parents had been divorced twice and his mother would “go to work in the middle of the night” and then come home and get her two children ready for school. Her influence can be seen in the thoughtfulness he takes with his writing. “Whatever I write has to mean something to me. I can’t just slop it down. Like, you have the pencil pushers who just write whatever. They don’t think about it. They don’t relate themselves to what they’re writing or compare or anything...”

Family and money are important to Eric; he began working at 16 because “of course, money. I wanted to go to Ada a lot to watch movies with my friends, and to just hang out with my family, buy my family dinner every once in a while and without

a job you can't do that." Eric's predilection to put himself behind others is evidenced in his reason for not receiving the financial aid he qualified for through the Oklahoma Higher Learning Advanced Program. He has no current plans for college. "It was pretty much a full ride to wherever I wanted, but I thought if I'm going to go and not like it, and not do anything with that money, why not just save that money for someone else who's gonna go and enjoy it and get something out of it." Despite his mother's hope that he would attend college and not have to work as hard as she has, he is still "...pretty much set on not going. Maybe someday down the line I'll go, but now going thirteen years straight makes me apathetic toward it." This decision came to him during his senior year, when he stopped telling his family "what they wanted to hear." Earlier he had thought about "going into psychology...it's eight years so everybody gets their bachelor's, and just that doesn't count for much. It just comes back to the fact of me not wanting to go to school for another 4-8 years."

Overall, Eric's story of his educational experience points toward a negative school environment which has influenced his decision to forego college. His transcripts reveal adjectives such as *pointless*, *apathetic*, *retarded*, *waste of time*, and *ignorant* when he describes his hours at school. Yet, equally as frequently, he will describe himself as "not looking down on people" or "not judging other people." He evaluates himself as having a strong work ethic as evidenced by his "trying to make the grade, just trying to make a good grade on whatever I was doing or trying to better myself. By working hard and doing what people ask of me." He also acknowledges

the link between lessons learned at school and performance on the job in terms of social skills and respect, “People who are higher than you, like a manager or whatever, you know that attitude ‘the customer is always right,’---self control. It’s when people get mad you want to tell them to get out of your store. I learned that from teachers---you got rowdy little kids, but you can’t say ‘leave’ or ‘shut-up.’” In Eric’s story there is little to applaud regarding his senior year; he was challenged and engaged for only one hour out of six each day. When asked toward the end of one interview if his story is a happy story, he replied: “It’s kind of intermediate, like in the middle. Some days are better than others. And some days you want to jump off a cliff.” His transcripts support his own assessment.

Chloe: Structural Description

Chloe’s accommodation of learning under mandatory school attendance indicates a routine of constant demand. Seldom is a moment unaccounted for. This can be traced even to her early years of literacy. “I was about three and reading was an escape from life, escape from the fact that my father had left me when I was two, that my family was dysfunctional, and it help me get away from what was happening in my family and me feeling like a failure.” She read fairy tales and love stories as a child and began writing poetry at age 12. Again, she describes her writing as escape. “It helped me write my feelings and express without shame, without guilt, without knowledge of hurting other people’s feelings...without feeling embarrassment about

how or why I felt that way. My poetry proved to be an escape from judgment from my family.” At school, teachers encouraged her writing and the sharing of her poetry with others. At one time she even wanted to be an English teacher so she could “teach others about escape.” Her career decision became clear to her during senior year. “I wanted to be a cop. I want to be a detective. And I went through the military because I knew that in order to get into the FBI I’m going to have to have a good background.” She is proud of her ability to graduate high school and will be the first in her family to graduate from college.

She began working fast food when she was 16 during her sophomore year; she was working about 25 hours a week. She worked 40 to 50 hours a week during her senior year, but finally found a job in a convenience store that was less hectic and would permit her siblings to visit her on the job. She also could occasionally squeeze in some homework during free minutes. In addition to work and school, she also had obligations with her Army recruiter and had to juggle her schedule to attend meetings when he called, often on short notice. Her schedule did not provide her with time for her family, her friends, nor her homework.

When interviewed about the academic benefits of her senior year, she often refers to “life lessons” as having more impact on her than actual subject content. She acknowledges that her English class prepared her for college, but often found dissatisfaction with public education in general. Her transcripts reveal that her sister’s home schooling Becca books series teaches more than do public education textbooks.

She also faults public education with influencing her brother to drop out of school in tenth grade and not learn to read until he was in jail at age 19.

Overall, Chloe expressed an appreciation for learning throughout her transcripts. However, the hours she devoted to employment clearly interfered with the education she actually received. Her approach to English resulted in both success and failure. While her transcripts indicate that she feels prepared for college English, she scored a 2 on her AP exam, which negates college credit for Composition I.

Jenny: Structural Description

Jenny's approach to learning hinges upon a strong internal drive fueled by a desire for achievement; she is a self-made person. She recounts her early memory of learning to read with ironic surprise because "my mom, who isn't exactly very literate, is the one who taught me to read." In kindergarten she was quickly "traded up" to the group who was already reading and was "smart." She became a source of pride for her parents who enjoyed "bragging" about their daughter's good grades in school. "Maybe that was their way of reassuring themselves that they were doing a great job, though I'm not so sure they were doing a great job."

By second or third grade she was writing poetry and still has the first poem she ever wrote, which was about the death of her younger brother; she was three, he was one. "...whenever I got upset about something I'd write instead of like getting angry and throwing a fit." Not surprisingly, her first aspiration in life was to be a writer. An

avid reader as a young person, she took books to bed with her at night and read under the covers with a flashlight. As soon as she finished one, she had another in hand to begin. Reading was an escape from her relationship with her parents that has “never been good.” However, today she seldom has time for reading anything unless it is assigned in school.

She credits an ACT score of 36 on reading and a 35 on English with the many years she raced through reading stacks at public and school libraries. She builds her vocabulary by keeping lists during the reading of novels. “With *Crime and Punishment*, I had to stop looking them up because I got so far behind with Key Club and everything else.” Jenny takes on more duties and responsibilities than she actually has time for; though she accomplishes her goals, to a degree, she readily admits a problem with procrastination that surprises her and seems out of character. Her self-proclaimed procrastination is a natural outgrowth of having more demands on her time than she actually has time to meet.

She is a self-disciplined person. Though she hated Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*, which was required reading in her English class, she hates “not finishing books” and got “through it with energy drinks” that helped her stay focused. Determination gets her through her schedule of school and work. Sleep is a luxury. The only open hours she has each day are between three and five. She works until 10:30 each night. During her sophomore year of work, she survived on only three or four hours of sleep each night. “If I got any more I was dead the next day.” By end of

that year, her relationship with her parents had deteriorated to the point of moving out and living with her grandparents. “It didn’t matter how many hours of sleep I had, I was sleeping through almost every class I had the last nine weeks of my sophomore year.”

Money is critical because Jenny refuses to ask for help from her grandparents. Her parents can barely take care of themselves. She does not own a car; her grandfather provides transportation for her. She works to buy essential things she needs: food, activity expenses for Key Club and other extracurricular costs, clothes, a lap top computer (without internet) and entertainment. Though it is hard, she acknowledges that she would rather endure the stress of employment and school and be responsible than enjoy the easy life of her peers who know nothing about how many employment hours it takes to acquire the material possessions they take for granted. Her peer group is mostly older than the students at school; just a trip to the movies equates to “two days of work probably because I only get about four and a half hours, so I tend to hang out with people who know more about that than most of the kids around here.” She was not able to attend any football games her senior year, which is the single-largest event in her small hometown. Jenny is on task most of the time, either at her job or in her duties at school. Homework requires more loss of sleep, if it occurs at all. Her success in English can be attributed to the foundation she arrived with. Unlike many of her classmates, she actually read the assigned novels. This was evident by her score of five on the AP exam, resulting in college credit for

both freshman Composition I and II at Oklahoma State this fall. In addition, she attended class regularly and gleaned meaning through participation.

Jenny's senior year provided her with other successes as well. She discovered herself as a leader and graduated with honors, a lifelong goal. In essence, she felt she had proven herself to her community and peers---she had shown them what a "poor girl" can accomplish through hard work.

Composite Structural Description

Participants recognize senior English's potential for personal and academic growth; however, learning is thwarted by the realities of employment and mandatory school attendance. The end result is a bipolarity of experience whereby students perceive loss as gain. Giving and getting begin to resemble one another; and in the end, ambiguity results from the intermingling of idealized outcomes and lived-through realities.

They want to earn money, and they want to learn. They want to go to work, and they want to go to school. They want a good grade in English, and they want to graduate. However, reconciling their wishes with the time-labored effort required to satisfy those goals becomes problematic. Whether consciously or not, they set themselves up for failure; it is simply not possible to succeed completely when wearing three different hats at once. And because they are both young and old at the same time, disappointments in their actual work-school lives are vaguely noted and

duly forgotten. Before they have time to process their emotions, the alarm sounds and they are late or early for somewhere.

It's a mad dash driving to and fro, and school is the setting where the pace is least demanding. The world of work offers more challenges than a day at school. It pales in comparison to the frenzy of rush hour at a fast food window, or the steady stream of customers before the bank closes. It is a "sit and wait" experience while work is a "move, move, don't think" or a "think, think, get it right" zone, depending upon whether we are sacking fries or balancing the bank drawer. Either way, we are important. Somebody, somewhere, is affected by what we do or don't deliver. Our decisions, our performance extend beyond ourselves; we are part of "the real world."

Perhaps our work environment moves a bit slower where we don't touch food or money. We stock the shelves. Over and over and over. We envision that we'll have energy for English when we leave at night, since stacking dog food isn't really hard work at all, well not physically anyway. But when we get off we're hungry, and after we eat we're sleepy, and then we go to bed. We haven't been very stimulated throughout the day, so we turn in the darkness, and toss without rest. Our body isn't truly tired, but our mind is definitely numb. Tomorrow will be better, but school is boring again. English comes and we aren't prepared---not really, not enough to enjoy the humor in a stream of consciousness internal monologue. We only know enough to find an example of one in the chapter. At least we get paid for working.

We might work in customer relations. We're ambitious; we're independent.

We can deal with people who are upset or unhappy. Of course we're good at that; we've been dealing with such since we were children. When we leave the job, we take that determination home with us and use it to read *The Sound and the Fury*. The energy drinks keep us focused, but when we try to fall asleep we stare at the ceiling. We're used to this; if that's what it takes to maintain employment and succeed in English, we can do it. When the year ends, our prevailing emotion is *relief*.

Sometimes we wise up and leave the fast-food business after learning its stressful lessons. We take a job where there is no rush, but we end up working more hours. The result is the same; we're too tired for school again. But at work we see people whose lives once looked like ours. We sell pick-a-pack items to people who are poor and give free things away to those who have no money. We could have discovered this same pathos in Thomas Hardy's *Tess*, but we didn't have time to read it; even though we love to read, and reading for us is escape.

In some cases, we've been dealing with frustrations at school for so long that by the time we figure out how to study better, the final year is over. Overall, our employment lives have produced more tangible results than our academic ones. We own the car of our dreams and have a job that intersects nicely with other demands on our time, though these do not include English. Our brains are packed with anticipated errands to run; school is a comfortable place for visiting with friends and organizing our to-do lists. We would like to pay more attention, but there isn't any space left. If only we could have come to this knowledge earlier, like in sophomore year, but that

was the year we turned 16 and got our first job. Where does time go?

If we're lucky, we work for our own family. Leaving school and going to work doesn't feel like drudgery. We're vested in the land and the animals. They will become ours; we've known all our lives that school can't compare with outdoor freedom, and that breaking a horse is much more exciting than Shakespeare's sonnets. We don't make too much of this, however; our family has told us over and over how important it is to respect the power of education. And we do. No assignment goes incomplete; we take no test without preparation. When it comes to attitude and approach, English and electives and calving are all the same. One does what has to be done, but never without a level of care. There's too much work ahead of us for complaints, and time is precious. We don't have problems with sleeping or eating. Our only concern is a lack of time for socialization, and school helps to ease that worry.

Of interest to me, as researcher, is the pronoun shift that occurs in this composite description. There was no conscious intent to do so, and flaw or not, I have elected to leave the language as it is.

Chapter Five continues with a narrative of the core themes and sub-themes that emerged in this study. It also contains the final synthesis and concluding thoughts.

CHAPTER FIVE

Synthesis and Conclusion

What can be done about what the researcher does not know and cannot learn? I judge what I have managed to learn to be useful or not, I judge where it can fit in my line of reasoning, and I judge what extent of qualification I must attach to what I believe I can conclude. (Alan Peshkin, 2000, “The Nature of Interpretation in Qualitative Research” p. 9)

This chapter begins with a second look at the themes that emerged from this study. The final textural-structural-synthesis follows. The picture created by these participants is then compared to earlier literature. In some cases their stories ran counter; in many cases they ran parallel. The chapter concludes with future implications and asserts that this research topic will continue to attract interest.

Revisiting Themes

The participants in this study were all employed, eighteen-year-old seniors who only needed English to graduate in a rural high school. They each had their own unique renditions of what it meant to them to be at school all day, need only one core course, and also meet the demands of employment; however, there were resounding commonalities as well. Their interviews were analyzed with the resulting descriptive

categories as themes: frustrations, values, personal growth/identity of self, and academic growth. These themes were explored under all three aspects of the research question: How do employed, rural seniors approach learning in English, their only required course?

Perceived Frustrations and Values: Mandatory Attendance

Their perceived frustrations with mandatory attendance were, for the most part, unanimous; however, their sources of frustration varied from participant to participant. Reasons given for frustrations were that the time could be better spent either working more hours to increase their paychecks, or taking college courses to get an experience of collegiate life before they actually became college freshmen. Adjectives such as *ignorant*, *ridiculous*, *rut*, *trivial*, and *monotonous* convey the degree to which many participants felt stymied by their situation.

Most participants found minimal value in the electives they were enrolled in. They cited scant instruction at the start and ending of the school year, teachers who do not challenge students enough nor interact with them, and lessons that come straight from the book requiring no complex thinking as evidence of elective courses failing to meet their educational needs. What was most disturbing was the apathy and boredom their misspent time created, particularly when it came to English, the one class all participants agreed was their only challenge of the day. Though they did not view that class as a “blow off,” their energies they brought to it and the resulting consequences revealed novels that were never read and papers that were written under rushed, at

best, circumstances. Even when students began their own individual and independent English study at home, as enhancement of time in class, they aborted these plans because of lack of time. Anything beyond the minimum requirements of course success was not approached, despite good intent.

When participants expressed feelings of being overwhelmed, horizons indicated that, overall, they were not a result of too many outside assignments. In most classes, there seemed to be very little required of them once the bell rang. The exception was English; and again, the laxity of the rest of the daily schedules made the workload more frustrating for them; honest confessions of procrastination abounded. Though they admitted that they tried harder in English because it was the one class they needed for graduation, they also were equally candid about not spending as much time as they should have on that class.

In an attempt to note the value of being at school all day, increased learning seemed to be one of the justifications. This alerted the researcher to ponder the authentic value of this learning. Responses were often non-specific or random when questioned to elucidate this increased learning. They learned how to “care for a child” or “find the volume of a bale of hay.” Many were energetic and animated as they recounted these reflections, but their transcriptions clearly revealed a consistent boredom with their days when taken as a whole. They were content that they were being “prepared for the real world” by all day attendance, but the question remains as to whether that should be interpreted as optimism or complacency. Responses such as

“begging lunch to come early” cannot be dismissed. Their accounts indicate that the days were difficult to get through, except for one aspect. By far the most commonly cited value of mandatory attendance was the opportunity for socialization.

Socialization was a recurring priority for participants. Only two participants did not overtly laud the value of seeing friends at school, yet their transcriptions were sprinkled with statements indicating otherwise. Clearly, for students who work, school time provides more opportunity to socialize than after school, where hours are filled with employment and the recovery of it when they return home late at night.

All participants did benefit, whether through a school related activity or otherwise, in growing nearer to pinpointing future goals. Some changed their ideas about future college majors; Eric simply stopped all plans for college. In the latter case, apathy was again one of the reasons cited. He was too bored with school to consider higher education and another four years of classes. It should be noted that lack of college funding was not an issue for the participant.

Two participants stated they felt they received a quality education through mandatory attendance, but these were students who had taken tougher loads. Yet they too revealed frustrations; they were in classes where the majority of other students were “not interested in learning.”

The descriptions of their days at school indicate that mandatory attendance, for these seven participants, failed in its educational efforts. It succeeds, however, in its role as an outlet for socialization.

Perceived Frustrations and Identity of Self through Employment

Despite the many gains participants shared as benefits of being employed, compromises were large. Illnesses, sleep disorders, missed meals, fast food late at night, anxiety, and the like were reported by all participants. Their schedules of balancing work and school did not permit proper health care. Jenny, for example, accounted her improved health during the latter half of her senior year to the drinking of more water. Prior to this discovery, she had been sick for most of her first semester with colds and viral infections. Fatigue was repeatedly mentioned by all participants.

Education, as a priority, does not suddenly fall behind employment; participants reveal that it is not only a gradual process, but also a surprising one. This is due in part to the ease with which participants are able to add more and more hours on the job and still function at school. Once they discover that they can work twenty hours and survive, the lure of increased pay persuades them to commit another five or ten hours per week to their employer. Eventually, the imbalance creates observable performance issues at school. As Bobby expressed it, “The more I work, the more my grade slips little by little in English; I finished this year with a 79 which is the lowest I had all year.” At the start of the school year, he was willing to expend whatever it took to earn an *A* in his AP Literature and Composition class. The result was a *C*. Chloe, at one point during second semester reported working as many as 58 hours in a week. She too finished the semester with a *C*; her goal had been much higher.

Regrets such as putting English reading assignments behind work, sports, and friends were consistent. In true numbering order, their priority list begins with employment and ends with English. Participants were cognizant of the misplaced order, but seemed helpless to alter it. Several talked at length regarding the attempts they would make to put their studies first, but their routines never changed; they found themselves repeating the same habits of “falling behind” or “falling asleep.” The one area all participants agreed upon was English class attendance. Though work fatigue sometimes caused them to sleep-in and miss other classes, they “dragged” themselves to English because they needed it for graduation.

Participants noted missed senior activities, attending sporting events at school, and spending time with family as disadvantages to employment. Asking for time off, Sarah commented, was like “pulling teeth.” Allie, after having read over the transcript of her first interview where she described her mother instilling a love of books in her and how dedicated her mother had been about reading to her as a youngster commented, “I wish I would have more time now because I miss those days almost where I did have more time to just relax and not worry about anything around me. Watch TV, get on the computer, sit down and just read a book. Like going through that [the transcript] I remember what it was like and I remember those feelings and I almost wish I had more time to do that again. But...”

What followed was a very long pause at which time she returned to describing how her elementary teachers encouraged her to do her best. In the first interview,

Allie had reflected on the experience of learning to read as such: “Around first grade is when I really wanted to start reading...I would go through the book and make up my own story and eventually I got where I would ask her [referring to her mother] ‘what does this word mean’...I just wanted to read books.” By high school she had stopped all reading for pleasure; there just wasn’t enough time.

In many instances the sense of “something lost” manifested itself during interviews as lengthy silences. Sometimes with female participants eyes became watery. Voices cracked. In studying the context of comments that insinuated loss, it would be remiss to discount those instances as simple moments of parent separation associated with graduation. Sometimes “loss” was expressed overtly as uncertain fear as in Bobby’s statement, “...just going mad because I’m scared I’m going to lose something in this year; because my work ethic [referring to English, not Wal-mart] has been completely kicked in the face.”

For all that was sacrificed, what participants noted as rewarding occupied a larger territory. Though participants frequently referred to “bad days” when customers were annoying or rude, those encounters were offset by the praise they received from employers. Likewise, they took pride in relating how it is a “real world” experience to be faced with the disgruntled public. They were grateful to have acquired the coping skills to handle such situations. Participants understood that it was a necessary skill because otherwise, they would have to quit their jobs. This was not a realistic option. Jenny’s response represents all of the participants: “...you have to go weeks without

pay and finding another one... You're going to deal with it."

Enhanced understanding of others (respect, appreciation, knowledge of an underprivileged public, a window into others' lives) came to light through the world of work. Participants described themselves as "more mature" than peers who did not work. For Bobby it means, "...it's something everyone should go through because even just paying for your own gas---how many hours a week do you have to work if you're making just minimum wage to fill up each week?"

Participants relished the independence from others that resulted from employment. Feelings of self-reliance and the ability to lessen their parents' financial burdens were mentioned. Many pointed out that they gained an understanding of money that "they don't teach in school." They learned to be punctual and talk with ease to strangers. Peer groups became older and more diverse because of employment. Some even referred to their workplace superiors and co-workers in familial terms. In short, they realized that employment had shaped their personalities, had enriched their lives.

But the most important perception of growth was measured in dollars. Financial independence, even if couched in disclaimers, contributed somehow to all other benefits. Chloe, for instance, stated that she chose to work; yet her interview was laden with the word fatigue and references to lack of sleep. Dropping to an average of 30 hours a week, as opposed to over 40, seemed a much easier schedule to her. Twelve hour shifts were expressed as lucrative: "I can get in 25 hours in just two

days if I work Friday and Saturday.” Though some alluded to the practice of working to save money, when they accounted for where their paychecks actually went, savings were only somewhat addressed, if at all. In most cases “saving” referred to the eventual purchase of a laptop, better car, or another predetermined need.

Several participants offered their food bill as a motivator for making money. Because they spend so little time at home, eating family dinners is a rarity; they buy meals between stops. The only exception in this case was Rocky who worked on his family’s ranch. Clothes did not rank high on their list of motivations. They were much more likely to cite gasoline, entertainment, cell phones, or club dues. The circle was complete. They perceived employment as making them mature; and because they were mature, they spent wisely.

Perceived Personal and Academic Growth through English

Of interest to practitioners was the attention participants afforded discussion of the research paper process. Every participant pointed out the learning value of the assignment; many referenced this experience with phrases such as “last shot” indicating the senior year may be the first time they internalized the assignment’s importance. While titles of novels and plays that were read second semester were sought out but never recovered during interview, specifics of the research paper, which occurred during their first semester, easily came to mind.

Regardless of whether they were in English IV or Advanced Placement Literature and Composition, vocabulary development also was mentioned by every

participant as a valuable learning tool. Some referenced this through its transference beyond the classroom, while others noted that they were able to construct their own mnemonics as a method for remembering and studying in general. In other words, vocabulary meant something other than a brain stuffed with words. “Vocabulary” meant more enjoyable communication with others and increased comprehension away from school. It also meant a process which made other learning possible.

With the exception of Eric, who was the only participant who did not plan to attend college, all who were interviewed expressed confidence that they were prepared for college through their English class. Daily Language Practice was cited by all participants as building their confidence in both spoken and written language. For Allie, it meant that she was better able to send e-mails to superiors at her bank. In Sarah’s case, she indicated the daily ritual had freed her to speak up in class knowing that she need not fear not having the right answer. Eric cited it as a way to learn “at least” something every day.

Context clues were referred to not only as a way by which participants were aware of increasing their comprehension with class assignments, but also as a tool for taking tests such as the Advanced Placement exam. Relating concrete examples that came to mind readily, participants revealed that through English they had acquired several study strategies that would be used later in their educational pursuits. They also had come to understand themselves as learners (“it’s okay not to know everything”) and through “teaching others” had learned to “teach themselves.” The

value of small group had served them well in learning from others and in sharing their viewpoints. Only one participant, Rocky, had negative comments about small group; he valued large group discussion more and felt he had become better adept at expressing himself before others through this experience.

Accountability was another priority. Participants reported that it was necessary for them to actually complete assignments and meet expectations through the class. They found this often transferred to their world of employment where they had to meet specific guidelines. They learned not to “half-way” do assignments; they discovered that grades had to be earned.

For Advanced Placements participants, they were grateful to have been assigned some “amazing” novels they would never have read otherwise. Through this they learned self-discipline and more challenging vocabulary. They were forced to read passages multiple times to be prepared to dialogue with others in class; they became independent thinkers through close readings. They discovered the value of peer networking.

Overall, what emerged from their English class was the knowledge that they had acquired strategies and methodologies that they believed would be employed again and again. All felt they had been prepared for college. They had “bettered themselves.”

Textural-Structural Synthesis

Employment during the senior year while attending classes for a mandatory six

hours, yet only needing English for graduation, creates a unique experience of manipulated perception for the student. One finds herself or himself caught in conflicting responses to expectations and realities. The combined elements of employment, all day school attendance, and satisfying only for requirement for graduation (senior English) converge to place the individual in a position of tradeoffs and sacrifices. In short, the student wants it all but cannot have it. As a result, school becomes socialization, employment becomes the learning arena, and English class becomes the scapegoat.

Because the student wishes to remain employed once employment begins, he will accept the destructive aspects of his situation out of fear that if he quits, he may not be given another chance. His record will be tarnished and, especially in a small town, his options for another job will diminish or disappear completely. Thus, he tolerates whatever scheduling of work hours and job responsibilities his employer sets for him. He accepts fatigue, lost sleep, and a poor diet as occupational hazards. He views this as a lesson in maturity and character building. The job becomes his teacher; he learns to be prepared for “the real world.” Though somewhat exaggerated, the prisoner learns to love his captor. It feeds him, clothes him, and provides his identity as a responsible adult.

At school he shifts away from education and utilizes the school day as relief from the demands and drudgery of employment. Only the most energetic will attempt to fill their days with strenuous classes; the temptation to elect a softer schedule, one

that will make the employment hours less difficult, usually wins. And when students do seek what they anticipate as a challenging schedule (and these are in the minority), they must contend with a general senior population whose lack of academic interest sabotages teacher effectiveness and instructional gain. They sit in classes with students whose approach to chemistry is no different than that of an elective such as chorus. For students who take lighter schedules, school is socialization. The hours at work cut too deeply into the normal hours for “hanging out” and weekends are opportunities for even more clock hours. They are tired and sleepy from the night before; they clear their heads and relax during the school day.

English class, which they acknowledge as a priority, is regarded as a friendly intruder. It is consistently the only class which demands participation during the hour and additional study outside of class time. Despite their regrets of procrastination and mind wandering, they are unable to approach their only required class with the attention a core course deserves. It is the last to receive whatever time remains after employment and socialization constraints are met. They rationalize that English serves them well in spite of its last place position; however, its learning is diminished and this too is acknowledged. Attempts are made throughout the year to correct the habits of not finishing novels or staying up the night before a paper is due, but behavior never changes. They squeeze in English wherever and whenever they can. Behind friends and work, English becomes a source of either frustration or apathy; it hangs over them with deadlines and expectations, or it is buried under resentment and

resistance. Either way, they rely on its one hour each day to prepare them for college and provide them with personal growth. Compared to the rest of their days at school, they readily agree that it satisfies this goal.

Participants and Previous Research

Research that employment does not affect grades (Kablaou, 1992; D'Amico, 1985; Schoenhals, Tienda & Schneider, 1998; Winkler, Dewalt, Rhyne-Winkler, Dewalt, 1994) is not substantiated by these participants' stories. Though it may be said that for their electives, they were successful, all expressed concern that their English class grade was either lower than they wished or that it was difficult in trying to keep it at an acceptable level. They indicated that reduced study time was critical, supporting the work of Reaves (1992) and Warren (2002). Particularly this was true in Chloe's case who worked upward of 35 hours per week. More work intensity does result in less academic success, also found in Reaves and Warren.

Decreased enjoyment of school (except for the socialization factor) cited by Steinberg, Greenberger, Garduque, & McAuliffe (1985) and Shanahan & Flaherty (2001) is clearly evident in their voices.

That students who are less connected to school are more apt to find their identity in the workplace (Bachman, Safron, Sy, & Schulenberg, 2003) certainly runs parallel to this study as evidenced by the values they attached to the workplace. What is interesting is the dilemma presented by the precept. If students work intensely, isn't it likely they will be less connected to school? Further research might be noteworthy.

The evidence given by Safron, Schulenberg, Buchman (2001) that seniors who work are more involved in social activities such as dating and riding around is somewhat noticed in this study; however, the participants interviewed were more likely to express concern about filling their tanks than “driving around.” Winkler, Dewalt, Rhyne-Winkler, & Dewalt (1994) found that car ownership was a motivator for employment; this is true for most of the participants in this study.

Marsh (1991) pointed out the negative self concepts that occur after the sophomore year from the failures that arise from working too many hours. This was noted through several participants’ accountings of what they had “lost.”

That work negatively affects attendance (Barling, Rogers, & Kelloway, 1995) was not fully explored in this study regarding English class. Most all participants revealed that they tried not to miss their one required course for graduation. It was surprising that the study resulted so in favor of what students associated as gained from that class.

Implications for Further Study

One aspect this study did not consider is the student who does not work at all. My focus rested on those who were most on my mind, and I never considered enlarging my vision. Those who do not work at all, at the senior level, would account for a very small sample size. At any rate, it would be interesting to investigate their worlds of experience as well. Additionally, it would be enlightening to explore how

students who have few electives their senior year fare in their responses to their last chance to acquire skills taught in English. Of curiosity to me regarding this study is how these seven participants would respond to follow-up interviews a year later, when they have made more decisions about their futures and have had more time to reflect.

I anticipate more studies that focus on American consumerism and its impact on our students; however, how well our economy fares will be one of the best determiners of whether this occurs or not. From the increase in literature on employed students since 2000, that may or may not compare with what came from the 1980s, I am encouraged that this is a topic taken seriously. Evidence regarding the increased requirements for graduation around the country also indicates change. While it would be easy to focus (with opinions added) only on the government mandates that may be fueling this difference, these changes may also mark the end of English as the only core course for senior year. Overall, the students in this particular study, suffer throughout the day when English is the only requirement. And English class suffers too. It seems a shame to be content with a little learning, when there could be so much more.

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APPENDIX A

Sarah: Horizontalization

1. I should be interested in reading and learning, which I do enjoy learning new things, but...I don't know why, but I do get bored really easy and I picked up the reading problem, and of course, you've got all these things going on at school and you don't want to think about school work; it's like 'what's gonna happen after school' and at lunch and all that kind of thing. I think that tied into it [her failing interest in reading]; I should have been more focused. And wanting to read more to comprehend things better.
2. If somebody is talking about stuff and I'm more interested in that then I just tune them out and that's what teenagers do; if they're bored or something they don't want to listen to it, and so that's their problem; they should make themselves listen.
3. Even in *1984* I stopped [reading] after 19 pages. I just was not into that. I do love, well I don't *love*, but I do like love stories and kind of mysteries...say where someone was raped or something like that and they were trying to find out who the guy was and the whole teenager thing, where the guy breaks up with the girlfriend because of what so and so reasons...just those things but not anything like government control.
4. ...as far as writing, like term papers, I don't think anybody enjoys that.
5. There's two different...like I'm glad I'm here all day to see friends, but there's a

point to where I could be making a lot more money by just going to work and then leaving and coming to school for that one class [English]. And then going back to work. There's ups and downs to it. Of course I like to be here at school to see everybody, but that's the only thing...I don't have to be here for anything else, just that one class. It takes money out of my pocket but...

6. I get off work at six and so it's really hard [socialization after school]; it's not a hard job at all. Very good hours, unlike most people---they get off at one or two in the morning, those who work at Taco Mayo. Yeah, I have a chance to go and hang out, but I don't usually, taking care of Lexie (her infant daughter) and everything, so here's where I see everybody.

7. ...if I didn't go to all these classes I wouldn't learn all this stuff; I wouldn't have the opportunity to get the solutions manual to help me out for college for trig and biology and chemistry. You have to know all this stuff anyways. I'd rather come the full day because if I didn't, without these classes, I wouldn't have known anything.

8. I had good and bad days. On a good day I was sad that the day was over because I wouldn't see anybody until the next day. It wasn't a real big deal to me, but there was a dread to go to work. On bad days I was glad that day was over. But I was still mad about the work day because I knew I was going to be in a bad mood.

9. If at school I've had a bad day and somebody's made me mad, then I'll take it to work and I'll be mad that whole day and it's hard to wait on customers.

10. Working at the pharmacy has helped me to realize that I'm going to be doing that

every single day, trying to deal with people; if they get mad at me, I'm going to have to try to work with it.

11. It's not a big deal for me; I just try to get there in a hurry to have more time on my time card.

12. I just am very...I like material things. Everything has to be a certain way. I guess I'm spoiled.

13. ...going through four years of [high] school I was trying to get A's and B's...but I would get aggravated and frustrated; it kinda went down hill my sophomore year [when she started employment]. And I daydream for whatever reason, and if anybody is talking to me, I just stop. I guess a lot of things are on my mind, and so I start thinking about those instead of doing work...I can do, if I study, I can do really good. It's just wanting to. I'll have ten million things to do; it's hard to get focused with all that's on my mind.

14. I don't want to miss anything or leave out anything; I forget more things now than I've ever done. I'll write things---but sometimes I lose the paper, so I try to get it in my head, holding the list and going over it, trying to see it.

15. [In English] I don't think I ever got lost. Just mainly when you would read a book. If we were reading books that I wasn't interested in, I would wander off. We were usually doing something, but even if the worksheet bored me or whatever we were doing, I would just stop. I have to be organized, so if get bored in a class, then I'll use that time to organize myself. I shouldn't do that. School should be my first priority. I

just get bored really easily.

16. It [using school time to rest in order to meet other demands away from school] shouldn't be that way. I don't like it. I don't like that I do this. Others do it too. I'll see someone holding their pen on the paper, but it's not moving. They're just looking at it. These are students who work. I understand that...I just know a lot of people have other things to do besides school work. It's power lifting or working long hours and it's hard to focus because we're tired.

17. Probably kids look at it as if they could be doing something better than coming to school. If I weren't at school, I could get all the stuff done that's on the list. People don't realize---of course we need school, but as seniors we get that senioritis and it's like we're just ready for it all to end. But we're going to college, so it's going to happen another four years. We're just hurting ourselves doing the not paying attention.

18. [Regarding engaging assignments in English]...the teaching thing because one, you need to know the material so you can teach others, and two, it's a big grade...to teach it you have to know it.

19. I work on Saturdays and if we have any senior activities it's like pulling teeth to get time off. We have to work every single Saturday. We go to school all day, but we don't get off early the way full time workers do. Even if family is down, I still have to go work 9-3.

20. Having all the things I had to do, get up, go to school and work, I think it's pretty

much prepared me because you're always going to have a job---you hope to always have a job to get up for. You're always going to have interaction with other people. It helps to know how to be towards them.

21. Now I'm given the opportunity to go to college. Even with Lexie, I'm not going to not go. There's daycare and I can do it. It could have been difficult having her and finishing high school, and for a lot of people it probably would have been. But for me it wasn't hard because I have a lot of family support. Even support from teachers. It means a lot to have that support to pursue my dreams.

22. During the year you have to keep up with every different class. You have to know when something's due. With the research paper, you had lists of dates where everything is due. I would do the same thing; it was good that you had that; you let us know what days we had to turn things in to you, even though I didn't always have it. That list was good to have. The check list helped too, so I could check off when I finished something.

23. We read plays. I don't know why I can't remember what they were called. I keep coming back to the term paper, but this year I finally understood what to do with it. Used to with other teachers, we weren't shown how to do it the right way. Of course I had you my junior year, but because of the year before that, I wasn't really focused and didn't really care or whatever. But my senior year I really wanted to know; I guess it hit me because I'm going to have to know this for college. I knew it was my last shot.

24. I know they'll help me in college [professors], but some stuff you need to already know when you get there, so that way you won't be stressing yourself out. With the whole teaching part that we did [in English], you can even do that at home with yourself.

25. And DLP---that helped too in finding all those errors because at the end of the year I would read a sentence and know exactly what was wrong almost every time. I would know what was wrong. It made me feel good by knowing that I knew what to do; I didn't have to wait for you to put up the corrections.

26. I'm scared to death for someone to ask me a question and I don't know the answer. Even if a teacher asks you in class and you don't know the answer sometimes, that would make you feel like you're stupid and you don't know anything. I would always hide behind people if a teacher was about to ask a question...I would think the teacher would think I was...if I didn't know the answer. But knowing the DLP makes you feel good and not stupid.

27. You always ask questions, but you always ask the class. You haven't ever, well you've asked some students, but usually what you'll do is ask a question and wait for someone to give you an answer. If they don't ever give you an answer, you'll rephrase the question. And that's when someone will give the answer. That's what I've noticed.

28. Sometimes if you ask a question, people don't get it the first time. One word could be the meaning word and the answer could pop up. That's what happens when

you re-phrase.

29. Insurance, I've been shown for only about two years. I don't usually do that stuff on a day to day basis. But punctuation, I do. I guess doing something on a daily basis helps you know it and you should know it and be able to pop that answer right out.

30. [Group work] was helpful because everyone will see something in a different way and be able to help you see their way---like if you don't get a context clue and they see that clue, but you don't. That's helpful because they can help teach you how they saw it. Getting everybody's difference of opinions, that was helpful. You'd give us those worksheets...

31. Being in group...they'd be questions...we were doing the pilgrims [Chaucer] trying to figure out which guy had the mole, the red hair, and stuff like that, which pilgrim had those features, and if you can't find the answer, someone else can because you're picking stuff out of everybody's minds.

32. In group you can do that, but if you're not in group, that's cheating. We're not really saying "Okay, somebody find that answer and give it to me." In group we never really did that. If someone said, "Oh, I've got the answer" we'd say "where'd you find that" and then they'll show us where the answer was. They wouldn't tell you what it was, but where it was. Then we'd read it for ourselves and see if we could figure it out. And then we'd compare answers.

33. When you used to do vocabulary, there were times when you would say the vocab word but then you would say different words that sounded like it. It meant the same

thing, so I guess that helped me remember that word, what it meant. If I could put two words together that meant the same thing, that helped me remember...

34. ...that was helpful because any time I'm going to take any kind of test that has that type of thing, it will be helpful. That I could compare---it's hard to memorize a ton of words and definitions, but if you link a word to a word in the definition, if you match up a word in the definition with the word...that helps a lot with trying to connect different things and pull them together to make them one.

35. [Boredom with all day school] It's usually the first of the school year and the end of the school year where sometimes we don't do anything in class. That's when I think I could be using that time doing my list or going to see Lexie. Doing something else. But you have to be there or they'll count you absent.

36. We'd come in [sixth hour] and it'd be like study hall without study; just basically a pointless class for me to be in. For six months we caught up, pretty much, on gossip. Some would think, oh we're not doing anything in this class, why do we always have to be busy in this [English] one. Why do we have to do something every single day? That's the way some people would look at it; some people would get mad or aggravated; they're used to not doing anything and that would interfere with them working in another class. If you have a class period where you can talk, of course, kids are going to do it.

Rocky: Horizontalization

1. My mom has always encouraged me to read. My Grandpa said to pay attention in English and read. Math and English were what he always said to pay attention in. Keep your mind open and broaden your horizons.
2. I used to not [enjoy school], but here in the last couple of years I have. Just because of the social events...girlfriends and go hang out. I used to not. I hated coming to school.
3. I didn't do that much [homework] that I remember; I didn't do that much at home. I tried to learn everything in class so when I got home I could practice on training horses and roping.
4. This year I kind of started going out at night and stuff. Going around to little parties and stuff. I can go out at like 9 and do something because I'm not working then. Everything is done by 8. Girls got me out on the weekends this year.
5. I think I've always put my work before school; I know that. Because I was always a little more interested in working. I guess because I'm more interested in doing stuff outside and the work was kind of fun to me. Riding horses and moving cows and doctoring. Things like that; the books and study wasn't appealing.
6. It's helped with my work ethic some...whenever I was putting my mind to something. I tried to focus on something I really knew I needed to do. To an assignment or like a term paper...but I wouldn't stay hooked with my homework. I'd

just try to get it done. I knew I was going to be okay with it; I wouldn't try to make it flawless. I got by.

7. I don't know if it helps me during high school, but once you get out and you have to enter the real world, I don't think it's going to be that difficult of a transition.

8. Respect for older people. I think I have more respect, but I don't know if that's from working. Some people don't treat older people, like substitutes, the way they should. I don't know if it's from taking orders and just doing your job.

9. On the weekends we do vaccinating, big jobs, branding, or de-horning; that's weekends because otherwise, during school, we'd only have like three hours. We usually rope every evening. We rope for two or three hours. That's free time. I'm still on the farm. Practice. I plan on roping in the future; not go pro., but that's where I get all my spending money. My dad supplies my fuel, gives me a truck, tires, and that's how I get paid.

10. [Regarding all day at school] I'm sure I sharpened my skills in all of the classes I took...cooking and biology. I learned chemistry. Mostly just social.

11. [Regarding English] All the poems and old English, I don't know about that.

12. I love when we talk to you. I don't know if it benefited me, but it made class enjoyable. Like, if you were on a subject that I knew something about, I could speak on it. I was confident, and I just liked that.

13. I'm attracted to good language...I like the way you speak, your vocabulary, your language, your diction. You used the word concise. It's concise. It's to the point. Not

a lot of bull. You're not just using a big word to make yourself sound all howty-towty.

14. Speaking in front of the class, if you give me an assignment, and you know you're going to have to speak in front of the class, you're going to do a good job, so you feel confident in what you're talking about and Mrs. Blake's not like well, that's not the way it really happened---you don't want to look like a fool up there, so I tried to work.

15. I got up there and I was confident and I knew what I was talking about. So I could answer any of your questions or any they had. Preparation. I felt like I'd learned something, bettered myself.

16. I definitely got more comfortable speaking aloud in groups. If I'm trying to break down something, like in a run, like with horses if I'm trying to get the point across to somebody else that I'm teaching, it has broadened my vocabulary and maybe I can paint a better picture to them if I'm trying to explain that. People ask me questions and stuff. During competition.

17. I've gotten a lot better now at getting up in front of people. I used to not want to do it at all. I'm not gonna say I enjoy it, but it's kinda fun.

18. Little groups didn't help me. Mostly people were just talking about the weekend. I know you don't want to hear that, but that's the truth.

19. Some people griped about your class, but I liked it because we talked. The teacher talks and we have conversations among students. That's what I liked. And we were learning something. And it was interesting.

Bobby: Horizontalization

1. There is no class in high school saying this is how to manage your money.
2. Working for my dad is quite a bit easier than working at Wal-Mart. Physically, no. Mentally, yeah. Knowing that whenever you work construction, you can see what you're doing. You can see you're taking something and literally building it into something else. You can see your progress.
3. At Wal-Mart there's a new shipment every four days and it's just the same stuff over and over. It's almost maddening.
4. It's so monotonous that you draw this little bit of money. It's an easy job, really. The hardest part I have is moving dog food from a pallet to the shelf. Not very strenuous at all, but it's so disheartening because you don't see any progress in it.
5. The only core course I needed was English. It seems like I could take a college class instead of coming all day and take a full time job and receive the same amount of benefit.
6. It's almost monotonous to come every day and have to pass classes that are an absolute breeze that don't challenge me at all.
7. The more I work, the more my grade slips little by little in English; I finished this year with a 79 which is the lowest I had all year. I could pass art with an A; I could pass vocal with 100% average. No problem because you do you work in the class, nothing to take home, nothing to occupy your time unless you just have a desire for it, but it's not mandatory.

8. Yeah, some of those classes push you, but not outside of the classroom. So I'm probably going into shock when I go to college.
9. I've got the whole term paper bit down, but outside the classroom studying, I'm not completely prepared for that.
10. It's a little scary, but it seems like I could have taken a full time job and benefited the same level.
11. It would be very beneficial if before you're kicked out into the fire, you experience what college courses are like. I'm going to have a full time job and go to classes full time just to stay in my house, but if I got a small taste of what college was like, which I think I have a little bit in this class [English], I think we'd see the drop out rate [college] cut in half. Easily because 90% of the drop outs are the first year.
12. It would be something that people should look into instead of saying, well, you're a certain age, so you have to be in high school. I think it's ridiculous.
13. The people in power right now, they got an education, the system worked for them, and I'm not sure they were required to stay all day their senior year for one class, but I don't know that they're unhappy with the system.
14. I drag myself out of bed and come to my only class of the day, English. The rest of the day I do a worksheet or sit and talk with my friends and still get an A in the class.
15. Begging lunch to come 30 minutes early just going almost mad because I'm scared I'm going to lose something in this year. Because my work ethic has been completely

kicked in the face. I do what I need to get by; used to I had more challenging courses and I'd be more motivated to succeed.

16. And there is no motivation because I can succeed with my eyes closed. I don't want to go into college with this mindset. That's scaring me.

17. So I go through the day, take my little brother home, try to get a 15 minute nap, come back to town, and usually work until about 9 o'clock. So if I have anything important to do for school, it gets completely pushed to the back burner because you can't do that during work.

18. If I have a novel to read, my focus on that is completely hindered because I've got to go make money. I've got to stay employed. If you get fired in such a small town, they call your previous boss and say, well, this was the reason why he's not working here anymore. So your next job choice is really spanked.

19. Your next employer will see you as a trouble-maker. Even if you hate your job, you have to stick it out with a smile on your face so that whenever they call your previous employer they don't say, oh, he didn't want to work.

20. My parents pay for my insurance and my car payment. All I pay for is my gas, but out of \$250, I have a small car, and it's costing me \$43 to \$44 a pop to fill up my car. I do that once a week, so that's almost \$100 out of my check. And I pay for all of my own meals; you really can't get...my healthy lifestyle is going down the tube as well.

21. You work 'til ten at night and the only things that's open is a burger joint. And

eating that late is completely unhealthy. I don't feel good any more and I don't sleep, which I've had that problem a lot this year. And I'm not real sure what's driven it, but that's hindered a lot of stuff too. Pretty rough.

22. Employment, school, stressing out whether or not I'm going to be an honor graduate, which I didn't get. I had an English teacher my freshman year who was a big-time-she-woman-man-hater who decided to lose some of my papers. Your overall GPA includes honor courses. I had enough...then I would have had enough...at the time I was grounded, oh, better get that grade up, but I never understood that it would have this much of an impact on me.

23. [Regarding reading assigned novels in English] Very little. There were certain books that I did finish and certain books I'd fall behind on and catch up with *Spark Notes*. The only book I didn't read was *Tess*...I'm not making any excuses why I didn't read it, there just really wasn't any time.

24. *Sound and the Fury* was really hard for me to get into. I understood it...it's one of those books where you have to read the page two or three times in the first section. Actually, the Quentin section is the only one I really understood, which is odd to a lot of people, but having read that book, which is one of the ones I had to catch up with *Spark Notes* a few times, I think if you can read that Faulkner, that level of literature, you can pretty much read anything.

25. And yeah, Stephen King is entertaining and so is Anne Rice, but they don't really prepare you for anything. They may get you in the habit of reading but as far as

educating you, increasing your vocabulary dramatically, I learned a lot of words reading *The Stand*, which is a 2000 page book, but my vocabulary wasn't really boosted as much as reading Dostoevsky and Faulkner and books like that.

26. It's understanding the text. The way certain things are said, the way conversations, the dialogue, the understanding of someone by their dialogue.

27. Knowing that you have to give everything you have to accomplish something is good motivation to accomplish it. To exercise all of your abilities for this one goal, and whenever that is compromised, whenever you no longer need that, I'm not sure if I've lost it or not. I guess I'll find out pretty soon. I'm sure my work ethic is still there.

28. This past year I haven't had to push myself at all academically.

29. Yeah, I wanted a light year, but I didn't want a ridiculously light year. I didn't want to just drift aimlessly. I come to second hour [English], then I would go to family and marriage class first semester and child development second semester, which mostly I knew, so it wasn't very strenuous and everything was straight out of the book. No complex thinking at all; word for word verbatim out of the book. I learned from that class, but it didn't push me.

30. Then I have art; art, the last three months of my senior year, I maybe spent four days in that class because the rest of the time I was so focused on the school play and building sets and going through read-throughs. So I don't have any idea how to water color, which I regret that because that's something I was really looking forward to.

31. Sixth hour democracy. A little challenging, but only for the mock trial. Mock trial made us embody these other people and go through this trial of someone else who is accidentally killed. That was pretty strenuous and I liked being pushed. It was a lot of fun. But that's pretty much the only thing, other than this class [English], where I had to push myself the entire year. So I don't know if I've lost my drive to academically push myself.

32. Like I said, I'm just scared to find out if it's impacted me as harshly as I think it has.

33. If there was a happy medium where someone had to, of course take this class, and maybe just a couple other core classes because the only actual other class I had was democracy. That wasn't very academically pushing, but it was an actual class. It wasn't an elective. So, if you could have two or three actual classes a year to keep you sharp, I think that would be very beneficial.

34. I see certain people who just took blow-off classes all year and have college credit and I'm a little envious, but I don't know if I would have done as well.

35. I know that Comp. I classes that you take during school aren't as strenuous as the ones you take on campus.

36. I know people who did literally nothing their senior year. Some didn't even do their research paper and just floated through their senior year. They're loving college; they're taking maybe 8 hours a semester. They'll be done when they're 40, but they're loving it.

37. I suppose not having all this work to do my senior year, I think it has kind of dulled my senses a little bit...

38. Not having such a strenuous work schedule at school my senior year has affected me not exactly in the greatest of ways, but at the same time, working has well...I'm not walking up to daddy, daddy, money, money...being able to work has taught me---like, my kids will work through high school because you never really understand what exactly money's worth because it's just something that mom and dad had.

39. And it's no big deal; they're rich. But it's usually not the case. Kids who have worked during high school whose families haven't had that much money will tell you it's not that easy.

40. I think I'm kind of mature in comparison to fellow classmates. I don't really know what's made me that way. It could be having to work and self-rely.

41. I understand that if I spend ten bucks on a case of beer, that's ten bucks which I can't put into gas, which will get me to work and home and most of the people who are ridiculous party animals haven't worked a day in their life. Parents just give them money and don't ask questions. It's dangerous.

42. [Without a job] I would have been riding the bus. As a senior not many ride the bus. That's a pretty profound statement that either I'm lazy and don't want to work, or I'm too poor to afford gas or a car.

43. Yeah, I suppose I could have done that, but that would have put a little more strain on my parents. Actually, to show how much of a [financial] situation we're in, I've

got a savings account from my grandpa and my dad's had to borrow some money on some stuff; two days ago I had to make a house payment out of my savings account.

44. Of course my parents will pay me back, but on some of the money I make, I put into that account so I'm still having to pitch in and help...

45. Seeing my parents struggle, I don't ever want to struggle.

46. I've always loved literature and everything...I was like all right, I want to be an English teacher. I thought about my future, my family, and seeing my family struggle and I didn't want to leave it to chance.

47. Just being so in love with literature...being this book will change your life if you read it. And maybe three of us read it. And the rest of us got a section of the way through it and said this is crap and it doesn't make any sense. But having something like that mean that much to you; I didn't know what that felt like.

48. Yeah, I love reading, being caught up in something different, but I never really understood that passion and I wanted it. I wanted to be passionate about something. And, of course, you want to be passionate about your kids and stuff, your family.

49. I read some amazing things. *Beowulf* was awesome. I absolutely fell in love with *Macbeth*. Term paper wise I was clueless. And you kind of showed me the light and said this is what will be expected of you, so this is what you have to learn, and really, without this year, I don't think I would---I would be completely clueless going into it.

50. I'm not real sure I would understand the quality of work that is required of you. If I had taken comp. this year instead, yeah, I would have gotten by because according to

some of the students I had this conversation with, your term paper was harder. So I'm thinking if I can pass yours, then I'll be ready for just about anything.

51. And not just necessarily literature papers, but just a basis for other papers. PIE, you know. I never really understood that before but the more you worked with me on it, I got it.

52. I learned how to work off other people's ideas. If Laura said something interesting to me, then I can put in my two cents and everyone benefits because no one is going to get the same exact thing from one novel.

53. Yes, *Crime and Punishment* is about redemption but...some people may be trivial just looking at the main point, but bouncing ideas off each other just like you would in college, this is what I have---what do you have? I think it prepared me for my higher education.

54. And people who are so much alike, love the same stuff, who are drawn to most of the same stuff from the same novels---to see how different we're becoming is interesting.

55. Maybe we could actually change our lives if we actually read. Sitting there reading *Spark Notes*--- "and Benji cried, and Benji cried" --- well, he's a crybaby; that's all I really got from that. But once I re-read it, it made a little more sense. I had to keep cross-referencing summaries and the actual text.

56. [Regarding art] Education wise, I didn't learn how to read from this guy, but I learned ways how to express myself, which is just as important.

57. They didn't have chemistry II; they completely dropped the science honors course which was really upsetting to me. It really made me apathetic. I was just angry.

58. Knowing that you are going to be an honors student and that you are an honor graduate and that you're in this honors class---it drives you.

59. There are certain people who had never taken an English honors class in their life and this year they weren't driven to excel and I had to push myself. I said I'm going to do this.

Allie: Horizontalization

1. In high school, I guess, is when I really stopped reading as much as I had because I started getting involved in so much more stuff. My freshman year I played basketball, I ran track, I ran cross country, and I did golf. And I babysat all the time. So, reading kind of took a back seat to all of my other stuff that I had going on.

2. My classes didn't really require a lot of reading in high school until these past two years. And so I didn't give it the importance that I need to. I just didn't read as much as I should.

3. Reading at home, kids would talk about TV shows they watched and mom didn't really let me watch a lot of TV. I would pretty much read. I didn't have a TV in my room until this year. Until the middle of this year, actually. I remember I would get mad at her, but I don't regret it. At the same time it would make me mad, but now I don't regret it at all.

4. Before this year I just babysat all the time. Now I work at the bank; when I started I

would be there by 2:30 and close at 5:30 every day. Then on Saturdays I work 8:15 to noon every Saturday. I quit playing sports for the most part because I was working.

5. But I did play golf this year. And so what I did was I would get off of sixth hour and go to the golf course until three. Then I would be at work by 3:30, get off work at 5:30, and go back to the golf course and finish whatever it is that they did that day.

That's what I did for two or three months and it was chaotic.

6. It was hard to make myself go back out to the golf course because I was so tired after I got done with everything. It was hard to make myself do my schoolwork. I'm back now to working 2:30 to 5:30 every day.

7. Working at the bank taught me a lot of responsibility because I was handling other people's money. I had to balance perfectly every single day and if I messed up, I had to own up to it.

8. I also had a problem with being late a lot and working kind of fixed that because you have to be there or you don't have a job pretty much.

9. It helped me with my people skills and being able to talk to people because you have to talk to your customers. You have to be friendly to them. I didn't really like talking to people I didn't know, and now it doesn't bother me. I think I will be able to open up a lot more in college.

10. I worked, but I can still do what needs to be done, like with school, for the most part, unless I get lazy. I don't think I could handle a job where I had to work until ten every night, plus do schoolwork on top of that.

11. Some days, at the bank, if we were really slow, they would let me do my homework; but if we were busy, I couldn't do it because we can't let our customers see our stuff. So, I got lucky with my job.

12. I think that the kids that do work that much don't do their schoolwork because, for the most part, I think they have to work. They have things that they have to pay for themselves. They have to work. That's more important to them than school is. If they're not going to go up to college, why would they be trying so hard in high school?

13. I have honors biology, honors chemistry, computer class, calculus. I didn't have to take all those classes. The only one I had to take was this one [English]. I did it for me, pretty much, because I don't want to fall behind in college. I either want to be where I'm supposed to be or ahead of where I'm supposed to be.

14. People ask me why I did that. Why didn't you just take a blow off schedule? Why did you even get in AP English? Why didn't you just get in regular English? It's so I can get ahead. That's why I did it.

15. And that was a personal choice. My parents didn't make me. Nobody actually made me. I've always tried to work harder to be ahead.

16. Most of my classmates in the senior class have changed a lot over the summer [before senior year]. They used to be like that, but now they just do whatever---it doesn't matter...I surround myself with people that are similar to me. And so I don't have the pressure to be like, oh, don't do that---just come with us.

17. I think just the pressure to drink and do drugs is what changed most of them. People gave in to the temptation because they either felt overwhelmed, or they felt they needed to fit in. It was just something to do because there really is nothing to do in this town. It's just what people do for fun.
18. [Regarding socialization] Only at like from eight at night on. And usually from 8 to 10 is when I go because I have to be home by 10. That's another thing that I have that other kids don't have---I still have a curfew. On weekends it's twelve.
19. I have studying in my English class; that's pretty much the only class I have homework in. In reading, that's the thing I get behind in the most.
20. We pretty much lecture out of the book and I guess that's why I don't have very much homework anymore.
21. When I get homework in high school, it feels like it's all coming at the same time and I can't get every done that I need to. It bothers me.
22. Kids these days think they can do anything. They think they can get away with anything. I fall into that category too. If I know that I don't have to do something until it's...like she'll assign it the second nine weeks and I know it's not due until the nine weeks. I'll still do some of it, but I may not have it finished. I don't work all hours of the night trying to get it finished because I know I can turn it in later.
23. It's not good but it saves me, I guess, sometimes. Not really me, but others. They'd be a lot less honor grads if it wasn't that way.
24. I wish my freshman and sophomore teachers would have pushed me more. I think

that would have helped me my junior and senior year not get so far behind. Too, if they would have challenged us more and not just let us pretty much half-way do everything, if that, and get away with it, I think that would have helped a lot too.

25. [Regarding senior English] I think it prepared me for college. Cause we did have to do a lot more on our own. And you couldn't half-way do anything. It was pretty much all or nothing. And you had to work; you had to earn your grade in that class; you couldn't, just because you were used to getting A's; we actually had to study.

26. That will help me out a lot next year because I hadn't studied in I don't know how long for anything.

27. For tests, our vocab tests when I was a sophomore were matching or they were pretty much common sense words. This last year our words were words I'd never even heard of before. Some of them weren't even English words and so I actually did have to study.

28. Like I'll be talking to somebody and they'll use a word that was on our vocab test and I'm like, gosh, I actually know what that word means. Or I'll be reading the paper or a book and think well, in those classes when I read a book they would have some of those words that we had used and I knew what it meant.

29. That helped a lot because I'd probably just have skipped over it and tried to figure out what it was by what was around it.

30. Just because we had to well, keep everything organized in our binders, know where everything was...

31. [Regarding time alone reading or enjoy her mother's company] It took a back-seat to sports and to work and to friends and boyfriends and just everything around me. I just felt like I wanted to spend more time with friends because we're all fixing to go off to college and so I'd say, well, I can do that school work, I can finish reading that book later that night. I'd go hang out, and then I would get home and I'd fall asleep trying to read the book.

32. I think it just kind of foreshadows what is to come. Once I get out in the real world I'll have to work more so I'll have less and less time for just reading and relaxing.

33. Like I'm sure I'll have required reading for classes, and I hope to not do the same thing I did this last year where I put it off until the last minutes.

34. The majority of it [work for school] was English; probably 80 percent of it was and the other 15 was calculus. The rest was a worksheet in science here and there.

35. In English we would finish one book and I would say okay, I fell behind on this book, but I'm going to catch up on the next one. And I would end up doing the same thing.

36. I didn't like it, and I knew I should do stuff differently. It's just getting caught up in everything around me. It was overwhelming.

37. In English we did that Socratic Circle thing and that kind of helped me to start speaking about what I thought. I didn't like it at first; I just wanted to keep to myself. If I don't say anything, I won't look like an idiot, pretty much.

38. But then I realized you're going to have to talk or not get the grade. So I kind of made myself and at the end, it kind of got easier. But I still have kind of a problem expressing my thoughts---I care about how people see me.

39. It helped me kind of speak up; it helped me with responsibility too because you had to look for yourself on your own. It wasn't just handed to you.

40. You have to know how to look for stuff on your own...that helped me a lot my senior year. And the networking with friends; that helped because in college you're going to have to ask people around you if you need help. So you'll have friends, a network that you can communicate with. That's what we did last year.

41. That [negative experience in science class] got to me because pharmacy is science and I wasn't getting hardly anything out of those classes and those were supposed to be honors classes. It was almost like if you want a blow-off class, go take a blow-off class. Take something that's not core like English, math, go take home-ec., art, computers---an elective.

42. And I probably don't get as much sleep as I should either because I start doing stuff and sometimes I get to bed around 2 because if I could make myself stay up and do my work, I would. Thursday nights, for sure, I was up past midnight every night for vocab tests on Friday.

43. Like I would type it up on my computer, the list, type the words with blanks and print off like four copies of it. Then I would take the words and write the words five times each. My vocab tests were a lot better than junior year and last year I didn't do

it. I know what will work.

44. So it almost became pointless [trying to learn in science class].

45. I think the only way I would have gotten anything out of that class was if they [students trying to turn class into “blow-off” class] wouldn’t have been in that class.

46. English kind of prepared me for work because I was expected to do something and I had never really been expected to do anything before. And at work you are expected to do a lot.

47. With the vocab, I can, those words, you do see them, and I never realized, that helped me.

48. Like in the DLP, the correct grammar, I’ve had to write e-mails to our main bank. They’ll ask a question and we’ll have to answer them. So, I’ll go no, this doesn’t sound right, or no, this doesn’t go there.

49. I’m very thankful that I took a full load this year, and that I took AP because I think a lot more was expected out of that class than regular.

50. I read all of the novels except *Tess* and that one I just tried to go on the internet and keep up with, but the novel I liked best was *The Sound and the Fury*. It was a hard novel to read, especially the first part, but it’s one of those things that could really happen. I almost wanted there to be a chapter for Caddy. Just to know what happened to her.

Chloe: Horizontalization

1. I think my hardest thing of working and going to school is that I had to go to work right after school. Like I had no time to spend with my family.
2. I was also tired all the time because I never got to rest because I was always working, or going to school, or something.
3. So, yeah, I got money, and I have money to do things and get stuff that I needed, but sometimes I wondered if it was actually worth it because I was so tired and worried about my grades. Just, it's crazy.
4. And then most of the time I worked at fast food during school and that business is so hard. It puts so much stress on mostly teenagers because most of the adults are used to stress by now, but the teenagers are just stressed and tired. There's all this stress and pressure getting the food out, getting the orders out so fast.
5. At least at the job where I'm at right now, at the convenience store, it's better paced where you don't have to work so fast. That was a good change for me to make because I started improving in my grades.
6. I was 16 when I had my first job. I was working about 25 hours then and I was a sophomore. It was summer, but I was still going to school when I first started and that was a weird experience because I'm tired and I don't want to go to school.
7. And when I realized that I didn't want to go to school because I was so tired, I'm going wait a second---that's not me. And then after that I went to work at Braum's, and I was working with Braum's all through my junior year. That was hard because it

was long hours, later nights, and I just didn't want to go to school anymore.

8. After that I went to Golden Chick for part of my senior year. It was easier; it wasn't as stressful because that isn't a fast food restaurant.

9. And then I went to work at Sonic again, which was a stupid mistake, and I was working 40 hours plus. And then I just got so tired and so burned out with Sonic, and with fast food in general, and that's when I started looking for another job that wasn't fast food and wasn't high paced where I could actually think...because fast food, you don't think...you just do it.

10. That's when I found out that Snak Shack [convenience store] was hiring and I'm like hey, I'm 18 now, why not?

11. Once I started that job I noticed I was starting to do better at school. I actually had time to focus on school. Yeah, it was long hours, but I'm still getting the eight hours of sleep I needed except on Fridays when I wouldn't get home until two in the morning.

12. But during the weekdays they were really good about letting me have days off. I'd work for a day and then have a couple days off, and then for a day and then I'd work the weekend.

13. And then, of course, I was in the Army and juggling that, school, and work was really difficult because you'd have to be at the station at this time, but I'd also have to be at work or at school. I was always somewhere.

14. By the grace of God, I keep it together.

15. I'm still working anywhere between 40 to 50 hours a week. One week I worked 58 hours. That was week before last. We had two people quit, and I was the only one that could work.

16. That week I'm not sure I had any feeling left after about Tuesday because I had worked all weekend, all the next week, and then that next weekend. By Sunday I was so out of it that I was falling asleep at work.

17. It was hard because I knew I had tests coming up that week. I knew I needed to day, but should I go to sleep for a couple of hours or study for a couple of hours?

18. I was here [English] by second hour, but I missed first hour several times.

19. Now I'm only working about 30 to 40 hours. It's not so much that it's hard work, it's just long hours because we work from 2 to 11 every night. It's just those long hours get us very quickly.

20. The money is very good. I spend it on stuff that I need because I don't expect my parents to buy me everything. My senior announcements, stuff like that, they help me pay for. But the everyday things like lunch, and car insurance, college funds.

21. All the get-togethers for senior week---I've missed most of those. Just meeting my friends at the lake---I can't do that because I'm at work. My friends get really frustrated, and my boyfriend, because I never get to hang out with them. I'm always at work.

22. They work too, but they don't work the long hours that I do. They're usually out of work by 9 or 10 and I'm still going. On Fridays, I'm still going until 2. My family

gets frustrated, especially my sisters because they miss me so much.

23. I don't want to talk in classes because I know I need to be doing work; I need to be getting my grades up, but during breaks and lunch is when I'm socializing because I don't do that after school.

24. What's so sad about my job is there are so many people who come in and I already have their stuff ready for them because I know what they're coming to get.

25. It's kind of sad because I know it, but then it makes me feel good because you have a personal relationship with those people in a way because they don't just come in and get their cigarettes and leave. They sit there and chit chat with you for a little bit. They tell you how their day's going.

26. I have an old man who comes in every day at 5 and he'll tell you exactly how his day went at work. It's amazing because you learn how other people live.

27. We're right across from Jimmy's Motel, so the not-privileged people come in there all the time and you start to feel sorry for them. It's like you want to reach out to them.

28. That's one thing I've learned by working at that job. We spoil kids and dogs. We always have a kid who will come up and want candy, but they don't have the money for it because they live across the street at the motel. So we say, here, take the candy. It's just a soft spot we have.

29. The other stores have hard hearts and don't care. But we care. We're the compassionate ones. Most of us who work there have lived a life like that, if we're

not living it now.

30. [Regarding all day school attendance] I didn't like that very much because I got bored very easily in other classes because I knew that I didn't need them to graduate.

31. I'd come to AP English and stay awake for that class because I knew I needed that class. That was the class I worked hardest in because I needed it to graduate. I would go through the rest of the day tired and bored.

32. [About democracy turned psychology] We had a lot of kids in there who worked. Once we all started talking about sleep, we realized how sleepy we all were and we'd just fall asleep. It's amazing to look around at how many kids are actually sleeping in classes.

33. Your senior year really teaches you the life lessons that you need and working is one of those life lessons. And going to school is one of those life lessons.

34. I didn't have to work at all, but I chose to work because I knew that it was something I was going to have to learn to do sooner or later because Mom and Dad weren't going to be there forever.

35. When you're in high school you don't think about how the job's really hurting you because you're not getting the education you need.

36. They get to be sophomores and old enough to work and they go to work thinking, hey I'm going to make money. Forget school.

37. At the beginning of my senior year I was in a lot of trouble because I was hanging out with a lot of people that I shouldn't have been. Jessica picked me back up and that

really made me realize what a best friend is.

38. We had so much in common; even English stuff because my poetry actually inspired her to start writing poetry.

39. English taught me lot of my life lessons so I could see why I was there for it, and it taught me lot of things to prepare me for college. But it kind of frustrated me too because I was there for an hour and then I was there for six other hours for no reason at all.

40. You can go to school and work at the same time and be fun. And...it makes it easier having only one required class, but you still have all the little things you have to have...like my child development class this year was great. I loved it because it taught you the little things in life that you'll need later on.

41. There were a couple of classes that taught me but you know, the rest of them were just like my chemistry class. I'm going why did I even take chemistry? I don't even need chemistry. And that one was just a wash. And then I was in the office for two hours and I'm going, this is boring. I'm behind a desk answering phones.

42. English taught me that college is going to be hard; it's going to be a challenge, but you can still make it through this challenge.

43. In the military, I'm up north with all the people...I don't know if they're higher educated. I don't know what it is, but they seem more intellectual. There was a girl there and she had been to private school. She had private tutors who came into her house. She would teach us things that we had never learned before. She learned the

history of England and British history and American history; her favorite subject was history. I'm going how do you learn all this stuff you know? Where did you get that tutor? I want it.

Jenny: Horizontalization

1. I used to try to write stories, but they were never really good. I think my poetry was better. But I haven't written in years unless it was assigned stuff.
2. On my ACT I made a 36 on reading and a 35 on English. I think it's because I read so much. I finish tests because I read fast. I used context clues on the mock AP; there were some words I didn't know.
3. I sometimes make lists of words that I don't know, and then look them up. With *Crime and Punishment* I had to stop looking them up because I got so far behind with Key Club and everything else.
4. I hate not finishing books. I hated *The Sound and the Fury*, but I did get through it with energy drinks that helped me stay focused.
5. Surprisingly, I'm a very bad procrastinator...there have been times when I've stayed up all night to do papers. A couple of times.
6. It [senior English] was the only class that I had to have to graduate, so I definitely tried harder in it than the rest of my classes, even though you may not have been able to tell. My other classes were somewhat difficult, but AP was my challenge for the year.
7. Up until, I guess pre-AP, but really up to this year English had always been a class

that I could fly through without even trying too hard and get an A.

8. This year I realized that no matter how well you think you know something, you can always know more. So I guess the meaning I make of AP is just because I'm good at something doesn't mean I know everything I should know about it.

9. I've always been good at English and at first, this year, when I wasn't so good at it anymore, I seriously thought about switching to regular English IV. I'm glad I didn't though. AP Lit. showed me that sometimes it's okay not to know everything, so long as you're willing to learn more.

10. I just learned, for one thing, that I can't slack just because that's what everybody thinks that should be happening. If there's work that needs to be done, that no matter what, I need to do it.

11. I've realized in English how bad of a procrastinator I am and how bad I need to fix that.

12. I've learned that there are some things maybe I should apply my new theory [not making assumptions too quickly; "assuming just isn't the right thing to do"] to literature...maybe I should try to look past some things, but I know that's going to be hard for me because I hated that book [*The Sound and the Fury*]. Now that I've realized all this stuff about what people put up for a front, maybe I just wanted it to be a certain thing. So maybe I need to think more about the value of the book before I decide.

13. I dropped athletics this year because I didn't have time for it. I had to have a job

because I pay for everything...my clothes, my phone. I paid for my computer, I pay for my food; I do eat meals every once in a while at the house, but if I want anything I have to buy it for myself.

14. I'm at school until three. I go home, try to get a little homework done, maybe get some sleep; I go to work at 5:30 and work until ten. Then I go home and work on homework a little more until I get it finished.

15. I think I have a sleeping disorder because I usually don't get to sleep until two in the morning. If I try to sleep earlier, I just stare at the ceiling.

16. On weekends I work around six to eight to nine hours a day. I'm never usually off on Saturdays and Sundays.

17. Pretty much working and school is hard and sometimes I wish I could be one of those kids with rich parents and don't have to work...but then I'm kind of glad because I know I can do that, that I can support myself.

18. It kind of sucks that I have to pay for everything, even minor things like Key Club dues or paying for our Fall Rally which is 50 bucks...I mean little things like that.

18. It's made me independent because my parents have always been dependent on other people.

19. I'll be graduating as an honor grad...be National Honor Society and just be getting my scholarships.

20. At the beginning of this year I got sick a lot. I had strep and all sorts of things several times this year. I'm usually just wanting to sleep through a lot of stuff, but I

don't.

21. There are lot of my friends who work, but a lot of people don't work or they have jobs that they don't have to do much at. And they still get paid for it; like maybe they work for their parents. At the office or a family friend where they don't have to show up very much, but they still get paid. I don't think they're actually working very hard. It's not really a responsible type thing. I feel that I'm very responsible.

22. A lot of my friends are older because a lot of my friends are kind of immature. I don't know exactly how to explain it; there are just some people that I really don't get along with because in my grade they still act like children and they don't really understand what it is to work to get the money you need.

23. If I want to go out to the movies...that's two days of work...five for the movies about ten or fifteen in gas for me to pay somebody to get me there; if I want something to eat...

24. I think I've missed some things from my senior year. They say your senior year is supposed to be your funnest year, your best year, your greatest year of your life and so forth and so on, but this year sucked for me.

25. It's probably been the worst year of school for me. I've had so many things to do I just feel totally relieved that it's almost over.

26. I've been stressed a lot. Like I have worked and Key Club feel like a whole nother job for me.

27. And then school; like a lot of seniors don't take very many hard classes their senior

year. They take like the one English they need and a whole bunch of blow-off classes---whatever they can throw onto a schedule because they need it.

28. I'm missed every football game this year; I never went to one.

29. If I could, I would work but not as much as I have. If I didn't need the money I wouldn't work as much as I do.

30. I think I got a quality education, but I chose to. If you want to learn you will and if you don't, you won't.

31. I have learned to deal with people that I normally wouldn't be around, understand or get along with; I mean you can't choose who you work with most of the time.

32. You think about how hard you worked for that money, and I've learned communication a lot better. I work in the customer department at Wal-mart which is probably one of the worst place to work if you don't get along with people.

33. You can't quit your job because you don't like someone; I mean you can, but you have to go weeks without pay and finding another one, and you've got to deal with that person because you need the money. You're going to deal with it.

34. I think this last year, even though I complained about it being the worst year of high school or school period, might have prepared me more than anything else for what people call the real world.

Eric: Horizontalization

1. Language was one of my better subjects back then [elementary school], but going on through seventh and up until now, it's just been a strife to become better than what my parents were. My dad didn't graduate high school, and my mom graduated but didn't go to college.
2. I was very disappointed in myself [failing freshman English] because I thought that I could be good enough for what I thought she wanted.
3. Summer school we ["a bunch of people had received the same problem"] talked about what had happened [teacher who "lost" papers of male students]. We said it was her problem, not ours, because we did what we were asked and didn't receive the credit for what we had done.
4. My life was affected because to me teachers are supposed to be people who you can talk to, who you can trust, who care about you as a person, as an individual. By doing that ["losing" his papers], I was kind of lost. I lost my faith in teachers somewhat because I was criticized along with many other students that year.
5. Whatever I write has to mean something to me. I can't just slop it down. Like, you have the pencil pushers who just write whatever. You know...they don't think about it. They don't relate themselves to what they're writing or compare or anything.
6. My first hour, English class is one of the better classes. English we would come in, sit down, put the projector up, and do daily learning practice. That way, at least, everyday you would learn something. That was the whole idea behind that.

7. The work was non-stop until the end of school, meaning that you wouldn't slack off or whatever, and so by it being non-stop you wouldn't get in the mood of being lazy.
8. If you get a little break for a week or so and then you try to come back to it, all you're going to get is complains. Since we didn't take a break, it's been one of the better classes because this last semester we pretty much just read books that I enjoyed reading and had quizzes.
9. [We] read some books I never would have picked up. *A Tale of Two Cities* was one of the better ones. It was slow at first, but once you got there, it was pretty good.
10. At the first of the year, I was kind of nervous because people said that it [English class] was really hard. After the first month or so, you were one of the better teachers because we didn't joke around in there---it was serious---it was school which has been the only school I've had this year, pretty much.
11. After the first nine weeks, things just kept getting better because we just kept doing more stuff. I mean time went by fast because you were doing something instead of just sitting around watching the clock.
12. Sometimes it was hard because it was non-stop, but it was good for you.
13. The term paper was interesting; I learned a lot from that, but it was hard on me because of work. I'd work and then come home and do the paper. I was up until 3 for four days straight. That's kind of rough on you.
14. I started working right after I turned 16. I had a job at Sonic Drive-In for two weeks and I hated it and I quit. I waited probably for about a month or two months

and decided to try another job. I got a job at Braum's Ice Cream and Dairy Store and I've been there ever since.

15. The reason I started working was, of course, money. I wanted to go to Ada a lot to watch movies with my friends, and to just hang out with my family, buy my family dinner ever once in a while and without a job you can't do that.

16. At Braum's you felt like you were appreciated more; at Sonic you were just a burger flipper and that was it.

17. The people are more friendly; like you can even say that out of work. I was also working to make friends. Some of my friends were lazy and didn't have jobs. I did. So I made friends who had jobs. They can relate more to how I feel...say I had a bad day at work and they had one too, so they could relate to what I was feeling.

18. I'm not going to college; college is for some people, and for some it's not. I was going to receive financial aid through OHLAP [Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program] but I thought if I'm going to go and not like it, and not do anything with that money, why not just save that money for someone else who's going to go and enjoy it and who's going to get something out of it.

19. Maybe someday down the line, I'll go, but now going thirteen years straight makes me apathetic towards it. I can work straight out of school and start making money then.

20. [Regarding current hours of employment] Thirty to thirty-five hours a week. It's hard. It really is. My grades suffered a little bit last year, and I almost quit work, but I

just had to spread time more or less.

21. Stay up until one or two in the morning. Sleep 2-7 in the morning. Homework late at night. Didn't have that much. I don't like doing it. I mean sometimes it's like busy work, but if it's like reinforcement or on something that you did that day it's not a little kid thing.

22. If it's something I can do in like five minutes, I think it's just retarded and is just busy work. Like answering questions over something you did a week ago.

Remembering stuff on details on like a book or something. Because you've got your own questions in your mind. And by reading the book you're going to answer those questions.

23. Some students may use those questions, but I don't. People perceive things completely different than I think. They've got their own opinions.

24. If I'm getting off at 12 or 1 o'clock and I have to be at school in six hours, when am I going to do my school work?

25. I think this [attending school all day though only needing senior English] is completely ignorant. I have to come here five days a week like for six or seven hours, and I'm really only doing something in one of those classes.

26. It's kind of annoying because I could be spending my time reading or working or whatever. It's having one class a day just bothers me because I get bored.

27. If I could come here one hour a day and be done with it, I think I would be better off. Because for four hours a day, I do nothing. Just sit in there. I mean I'm pretty

free to do whatever I want to do...

28...students wouldn't be so apathetic toward school. We get tired of doing the same old thing, year after year. You just come here and for seven hours a day try to make it through the classes and then you go home. Get up and do the same thing tomorrow and the day after.

29. It's just because my second hour [office aide] I really don't do anything at all; it's really a waste of time. Third hour gets a little better; we have some interaction going on with the teacher.

30. Probably the best time of the day I enjoy, when I'm happy, is at the beginning of the day because school and work haven't had time to wear you down and at the end of the day, getting off work, is just another day done. Maybe I got something accomplished then.

31. Because I'm one of the better people up there. I know because you can see it. Everyone at work can see it. I've been there longer, so I just know more; I move faster. I'm a fairly intelligent person and that helps a lot because people who work at a fast-food restaurant are stereotyped as just high school dropouts who flip burgers. And that's not what it is.

32. [Lessons learned from work and school:] Social skills. Respect. People who are higher than you, like a manager or whatever, you know that attitude "the customer is always right," self control. It's when people get mad, you want to tell them to get out of your store. I learned that from teachers...you got rowdy little kids, but you can't

say “leave” or “shut up.” I’ve seen that and kind of picked up on it.

33. People have to wait in line and then they’ll get mad at you about not getting their crap or whatever they’ve ordered. It kind of makes you feel bad whenever they’re kind of yelling at you.

34. At about eight is when the church lets out [Wednesday nights] and we get busy for two hours. Non-stop. And it wears you down. You get tired. And then you have to clean up your station to close the store and we might get out of there by twelve, one sometimes, depending on how busy it was.

35. I go to bed probably about half an hour after I get off and sleep and get up and do the same thing. Each day. And that’s been going on like that for about two years.

36. [Happy life?] It’s kind of intermediate, like in the middle. Some days are better than others. And some days you want to jump off a cliff.

APPENDIX B

Reduction and Elimination Process of Horizontalizations to Determine Invariant Constituents

- ~~1. Value of English: methodology: Socratic Circle~~
2. Value of English: forced self expression in front of peers
3. Value of English: encouraged networking with peers: good college prep.
4. Value of English: promoted independent research
5. Problem with school: blow-off classes: frustration
6. Value of English: discovered successful study strategies
7. Value of English: high expectations that prepared for employment
8. Value of English: DLP made tasks in the workplace easier
- ~~9. Value of English: reading difficult works such as Faulkner~~
- ~~10. Regret: failing English I~~
- ~~11. Loss: trusting teachers~~
12. Value of English: learning something every day through DLP
13. Value of English: pace of class kept students engaged, not lazy over year
- ~~14. Value of English: enjoyable reading~~
15. Value of English: pace: no clock watching
16. Rationale for employment: make friends
- ~~17. Rationale for work: money to spend on family~~

18. Problem with work: “it’s hard”
19. All day school: “ignorant”
20. All day school: “rut”
21. All day school: not enough interaction with teachers
22. Value of work: personal recognition
23. Value of work: fosters self control: “customer is right”
24. Problem with time: too busy to read just for enjoyment
- ~~25. Regret: not reading more in high school~~
26. Problem with work: interferes with sports participation
27. Problem with work: complicates scheduling sports/other activities
28. Problem with work: creates fatigue
29. Value of work: teaches responsibility
30. Value of work: learning to interact with strangers
31. Problem with school: not a priority for those not college bound
- ~~32. Motivation for tough senior schedule: get ahead~~
- ~~33. Value of English: get ahead~~
34. Frustration with school: feeling of “everything due at once”
35. Frustration with school: teachers who don’t challenge students
36. Value of English: demands independent thinking
37. Value of English: had to earn grades
38. Value of English: demanded completion of assignments; no “half way”

- 39. Value of English: actually had to study vocabulary
- 40. Value of English: confidence using vocabulary away from school
- 41. Value of English: forced organization; had to know where things were
- 42. Regret: putting reading assignments last after sports, work, friends
- 43. Regret: unable to alter procrastination even though desired
- ~~44. Problem with English: boredom with reading~~
- 45. Regret: not studying more
- ~~46. Conflict: what students should do vs. what they actually do~~
- ~~47. Rationale for not reading English novels: lack of interest~~
- 48. Problem with all day school: losing money
- 49. Rationale for all day school: socialization
- ~~50. Rationale for all day school: socialization: no other time for it~~
- 51. Rationale for all day school: learn more
- 52. Dreading job: bad day at school goes to workplace
- ~~53. Value of work: money~~
- 54. Reason to work: money
- ~~55. Feeling overwhelmed: too many things~~
- ~~56. Feeling mind is overloaded~~
- 57. Problem with English: not paying attention (boredom)
- 58. Problem with work: fatigue
- 59. Problem with school: interferes with getting things done

- ~~60. Benefit of English: strategy learned: teaching others teaches self~~
61. Problem with work: interferes with family/friends
- ~~62. Future educational plans~~
- ~~63. Benefit of English: strategy for organizing~~
- ~~64. Benefit of English: prep for college: research paper~~
65. Benefit of English: strategy: teaching others teaches one to teach self
66. Benefit of English: DLP: builds confidence; erases fear
- ~~67. Benefit of English: teacher instructional strategy: rephrasing questions~~
- ~~68. Benefit of English: group work: perspectives of others; context clues~~
69. Benefit of English: group work: learning from others' strategies
70. Benefit of English: vocabulary and mnemonics
- ~~71. Benefit of English: teaches strategy~~
72. Problem with school: boredom at start and end of year
73. Problem with school: slack classes make English work more difficult/create apathy
- ~~74. Rationale for paying attention in English: family says to~~
- ~~75. Value of all day school: socialization~~
76. Rationale for work over school: preference for outdoors
77. Value of work applied to school: self discipline/work ethic
78. Value of work: preparation for real world
79. Value of work: teaches respect for others

80. Benefit of English: learning language from teacher's example
- ~~81. Benefit of English: built confidence through speaking before others~~
82. Benefit of English: feeling of bettering one's self
83. Benefit of English: better at communication away from school
- ~~84. Benefit of English: engagement through class discussions~~
- ~~85. Problem with school: doesn't teach money management~~
86. Problem with work: cannot see fruit of one's labor
87. Problem with work: monotonous; maddening
- ~~88. Problem with school: monotonous~~
- ~~89. Problem with school: no academic challenge~~
90. Problem with school: fails to prepare one for rigors of college
91. Benefit of English: understanding the research process
92. All day attendance: ridiculous
93. All day school: creates apathy
94. All day school: undermines work ethic
95. Problem with work: no time for school assignments
96. Rationale for work: fear of employment record if one quits
- ~~97. Rational for work: pay for gas and food~~
98. Problem with work: creates poor eating habits
99. Regret with school: failed to graduate with honors
100. Value of English: rigorous reading

- 101. Value of English: rigorous vocabulary from novels
- 102. Value of English: improves comprehension
- 103. Loss: motivation/academic drive
- 104. Problem with school: straight from book/no complex thinking
- ~~105. Problem with school: too many electives~~
- 106. Regret: no college credit at end of year
- 107. Regret: senior year “dulled my senses”
- 108. Value of work: less financial burden on parents
- 109. Value of work: maturity and self-reliance
- 110. Value of work: realization of a dollar’s worth
- ~~111. Value of work: helps with self image/peer pressure (no bus riding)~~
- 112. Rational for work: doesn’t want to be viewed as lazy
- 113. Value of English: learned “passion for job” from teacher
- 114. Value of English: read some amazing things wouldn’t have otherwise
- 115. Value of English: instructional strategy: PIE (point, illustration, explanation)
writing strategy
- 116. Value of English: peer interaction and sharing of viewpoints/ideas
- 117. Value of English: reading teaches perseverance
- 118. Value of English: goal setting
- 119. Problem with work: no time for family
- 120. Problem with work: creates worry over grades

121. Problem with work: interferes with desire to attend classes
- ~~122. Rationale for work: car insurance; save for college~~
123. Loss: Senior gatherings
124. Value of work: seeing self in relation to others
125. Value of work: window into lives of others
126. Value of work: promotes sense of belonging: “we-ness”
127. Value of work: awareness of others (underprivileged public)
128. Value of all day school: teaches life lessons
129. Value of work: teaches life lessons
130. Value of work: teaches one to separate self from parent
131. Problem with work: causes education to be sacrificed
132. Problem with work: lure of money overrides school
- ~~133. Problem with all day school: frustration with only core course/English~~
134. Value of English: recognition that challenges can be met
135. Regret: sacrificed education
136. Problem with work/time management: interferes with self education in
English away from school
137. Value of English: understanding self as learner
138. Value of English: encourages desire to learn more
139. Value of English: learned to not make assumptions about books before reading
them

140.Loss: athletics

141.Loss: sleeping disorder

142.Value of work: financial independence/can support self totally

143.Rationale for work: money for everything

144.Problem with work: fatigue creates illness

~~145.Value of work: feeling of being responsible~~

146.Result of work: older peer group

147.Loss: the “great” senior year

~~148.Relief: glad it's over~~

149.Value of all day school: quality education because of self motivation

150.Value of work: learning to cope with unpleasant co-workers and public

151.Value of work: learned you can't run from problems; must not quit

152.Value of school: preparation for real world

APPENDIX C

Invariant Constituents or Horizons:

How employed, rural seniors approach learning in English, their only required course

I. Perceived frustrations with mandatory attendance

- A. Misuse of time
- B. Lack of challenge
- C. Apathy
- D. Boredom
- E. Feeling of being overwhelmed

II. Perceived value of mandatory attendance

- A. Preparation for “real world”/life lessons
- B. Increased learning
- C. Socialization
- D. Potential for quality education
- E. Opportunity regarding decisions about future

III. Perceived frustrations with employment

- A. Compromised health
- B. Compromised educational opportunities
- C. Compromised relationships with family and friends

IV. Perceived personal growth/identity of self through employment

- A. Personal recognition
- B. Self control/self discipline
- C. Responsibility
- D. Ability to interact with strangers
- E. Window into the worlds of others/seeing self in relation to others
- F. Respect for others
- G. Work ethic
- H. Preparation for real world/life lessons
- I. Feeling of maturity
- J. Feeling of self-reliance
- K. Understanding of the worth of money
- L. Sense of belonging (we-ness)
- M. Understanding of the underprivileged public
- N. Healthy separation from parents
- O. Financial independence
- P. Commitment/punctuality
- Q. Older peer group/socialization
- R. Acquisition of interpersonal/coping skills
- V. Perceived personal growth acquired through senior English
 - A. Goal setting
 - B. Self discipline/self betterment

- C. Perseverance
- D. Improved communication away from school
- E. Organization
- F. Peer networking
- G. Independent thinking
- H. Understanding of self as learner
- I. Accountability
- J. Commitment
- K. Self expression before peers

VI. Perceived academic growth acquired through senior English

- A. Increased vocabulary
- B. Understanding of research process
- C. Improved comprehension
- D. Independent researching
- E. Rigorous reading
- F. Study strategies (context clues, mnemonic devices)
- G. Writing strategy
- H. Language usage skills

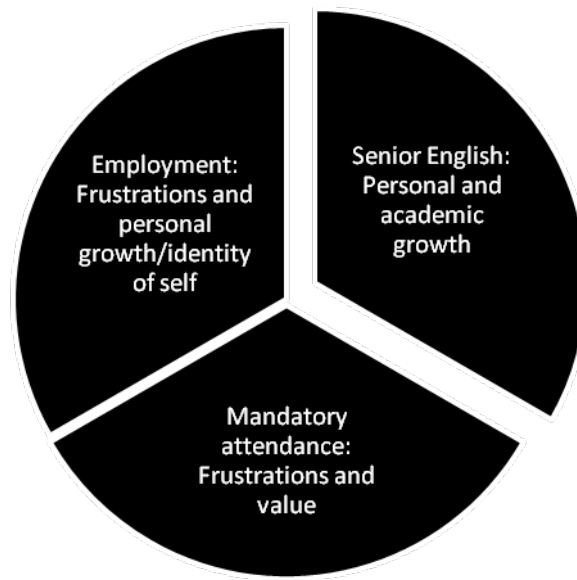


Figure 1 visually represents the themed constituents.