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Community Literacy, Community College, and Community Leadership in the Rural South: A Tenuous Triangle

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COMMUNITY LITERACY, COMMUNITY COLLEGE, AND COMMUNITY
LEADERSHIP IN THE RURAL SOUTH: A TENUOUS TRIANGLE

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

By
Denise K. Perdue

December 2016

COMMUNITY LITERACY, COMMUNITY COLLEGE, AND COMMUNITY
LEADERSHIP IN THE RURAL SOUTH: A TENUOUS TRIANGLE

Date Recommended 8/1/16




Dr. Kristin B. Wilson, Ph.D., Chair



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Dr. Aaron Hughey, Ed.D., Committee Member

 11/16/16
Dean, Graduate School Date

DEDICATION

Restoration from the Remnants of the Past

I discovered during this research process that the home I have come to cherish and have found peace and tranquility sits on a former plantation. The tears swell as I write even now. I had no idea. I am literally “walking on the shoulders of my ancestry.” I am awestruck that I will obtain the highest degree in the land from a place that literally crushed the human spirit of my ancestors. I experienced unprecedented pain living in this community, and at times experienced unbearable grief, sadness, and failure in this home; however, nothing compared to what occurred outside my front and back doors. I do not know the extent to which my kindred spirits have been propelling me to “finish Denise, finish,” but I heard them loud and clear. Through the years of writing I experienced a critical awakening identifying the links between social justice issues, self-recovery, and literacy. Through this egregious philosophy, choices were made through control that developed into a culture of silence for my ancestors. One of my charges will be to identify and remove the sources and forces that created the silence.

I commit to my ancestors the following:

I will share this writing experience whenever I speak to an audience about retrieving losses;

I will write a book entitled *I Heard You* that will examine the landscape of inadequate literacy development and its use as an instrument of repression; and

I will help others like me to no longer acculturate to expectations, but will insist and strive for more. We are now living in a knowledge-driven economy. Illiteracy is not an option.

I will remember. I realize you did not sacrifice for me; you endured for me and are now beckoning me to finish, stand up, and never be silenced again. I heard you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All individuals possess various interests relative to history and different perspectives on progress. The most important example of progress within the last 200 years, I believe, is the document you are currently reading. Two hundred years ago I, nor my race, would have been allowed to read this work, write this work, or have the support from scholars to complete it. It was not allowed. Progress. I have dedicated nearly six years to the dissertation completion process and four years to my undergraduate and graduate educational development and, at times, thought it was an implausible aspiration. I resolutely forged ahead through multiple set-backs personally, professionally, and academically, tackling each obstacle as it presented itself on the road toward completing my doctorate. I have learned that the journey itself, or the process, forces one to challenge predispositions, trust potentials, and understand that intellectual acuity creates choices with boundless opportunities. I began a practice of non-stop queries, and I remain determined to identify patterns leading to community illiteracy that sabotage human potential and development.

I must acknowledge the rigorous process positioned by Dr. Kristin B. Wilson. The Literature Review, Methods and Methodological selection, and Findings sections were an excruciating development experience, and your acute sense of research showed me that a meticulous research design would greatly enhance the study. You expected nothing but excellence because the product of my work directly reflected that which I needed you to help me understand — social justice has a literacy base. This was a difficult life lesson, but one I will revere forever because literacy development promotes social mobility,

economic confidence, and political knowledge, rather than the religious ideologies conveyed through a controlled hegemonic paradigm. Dr. Wilson, your depth of knowledge was rather intimidating at times. However, you were the best Chair for me, and I respected and appreciated your direct methods. You were thorough, straightforward, and complete. Not only did you believe in my abilities even when I was losing confidence, but you also guided me through the infinite and complex cultural maze of researchers and scholars. You taught me that good or great could still be better, and I utilized your directives to get me through this process. I am better prepared to give back to the system in which I resolutely aim to disrupt.

Dr. Jim Berger, thank you as well. The rigor of the research design contributed to the success of the research conducted. Your knowledge of Adult Learning Theories, and your willingness to guide me through understanding key concepts allowed me to interpret and analyze and, most important gain in-depth knowledge of the issue. You also guided my search to understand the interpretation and use of theories to develop my own queries of a phenomena. This knowledge led me to a successful interview protocol. I could not have proceeded without your insight into significant literature and the scholars in the area of my study. Also, I will forever use the lessons learned to acquire meaningful value-centered positions as I move forward in academia. My current position was obtained because of your time, attention, patience, and practice sessions. Thank you.

Dr. Aaron Hughey, you are such an inspiration for novice female researchers such as myself. You share your knowledge with every student and are a huge scholar in the domain of education. I am most grateful you agreed to serve as a member of my

dissertation committee. You have encouraged me with the knowledge to move forward with this project and beyond, and you indirectly inspired me to influence higher education policy. Thank you.

Miss Jenaya. My precious daughter. You are a Black woman with a college degree, and working in your field — education. Yes indeed, education works and you proved it like your brother. You helped me through every leg of this journey — particularly the transcription. I know you are proud of me; however, you allowed me to begin this educational journey many, many years ago with you as my first student. You trusted me, thank you. You challenged me to think beyond the norm, thank you. You pushed me to see cultural barriers when I did not want to see them, thank you. You read to me when I needed a respite, thank you. You taught me how to teach, develop curriculum, how to become financially astute, how to pray and to believe: “God is who He says He is” (Do you remember saying that to me on a daily basis?), and you taught me what it means to be a Mom. How were you able to do all of these things, because you questioned my every statement, request, judgement, and resolve. Question after question after question. That is why today you are Dr. Jenaya L. Perdue. You prepared me well from the moment you were born, and you were prepared well. Now, let’s go disrupt the educational norm. Our journey is just beginning. I love you.

Mr. John. My precious son. You are a Black man with a college degree and working in your field — business. Yes indeed, education works and you proved it like your sister. I remained committed to my studies, consistent with my theory-to-practice agenda, and steady through insurmountable difficulties and expectations certainly

because you did not complicate matters by having me worry about you. You knew how much I valued the meaning of education, and you did your part by pushing your intellect. You trusted me to curb negative influences that are responsible for and plague young men such as yourself with confusion, mistrust, hatred, semi-literacy, and disconnectedness. You trusted my resolve, even though as some would say, the most difficult growth period of a young man's life is the teenage years. Statistically the norm would dictate a different outcome — particularly for a young Black man being reared by a single Black mother. You disrupted the data, thank you. You are a standard of inspiration for the human condition. You have the propensity to motivate and to challenge all races, genders, and faiths. I am proud of what you have built. I love you.

Dad. Is there a doctor in the house? Nope, now there are FOUR! You changed our legacy. Thank you for:

Dr. Julie Yearling Jr., Ph.D. (my father)

Debra Yearling-Bryson, J.D. (my sister)

Dr. Jenaya L. Perdue, Ed.D. (my daughter)

Dr. Denise K. Perdue, Ed.D. (me)

The legacy will continue.

MOM. We all know there is nothing more to be said. However, I will continue your work. Thank you for the drive to push me to see beyond others' expectations.

Rogate. I would be remiss without acknowledging the emotional contribution of Rogate. You were the image I needed to keep fighting for what I believe to be true. I deserve better. Thank you!

PREFACE

It was important to me as a resident and researcher of Timner, Kentucky, to initially identify participants as either legacy landowners or not. This information was important from my discovery of the way in which Timner was established. According to Timner's archived data found in its museum artifacts, building markers, church histories, newspaper articles, family ledgers, books, and anecdotal conversations I conducted, Timner was incorporated from oppressive ideologies and practices, and the farming of tobacco was its primary source of economic development. I deduced that any participant with a lineage to landownership was directly predisposed to oppressive practices. The acknowledgment of this information was not shared with the participants; however, it allowed me to consider how the current level of literacy in the community could be linked and still practiced from an origin of repressive, unjust, and illiterate majority.

I vehemently reject the notion suggested by Graff (2010), a literacy research expert, that literacy is a "myth" (p. 642) and that it is not the route and "precursor to and invariably results in economic development, democratic practice, cognitive enhancement, and upward social mobility" (p. 635). The epistemological stance of Graff utilizing an etic pose — drawing inferences from outside a culture affected by a supposition — was evident and aligns with multiple researchers' "pathogenic approach to research" (Brooks, 2012, p. 125) about social injustice issues. The inevitable question from this pose would be: If literacy is a "myth," then what is the solution to the pervasive and recursive social, academic, and productive ills of our society?

Significant awareness has grown regarding literacy, along with attentiveness to conditions with which the lack of prioritizing literacy has wrought: oppression, hopelessness, discrimination, and subjugation. Scholars have alluded to their intuitive awareness of literacy, but a significant decline in the number of individuals having literacy deficiencies has yet to be seen: “We have the rhetoric of awareness without the will to change” (hooks, 2005, p. xv). One of the unique aspects of my discovery about poor adult literacy development is not the ongoing conversation of literacy problems, nor the sudden onset of political and social interest to find solutions to ameliorate the underdeveloped literacy causes in the larger economic landscape. Rather, it is the recursive tensions between races utilizing literacy to solidify class positions.

In my estimation, community colleges remain the untapped paragon to mitigate the identifiers associated with adult literacy deficiencies. This type of institution could strategically unpack the external forces that impede unification among differing classes and races. Further, despite the ideological view from the pioneers of the American education system to sequester investment in the democratic society to the elite, the future of America’s place in the hierarchy of countries that exemplify standards of excellence academically, fiscally, and socially is solely dependent upon its reinvestment in the product of education — this time though for all its citizenry.

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COMMUNITY LITERACY, COMMUNITY COLLEGE, AND COMMUNITY
LEADERSHIP IN THE RURAL SOUTH: A TENUOUS TRIANGLE

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155 pages

Directed by: Kristin B. Wilson, Jim Berger, and Aaron Hughey

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Western Kentucky University

This study explores a small, southern, rural community's interrelational domains engaged in literacy development and the choices made by community leaders related to their understanding of literacy. Community domains affected by community members' literacy deficiencies is ascertained by acknowledged sentience to the problem; however, the response to the challenges of inequitable access and denied liberties to all its members (i.e., education, employment, social strata, and governance) serves to articulate disparities in leadership for social justice and equity.

Within the context of ontological and epistemological assumptions, the transformative leadership conceptual framework by Brown (2006) of adult learning theory, transformative learning theory, and critical social theory are interwoven interrelationally with the three andragogical processes of critical reflection, rational discourse, and policy praxis to form an understanding of a community's deficient literacy development construct. A qualitative research paradigm is used for the investigation of this single-site case study, which includes interviews from 11 leaders representing various community domains (i.e., community college, secondary schools, library services, chamber of commerce, judicial services, civic services, and non-profits). Further, data collection techniques include transcripts from interviews from a semi-structured interview protocol, community documents, an auto-ethnographic examination,

and archived documentations. The study also operates from a pragmatist paradigm to explore the contextual and experiential principles from which inadequate literacy development practices originate.

Findings indicate that a collective origin of oppression (i.e., power, culture, epistemology, purpose, and literacy development) that goes unchallenged can continue to maintain class inequities in educational attainment, employment opportunities, social mobility, and a structure of governance.

The strategies are established to understand the way in which small, southern, rural community domains are interrelated. The transformative and reflective practices in which community members and leaders actively engage (e.g., educational, political, and emancipatory interests) articulate their understanding of literacy (Brown, 2006). Specifically, when examining “ontological and epistemological assumptions, values and beliefs, context and experience, and competing worldviews” (Brown, 2006, p. 700), it may be possible to develop community members and leaders that understand the shared cultural meaning of literacy.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

“We need to understand what currently exists before we can begin to understand what should exist.” Kathleen M. Brown

The purpose of this single-site case study is to examine the interrelationships between community domains engaged in literacy development and to understand the choices made by community leaders related to literacy. Therefore, the central research question focuses on do or how do community leaders understand and respond to the challenge of low literacy rates, followed by four research questions. First, how do community leaders in Timner, Kentucky, understand literacy and its practices?; second, what personal and professional experiences have guided leadership practices?; third, on the continuum from intransitive to transitive consciousness, how do leaders describe the issues in Timner, Kentucky; and fourth, does or how does literacy development affect the mission, goals, and outcomes of various community domains, particularly Timner Community College? Although literacy development in rural communities remains a challenge (Bracken, 2008), leaders must respond to inadequate literacy rates, as literacy development is essential for economic growth in an evolving knowledge-driven economy.

Introduction of the Problem

A number of reasons exist relative to the explanation of gaps in literature about inadequate literacy development and its persistence, pervasiveness, and significance in non-metropolitan southern communities. Critical philosophers such as Freire (2000) stipulated that in order for individuals and communities to strive for excellence and equity, “it is absolutely essential that the oppressed participate in the revolutionary process with an increasingly critical awareness of their role as Subjects of the

transformation” (p. 127). Further, due to countervailing pressures that resist change “if they [the oppressed] are drawn into the process as ambiguous beings...it is my contention that they will merely imagine they have reached power” (p. 127).

This study elaborates on the domains involved in Timner, Kentucky’s, poor literacy developed community members. This perspective is ascertained by acknowledged sentience to the problem but denial of equitable access and liberties to all its members (i.e., education, employment, social strata, and governance). According to US Census data, Timner, Kentucky, is the sixth largest city in the state with a population averaging 32,900. Population growth since 2010 has been .3%, with 20.5% living below the national poverty level.

In 2002 the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported findings from an eight-month study beginning in 1992 that surveyed and interviewed 26,000 adults on the complexity of literacy issues in the United States. At the time, “44 million of the 191 million adults in this country – demonstrated skills in the lowest level of prose, document, and quantitative proficiencies” (p. xvi). Despite unprecedented growth in world incomes and unparalleled improvements in educational standards, educators remain perplexed in ways to reduce the world of poverty and illiteracy, particularly in rural areas (Coleman, 1966). In 1998 the Task Force on Adult Education in Kentucky, led by Governor Paul E. Patton, “met ten times to address the directive of Senate Concurrent Resolution 126 (1998) to develop recommendations and an implementation plan for raising the literacy level and educational attainment of Kentucky’s adults who have not graduated from high school or who have poor literacy skills” (as cited in Legislative

Research Commission. (2000). *Adult education and literacy in Kentucky* (Research Report No. 296).

The Task Force was comprised of Senator Walter Blevins, Vice-Chair and Representative Brent Yonts, Vice-Chair; five State Representatives; five State Senators; and five Stakeholder appointments; two Legislative Research Commission Staff; and one Consultant to the Task Force, Aims C. McGuneness from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. In 1999 The Task Force reported that, “adult illiteracy is like a disease that infects virtually every dimension of Kentucky life” (p. 1). The findings from the report stated:

40% of Kentucky working age population (1 million) is at the two lowest literacy levels I and II – not being able to read at all or at very limited to moderate levels; Two-thirds of Kentucky’s counties have 40% or more of their working age population at levels I and II literacy; in 10 counties 50% or more of the working age population is at levels I and II literacy; Continued high dropout rates from secondary school continue to feed the problem; and low literacy levels of parents relate directly to the education of children and youth. Children of parents with low literacy levels are five times more likely to drop out of school. (p. x)

Statement of the Problem

Poor literacy development in Timner includes speculations on the way in which community members, institutions, and leaders define literacy and equity. The chronic problem of adults with poorly developed literacy skills is that it sustains unemployment, restricts postsecondary educational opportunities, impedes the likelihood of open-ended possibilities, increases recidivism in correctional institutions, and prolongs welfare

dependence. In Timner, Kentucky, it also stifled community growth and economic development. For this study, the response to these challenges originates from interviews, Chamber of Commerce declarations, Timner Schools academic scorecard, public domain documents, and community college documents. The combined evidence describes a community culture determined to maintain “historic marginalization of underprivileged [community members], and the perpetuation of the status quo [which have] served to benefit the same...[group of people] for hundreds of years” (Brown, 2006, p. 701).

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this single-site case study is to examine the interrelationships between community domains engaged in literacy development and to understand the choices made by community leaders related to literacy. Although literacy development in rural communities remains a challenge (Bracken, 2008), leaders must respond to the challenge of low literacy rates, as literacy development is essential for economic growth in an evolving knowledge-driven economy.

Research Questions

The central research question for this study is: Do or how do community leaders understand and respond to the challenge of low literacy rates? Questions also include:

- How do community leaders in Timner, Kentucky, understand literacy and its practices?
- What personal and professional experiences have guided their leadership practices?
- On the continuum from intransitive to transitive consciousness, how do leaders describe the issues in Timner, Kentucky?

- Does or how does literacy development affect the mission, goals, and outcomes of various community domains, particularly Timner Community College?

Conceptual Design

Brown’s (2006) conceptual model, entitled *An Andragogy of Transformative Leaders: The Principle Weaves of Principal Preparation*, is used to understand the way Timner’s leadership developed, understood, and made decisions based on their knowledge of literacy development (See Figure 1 for the *Conceptual Framework*). An accumulation of symbolic beliefs, values, and cultural understandings provide “expectations, framed within cultural assumptions and presuppositions [which] directly influence the meaning they derive from their experiences” (p. 708).

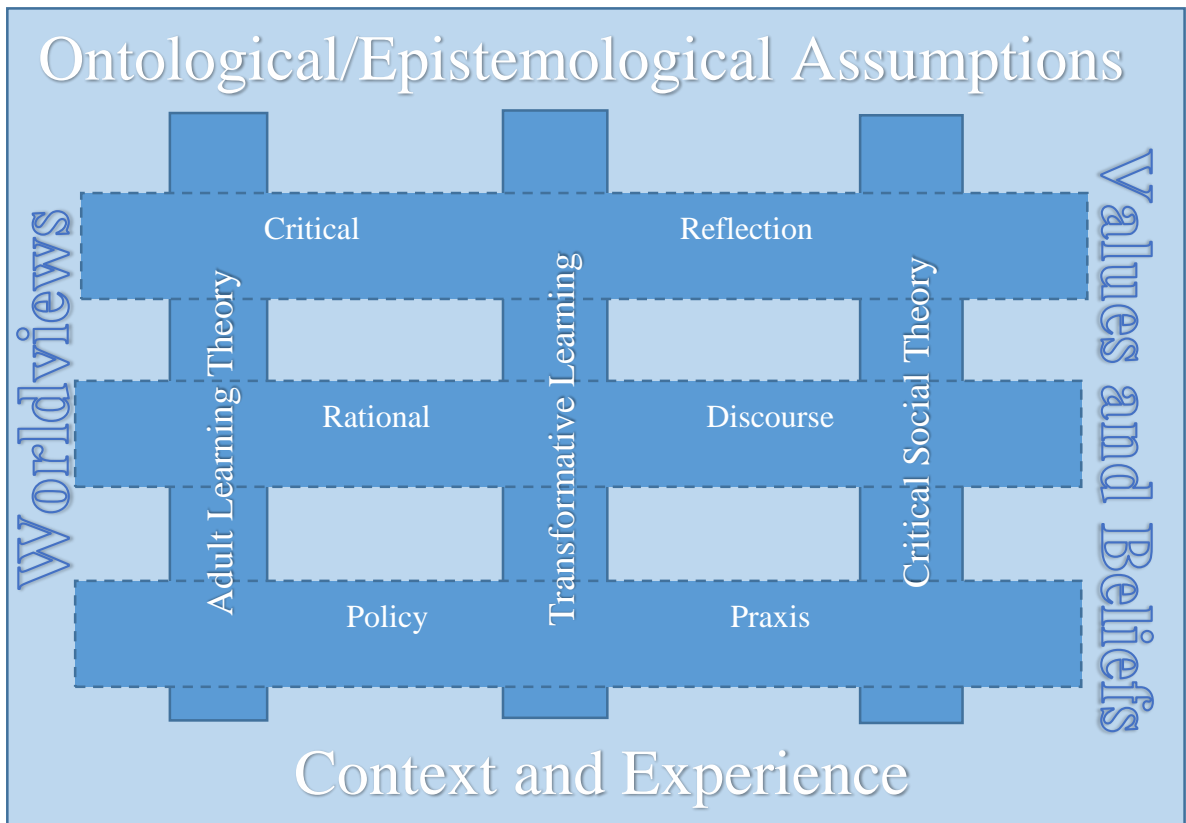


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

Significance of the Study

Brown (2006) believed, “Leaders for social justice and equity are committed to lifelong learning and growth, to recognizing and eliminating prejudice and oppression, to increasing awareness, to facilitating change, and to building inclusive communities,” (p. 735). Therefore, this research study is a deliberate examination of a symbolic layer of culture within a naturalistic setting — deficient literacy development in a small southern rural community: Timner, Kentucky. The investigation and analysis of participants’ knowledge about literacy, substantiated by an in-depth analysis of documentation from multiple interrelational community domains, is the motivation to probe deeper into the way rural community members’ lives are influenced by multiple oppressive forms of literacy development. Subsequently, I studied Timner community members’ ontological/epistemological assumptions about literacy. Community leaders’ contextual and experiential policy to praxis discourse extended from their understanding of literacy shapes the data gathering procedures. While scholars have long asserted that capital producing mechanisms are used in educational practices to instigate inequality (Francisconi, 2008):

What is more pernicious than...our common culture background knowledge, is [the] selective omission of cultural facts that all Americans also need to know but are prevented from knowing. This is part of the ongoing poisonous pedagogy designed to impart...from the beginning false information and beliefs that have been passed on from generation to generation and dutifully accepted by the young even though they are not only unproved but are demonstrably false. (Macado, 1994, p. 65)

In addition, research about rural America commonly has explored the “repository of virtuous and patriotic values, deeply rooted in a proud history of farming” (Burton, Lichter, Baker, & Eason, 2013 Abstract) and a working class White ethnic populace (Larson & Dearmont, 2002; Gillett-Karam, 1995, as cited in Eddy, 2007, p. 271). Timner, Kentucky, is one such community. Deeply rooted in distinctive values and ethos founded upon subjugation, conjecture coupled with supported evidence suggests that Timner’s White dominant decision-making group controls and outlines the way power and influence classified community members. Inadequate literacy development could be ascertained from this shared principle and points of congruence.

Definitions of Terms

Community Literacy and Community Leadership

For the purpose of this study the terms “community literacy and community leadership” are used for clarity and consistency of the interrelationships between community domains engaged in literacy development. The literacy culture in a small southern rural community is investigated, rather than conducting a corporate study on the economic crisis imposed by limited literacy development. The current study also uses cultural literacy terminology for clarification and consistency in definitions of social justice, equity and transformative learning as described in the literature. (Brown, 2006; Collins, 2011) (see Table 1 for definitions of cultural terms). These cultural terms describe the effects from interrelationships between community domains engaged in literacy development and the choices made by community leaders. The culture of institutionalized literacy development is explored to discover the challenges confronting leadership from community members with poor literacy development.

Delimitations and Limitations

One delimitation of the study is its sample size. The study occurs in a small southern rural community in which I resided. I did not grow up in the community, nor did I reside in the southern culture; however, I lived in Timner for 15 years and developed a respected and recognized position toward education. The small number of interviews and my relationship with those interviewed allowed for an in-depth study into the leadership philosophies and decisions of the participants. The rich descriptions offered in this dissertation would have been impossible with a larger sample.

Another delimitation of the study concerns transferability. Timner is a unique community in terms of its history and development; therefore, the interactions between domains that produce the subjugating forces for Black residents may well be distinctive to Timner. However, readers may find that these relationships and subjugating forces are at work in their small communities as well. I attempted to provide the type of rich description that empowers the reader to determine the transferability of the study to other contexts and communities. A final delimitation of the study is that I am a Black female co-constructing meaning through interviews with leaders in Timner. At times I suspected the participants were deliberately trying to hide egregious philosophies or choices. However, analysis and coding of the transcripts reveal the difficulty of hiding implicit biases of which the leaders may well not know they hold.

A limitation of this study is that it is not designed to ascertain whether the leaders enact the philosophies they espouse. While they offer examples of enacted philosophies, I made no attempt to verify the stories told. However, I did analyze policy documents to determine the values expressed and explicit issues with adult literacy in the community.

Table 1

Community Literacy and Community Leadership Cultural Terms

Cultural Terms	Definition
Andragogy	Learners view education as a process of developing increased competence to achieve their full potential in life. They want to be able to apply whatever knowledge and skill they gain today to living more effectively tomorrow. Learning experiences organized around competency-development categories. Performance-centered in their orientation to learning.
Rural Community Domains	A shift from personal awareness to social action, reminding us that respect for diversity entails advocacy, solidarity, an awareness of societal structures of oppression, and critical social consciousness.
Community Literacy	Community members fall into a predetermined mold designed for school failure and social inequity.
Epistemological Assumptions	Through reflection and challenge, individuals evaluate and adjust their thinking.
Intergenerational Interrelationship	Beliefs mediate knowledge, expectations, and actions. If professional beliefs (and subsequent professional behaviors) are directly influenced by personal beliefs, it is critical that preparation program curricula address deeper issues related to diversity.
Intragenerational Mobility	Community members want to be able to apply whatever knowledge and skill they gain today to living more effectively tomorrow.
Intransitive Consciousness	The lack of reflecting on, discussing, and/or addressing issues of race, poverty, and disability.
Literacy	Learners view education as a process of developing increased competence to achieve their full potential in life.
Ontological Assumptions	Learning experiences organized around competency-development categories. Performance-centered in their orientation to learning.

Social Reproduction	The perpetuation of the status quo served to benefit the same [community members]. Historic marginalization of underprivileged [community members] for hundreds of years while simultaneously ignoring the needs of low-income, Black, Brown, Native, and Asian [community members].
Transitive Consciousness	Change agents that analyze the cultural aspects that have permitted long-standing social inequalities to not only proliferate but also become institutional ideological belief systems.

Note: Adapted from “Leadership for Social Justice and Equity: Evaluating a Transformative Framework and Andragogy,” by K. W. Brown, 2006, *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 42, pp. 700-745.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this single-site case study is to examine the interrelationships between community domains engaged in literacy development and to understand the choices made by community leaders related to literacy. Therefore, the central research question focuses on do or how do community leaders understand and respond to the challenge of low literacy rates, followed by four research questions. First, how do community leaders in Timner, Kentucky, understand literacy and its practices?; second, what personal and professional experiences have guided leadership practices?; third, on the continuum from intransitive to transitive consciousness, how do leaders describe the issues in Timner, Kentucky; and fourth, does or how does literacy development affect the mission, goals, and outcomes of various community domains, particularly Timner Community College? Although literacy development in rural communities remains a challenge (Bracken, 2008), leaders must respond to inadequate literacy rates, as literacy development is essential for economic growth in an evolving knowledge-driven economy.

Literacy as a Structural Concept

The literature review is more conceptual than empirical, as few scholars have considered literacy as a community concept, as opposed to a school concept. This research is a case study of community illiteracy in a small rural community in Western Kentucky. The study is structured to examine the interrelationships between community domains engaged in literacy development, and to identify the choices, expectations, or initiatives leaders use in order that I can identify recurring themes related to literacy. Essentially, this study investigates the way members and agencies in a small, southern,

rural community understand and promote literacy. With this intent, the purpose of this chapter was to review the body of literature relevant to the study.

This research focuses on peer-reviewed journal articles published subsequent to the 1960s. The oldest of the literature, a collection of essays criticizing the community college construct and primarily emphasizing practices that have led to the development of hegemonic academic cultures, dates back to 1968 and was re-published in 1986. The articles were divided into nine topical areas explaining the constructs relating to:

1. literacy and meritocracy (Boyer, Butner, & Smith, 2007);
2. rural communities (Bracken, 2008);
3. ontological/epistemological assumptions of literacy (Brown, 2006);
4. social reproduction (Collins, 2011);
5. early learners' literacy (Cummins, 2011);
6. intergenerational literacy (Harris, 1992);
7. intragenerational literacy (hooks, 2005a);
8. community colleges (Kirst & Venezia, 2004);
9. andragogy (Knowles, 1980);
10. educational leadership (Mezirow, 2000);
11. literacy and capital (Piketty, 2014); and
12. literacy and the 21st century (Rex et al., 2010).

Seventy articles were reviewed related to educational administrators, leadership, particularly theoretical perspectives of adult learning, equity in teaching, and the parameters of inequality suspected in practices; the definition of literacy, adult education, and civic engagement as related to community literacy development; and the role and

response of rural community colleges. Only five of the articles used quantitative methods; one used institutional data, another used a self-reported data set, and the other three used a series of established data sets from regional programs accentuating underrepresented populations. In addition, I examined 34 literature reviews, five essays, 10 case studies, one scientific paper, two longitudinal studies, one dissertation, three biographical studies, one digest, five narratives, one monograph, one philosophical paper, a Standard and Poor's Global Credit Portal report, and one concept paper. Also read and reviewed were several popular press books for the current study to supplement the research studies. Well-known books were read on the subject of educational leadership (Mezirow, 2000); andragogy (Knowles, 1984); oppressive pedagogy (hooks, 2005, 2010); disparity in capital (Picketty, 2014); and destructive leadership resulting from race, social justice, and hegemonic education practices (Freire, 2000). Equally important, Brown (2006) believed "the true test of connection between personal understandings and individual and/or collective public responsibility is the degree to which any of the talk we engage in about social justice prompts us to a different kind of activism" (p. 706).

Theoretical Framing of Community Literacy

Empirical studies on social reproduction in rural communities have not fully operationalized the concept using ideas from all four views described in Brown's (2006) adult learning, transformative learning, and critical social theories (i.e., ontological/epistemological). This review of literature provides research from authors outlining an andragogy framework (adult learning theories), beginning with an ethnographic study based upon a researcher's initial attitude toward literacy issues in a

small southern rural community. In addition, the study documents the authors' philosophical "transformation" by examining intergenerational literacy development.

Researching Systemic Social Justice Challenges Involving Literacy

Cultural participation (literacy development) was consistently affected by all four of Brown's (2006) *principle weaves of principal preparations* toward social reproduction. Articles were sought that would emphasize a "reflective analysis and activist intervention" (Brown, 2006, p. 702) practice accentuating topics about literacy. An intentional search was employed for studies to assist in identifying academic boundary or limitation practices that target one ethnic population by another.

Also, a search was conducted for articles that noted the lack of systemic intervention practices in an attempt to assign a name to poor literacy development issues that were reviewed. Observances and experiences from the literature included hegemonic literacy practices from a researcher's point of view who sought to raise the level of consciousness about literacy, social reproductive practices, economic disparity practices, ontological/epistemological assumption practices, or transformational education practices. Articles were sought that did not focus solely on the literacy dilemma from southern rural counties in the United States. Instead, I preferred articles that would unravel a systemic construct of critical race and social justice challenges involving literacy at its core.

Ontological/epistemological Assumption of Literacy

From the literature, little critique was found targeting researchers' ontological views on the problem of literacy. Proponents of a high-quality education revealed post-positivist positions toward practices that were important for understanding stratification

and social reproduction in contemporary societies as they relate to literacy development (Collins, 2011). The examination of researchers' literacy practices may be linked to those that reinforced persistent class inequities. Although this may be true, executing quick-fix practices at the macro level of the phenomena may lead researchers to remain constrained and unchallenged in their micro-level beliefs about literacy; i.e. the educational attainment and social mobility of the researcher may need to be examined when investigating literacy development. Gaining insight into the origin of one's development may explain the relationship between social reproduction and hegemony. Thus, the research from Collins (2011) is important to this body of work. Not only was Collins' work necessary to review due to her introspective analysis of her own literacy development, but the opening of the conversation about the need for literacy is important when researchers begin their respective studies with an epistemological argument about their literacy development. Also, because of the complicated and pervasive assumption about the way in which and to whom literacy development practices should be distributed in small southern rural communities, the extension of her work (an introspective analysis to community, education, and community agency leaders) may warrant an understanding of the establishment of their practices. As leaders are charged with equipping, motivating, and developing community members' literacy levels, reviewing the work of Collins led to the relation of community leaders' literacy development to their decisions for community members from their respective positions.

In terms of developing an understanding of equal education practices from "agency administrators, human service providers, and social work practitioners [who] ...work with African Americans...living in rural communities" (Collins, 2011, p. 201),

research practices noted in a case study by Collins (2011) noted the importance of “adopt[ing] culturally sensitive practices and solutions” (p. 201). In order to examine the effects of inadequate literacy development and community progress, examining one’s limited knowledge of cultural differences and acknowledging one’s deficits of cultural competencies based upon agency affiliation are important. Collins (2011) identified several areas of cultural incompetence of leaders in rural communities with aging African Americans. She explored the basis of the growing and aging population in the United States: “Baby Boomers...people born between 1946–1964)” (p. 201). She used data from the Bureau of Census and the 2006 National Institute on Aging that reported the older population “(65+) is projected to double from 36 million in 2003 to 72 million in 2030” (p. 201). According to Collins, this indicates that rural communities with a growing older population, and for her study a concentration of African Americans in small, southern rural communities, were subject to “income” (p. 202); “health care” (p. 203); “transportation” (p. 203); and “social services and community providers” (p. 203) who possessed cultural competency in order to acknowledge rather than exploit their variations.

Collins (2011) further explained the importance of these competencies and discussed four operational practices developed through her case study “of an elderly family friend of thirty plus years” (p. 205). Collins self-described herself as a “twenty-four year old Caucasian rural-based social worker...[interviewing] an eighty-one year old, southern, African American widower” (p. 205). Her case illustrations described the first means to approach and to develop a cultural skill by “address[ing] elders by their surname...(i.e., Mrs./Miss/Ms./Mr. [This can be construed] as an empowering gesture

that signified respect and value for the humanity of the individual” (p. 207).

A second cultural competency was expanding one’s “understand[ing] that some older [Black] adults speak in stories, one-liners, idioms, or parables” (p. 208). Collins (2011) noted that these oral lineaments were tools from slavery that allowed the African American culture to be preserved, as well as served as a conduit to “share values, beliefs, and other forms of expression that they were denied” (p. 208). An example of an idiom from Collins’ interviewee was her statement that “a leopard’s spots won’t change” (p. 208), referring to trust. Her “aphorism taught loved ones to guard against being deceived about a person’s integrity and trustworthiness” (p. 208).

The third cultural competency from Collins (2011) discussed the importance of “form[ing] partnerships with community caregivers” (p. 210). These connections were viewed as an assessment tool. Collins determined that the collaborative efforts made between the agencies on behalf of its community members would ensure enhanced “visibility and credibility” (p. 210). This collective data gathering stratagem among community members and agency providers, Collins believed, acknowledged the fiscal limitations of social agencies and the “restrictive...social and economic barriers...[endured because of the] cuts from federal and state government...policies” (p. 203). Additionally, the sharing of information created an effective review of the overall needs of the individual and an estimation of the effectiveness of a “cross-cultural” practice. This evaluation presumably would raise the level of awareness through a “cultural context” (p. 210), rather than a “stereotypical and bias” context (p. 204) in order to better gauge the needs of the community. Collins discovered the difficulty of the elderly in gaining reliable transportation to medical appointments and the need to rely on

trusted confidants to assist in these areas—dependable and affordable transportation and medical care issues.

According to Collins (2011), one point often overlooked, was that community agency members do not consider transportation. Collins surmised that, when discussing transportation, it is important to consider the meager amount of income received by the elderly population to maintain reliable transportation, or even to have transportation; thus, the need for agencies to be able to “organize free or low-cost transportation services...to empower older adults to gain access to quality care that is sensitive to their economic and health needs” (p. 210).

Last, Collins (2011) supported the need to “understand that spirituality and religion are strong sources of emotional support” (p. 211) in the Black community. She discovered that the Black church historically has viewed the church as the institution from which African American families receive “resources, wisdom, knowledge, and skills” (p. 211). Collins cautioned, however, about the intentions of those willing to engage in the cultural mores of African Americans. While developing one’s competencies, one should guard against “sweeping generalizations about rural Black churches in spite of their uniqueness, location, or size” (p. 213). She reported that, in order to become a prudent culturally sound practitioner of the African American populace while gaining an understanding of their use of religion as a “protective factor” (p. 213), one must “suspend judgment and opinions about rural clients’ faith practices” (p. 213). Overall, in terms of working with Black individuals in small southern rural communities, and in the case of the current research focus of literacy, Collins broadened the dialogue by encouraging the development of culturally competent practitioners. Learning to

approach individuals by first becoming aware of one's own cultural nuances, Collins hoped that service providers would become "knowledgeable about the vestiges of discrimination and adversity that have impeded minority clients' ability to access many types of services" (p. 213).

Literacy Defined

Historical Background

As early as 1882 the concern for the way in which illiteracy was interpreted, understood, and used was of particular importance to those interested in growing the American economy. In an 1882 written document presented to the Union League Club of New York City, Hon. John Eaton, LL.D., the U.S. Commissioner of Education, stated:

It is not inappropriate as representatives of the great and far-seeing property interests of this metropolis that you ...should weigh the evils threatened by illiteracy and seek for their removal...have not our statesmen in the great changes of the last score of years seen the imperative needs of their revisions, and discovered the opportunity by giving to universal suffrage the guarantee of universal intelligence, to add new assurance of the prosperity of the country, and of the continuance of our liberties, and new glories to American citizenship? (p.

7)

Subsequent to 1883 the term "literacy" was defined as the ability to read and write. Those in society with this ability have status; those without do not. Just as important, "The term functional literacy was first used in formal educational contexts in the 1970's to publicly announce a widespread literacy crisis among adults who were unprepared for the emerging postindustrial labor market in the United States" (Pane &

Salmon, 2009, p. 283) [contrary to partisan influences, economic, social, or cultural practices from its early definition].

However, as the term and its definition have not changed across continents since 1883, current weaknesses and deficits in the educational system may be better understood by factors and overall interpretations of the term, its definition, and its usage. The ability to read and write determines and subsequently defines the way a society cultivates “factors such as social status, gender, vocation, and various criteria by which a given society understands” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2013). The term and definition, in contrast, did not carry the same designation as other cultures across the continent, a measure used to ensure a stable and progressive economic infrastructure. More specifically, in the United States, particularly in the rural South, literacy was used to depress specific alienated populations from equitable opportunities, while ensuring that a dominant group created and sustained upwardly mobile enterprises.

Essentially, literacy, in the rural South, was used to subjugate marginalized populations who were illiterate, especially Blacks. By withholding literacy education from marginalized populations, wealthy Southerners were able to ensure that their wealth grew and justified the economic structures that enabled them. Literacy was the nexus in determining the social order of entitlement in American capitalism.

Literacy Post Industrialization

The National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL), a “nationally representative assessment of English literacy among American adults,” defined literacy in two phases: (1) “the ability to *use* (emphasis added) printed and written information to function in society,” and (2) “skills based (operational) word-level reading skills [and] higher level

literacy skills” (McCloskey & White, 2003). These definitions suggested a rudimentary denotation to determine whether an individual is literate. While the definition of literacy has changed little, literacy scholars view it as an evolving term (Chu, 1999; Hauptli & Cohen-Vogel, 2013; Johnson & Cowles, 2009; Rex et al., 2010; Ryan, 1992; Saal & Dowell, 2014; Thames & York, 2003). The next section explores growing concerns and assumptions about various levels of literacy. This examination elicits different types of questions that could be asked to re-define the term for the 21st century economic construct.

Tabor (1987) reviewed the definitions of functional literacy through the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the Education Commission of the States (ECS), Adult Performance Level (APL), and ERIC database using the terms “literacy, literacy education, adult literacy, functional literacy, Reading Instruction, and Minimum Competencies” in order to determine the extent to which the meaning of the term has fluctuated in today’s modern society. Her findings speculated that the various “relative and absolute definitions of literacy” (p. 458) depended upon the culture and the standards by which the terms are used. Increasingly, researchers have begun to wonder whether the lack of continuity in defining the term literacy, particularly “functional competencies” (p. 460), contributes to “judgments about the extent of literacy in the U.S.” (p. 458).

Keefe and Copeland (2011) proposed a similar argument that the absence of a modern day umbrella definition of literacy affects the availability of opportunities to individuals. They examined “literacy as a human right” (p. 92) and presumed it would benefit one’s quality of life if literacy instruction was not “routinely denied” (p. 92) to those most needing such support. Keefe and Copeland explored the concept of a

relationship between the definition of literacy and subsequently the way opportunities are extended. This opened a conceptual conversation of “core definitional principles” (p. 92) through a historical approach from groups such as The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) which in 1966 “established the Experimental World Literacy program and characterized literacy as being a fundamental human right” (p. 92). Their core definitional principles of literacy enveloped the idea that assumes all people are “capable” (p. 97); literacy is a “fundamental part of the human experience” (p. 97); “relationship” (p. 97) building requires connecting with others which involves “communication and contact” (p. 97); and ultimately the “community” (p. 97) is responsible for insuring literacy is developed among its members. They found through a pilot study of action research that their courses and professional development sessions, in which the core principles of literacy were used, directly responded to the variation of “conventional definitions of literacy” (p. 97); and the benefits of literacy development that was cogently defined becomes a practice of developing human potential.

Social Reproduction

Harris (1992) examined “conceptions of literacy held by African Americans” (p. 278) by first defining literacy as “education and schooling” (p. 278). In the 1700s Harris uncovered “the irony of fighting for liberty from England while maintaining slavery” (p. 278) as an impetus toward freedom and independence for African Americans. She garnered from the literature that the quest for former slaves to provide provisions for learning resulted from “Sunday School[s] [and] the creation of benevolent and literary societies” (p. 278). Correspondingly, she noted that through the mid-1800s, despite a

period of political uprisings, “basic, vocational, classical education for African Americans began in earnest” (p. 279).

Intergenerational Literacy

Intergenerational literacy can be described as implications toward learning from beliefs and traditions within a culture. In addition, the cultural beliefs that shape literacy development often are enacted through interpretations and translations of literacy. Further, community literacy development may be considered a shared instrument that can safeguard personal power through culturally contextualized and socially embedded phenomena (e.g., hegemony, politics, race and racism, and beliefs about access to education) (Harris, 1992).

Intergenerational literacy research maps the implications and beliefs of literacy development through traditions that define, use, refine, and transform literacy as a function of lifespan needs. The importance of this literature for the scope of this study is the significance within the African American culture, particularly those in rural southern communities, to examine the preservation of the sharing of information about prior knowledge, social history, and personal and community expectations and goals toward literacy development. More important, historical documentation of literacy development within the African American culture proposed the dismantling of myths about literacy development among this disenfranchised population that occurred through meritocratic social reproduction practices.

Literacy and Racial Disparities

Ntiri (2013) also examined African American illiteracy issues similar to Harris. Ntiri contextualized three “salient barriers—incarceration, urban residential segregation

and intergenerational illiteracy,” (p. 159) as links to understanding illiteracy issues particularly confronting the African American population. Ntiri used critical race theory to guide her research, which she believed “permeates our social fabric...resulting from discontinuities between the larger society and African Americans” (p. 159). This particular piece of literature notably aligns with similar studies about poor literacy development; however, her stance on the Black population illuminated substantial “limitations imposed on one group by another...by the stark difference between the rates of adult literacy in the Black and White communities” (p. 159).

Through her critical race theory framework, Ntiri (2013) examined experiences of Black people as they responded in personal narratives to their delinquency in “computer literacy, health literacy, civic literacy, workplace literacy, financial literacy and media literacy” (p. 160). She also read several literature reviews tying closely with the theories of Ladson-Billings (1992) by defining and assigning a name to “racial disparities educationally and socio-economically” (p. 161).

Ntiri (2013) focused heavily on the relationship between the “microaggressions” (p. 161) of the majority group and the exploitation of the minority group “to give advantage to the capitalistic intentions...[from which] cooperation is evident” (p. 161), as well as the way in which they *can* (emphasis added) “mobilize resources for political and economic development” (p. 159). Evidence exists of such a relationship, according to Ntiri, due to illiteracy. She frequently pointed to political ideology that “subvert(s) the rights of blacks [and emphasizes] disproportionate opportunit[ies]” (p. 163). As an illustration, she rejected “ascriptive arguments regarding supposed deficiencies in the African American culture because literacy has historically been of great value in the in

the Black community” (p. 163). Further, she emerged with one idea that “intergenerational illiteracy [during the building of the] post-industrial American structure constrain[ed] opportunities” (p. 163) by creating a cycle of economic disadvantage. She added that “literacy within the home and the wider community is how knowledge is cultivated and passed on...[thus], a child’s value of education is evidence of parental social status, disposition and willingness to participate in learning opportunities that will enhance their literacy proficiencies” (p. 165). She surmised from her research that literacy disparities are “widening the chasm between the haves and the have-nots” (p. 166), as well as the importance of those in the field of education (e.g., educators and policy makers) acknowledging literacy as the “major social and political influence for marginalized groups” (p. 166).

Decentering Literacy Development

Harris (1992) documented African American literacy development by way of a historical perspective that utilized biographical material from multiple African American theorists dated: 1700–1799; 1800–1859; 1860–1899; 1900–1939; and 1940–1992. She used a collection of autobiographies, essays, monographs, periodicals, memoirs, speeches, and literature written and published by African Americans. The range of authors included Asante, Douglass, Du Bois, and Woodson, to name a few. Harris further noted the decision among African American leaders (e.g., Carter G. Woodson) “to establish a college at New Haven, [Philadelphia] that would offer a classical curriculum” (p. 279). One significant contributor and principle figure during this period in terms of educational achievement through hostile environments was Fanny Jackson Coppin. Her personal “educational attainments” were deemed as “proof that the race could achieve”

(p. 279). She ultimately became the principal of the Philadelphia Institute for Colored Youth while “fervently [seeking] educational opportunities for youth” (p. 279).

In addition, Harris (1992) documented that the “Literacy for Liberation” (p. 280) campaign, during the early 19th century, increased the number of free African Americans to become literate. As an illustration, “central to the creation of elementary, secondary, and higher education institutions, African American leaders began to offer adult education...free public school for all children...and makeshift schools...established through the humble efforts of former slaves” (p. 280). As a consequence, this plan could be characterized as “encourage[ing] philosophies and curricula that affirmed the value of African Americans and their culture...to acquire the literacy needed to function in an advanced technological society” (p. 283). Despite the vast economic growth and development in the United States, inadequate literacy development grew out of actions that denied equitable access and attainment for all citizenry.

However, and important to realize, Harris (1992) detected a shift among African American leaders that occurred in response to a “conspiracy to destroy Black boys,” (p. 283) instigated by the “integrated schooling philosophies” (p. 283). This collusion led to increased journal writing (i.e., *Journal of Negro Education*); the development of civil rights organizations (e.g., NAACP); and court decisions (e.g., *Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954, Topeka, Kansas). As a result, Harris concluded that, in order to understand the complexity and multiple stratagem used to help African Americans acquire literacy, the nexus of this knowledge should be anchored by “insight into current conditions... [and] the historical development of literacy among African Americans” (p. 284).

Educational Leadership

Transformative Learning

For this study, community literacy, community colleges, community leadership, and educational leadership are significant toward the examination of social reproduction through inequality patterns particularly in relation to literacy development in the current knowledge-driven economy. According to researchers such as Brown (2006); Knowles (1980); and Pane and Salmon (2009) the transformative nature of learning is a process of experiential learning, critical self-reflection, and rational discourse. The importance of the studies found under this body of literature was that which the potential leaders possessed in scrutinizing social responsibility — personal agency through their sociocultural experiences simulated by individuals, events, or changes in contexts that challenged their basic assumptions of the world. Further, this study includes others from K-12 researchers in order to provide ample arguments about ascriptive literacy development, particularly related to defining knowledge and skills needed for adults in their daily activities and work.

Andragogy

Knowles (1980) assumed the lead in the United States in andragogy, developing and initiating teaching practices for educational practitioners instructing adult learners. In his philosophical research about Andragogy — the art of teaching adult learners through their life experiences — he stated that, from their “natural... (p. 42) measure[able] gains [of] competence (p. 49)... from [life] experiences” (p. 49), students could become empowered to sustain academic rigor while concurrently addressing the factors that led to their literacy deficiencies. The significance of his research for this study is the reiteration

of the importance of educational leaders interpreting the origin of their sociocultural experiences. The examination into whether educational leaders include their life experiences as a construct toward understanding literacy development could indicate an ascriptive way in which social reproduction is practiced.

Literacy and Lineaments of Expression

Attempting to identify scholarship gaps in adult learners entering higher education institutions and developing teaching practices for these learners, has undergone several iterations among adult learning practitioners. The difficulty lies in identifying the coping mechanisms most often termed as *lineaments of expression* from those adults who lack basic competencies in reading and writing. Their interpersonal and individual skills often were not developed because of their communal status from “marginalization, segrega[tion], isola[tion], and invisibility...in society” (Pane & Salmon, 2009, p. 282). Much of the discussion about cultural approaches to literacy development has excluded “demographic shifts...from various cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds” (Ladson-Billings, 1992, p. 312). However, Ladson-Billings (1992) believed educators were now “forced” (p. 312) to not only define the cultural relevance of literacy development, but also reconcile the “social and political purposes of literacy” (p. 313).

Literacy Ethnography and Leadership

In 1988 Ladson-Billings (1992) published an ethnographic framework study for eight African-American elementary school teachers in Northern California. This study was developed to examine the pedagogical practices of instructors who taught African American students and their intuitive knowledge that would deem them “successful” (p. 314) from established “successful” teaching practices. Also important to her study was

the selection of participants. The selected teachers were identified by parents and principals as successful based upon the following three criteria: “1) student achievement, 2) student attitude towards themselves, others, and school 3) parent-teacher interactions, 4) and classroom management” (p. 314). The significance of her research was the avoidance of an “assimilationist approach to teaching” (p. 314) in young learners. This approach challenged societal categories or “ranks” (p. 314) given to groups when the status quo of literacy had not been reached. Hence, the early trainings of *lineaments of expression* were established at this point and subsequently exhibited later in life in adults lacking literacy acumen. The study was divided into four parts. First, participants were selected; second, an interview protocol was established; third, the educators were observed in their classroom; and fourth, they were videotaped in their classrooms. Ladson-Billings shared the video-tapings collectively with the participants in order to gather and have the participants “define dimensions of culturally relevant teaching” (p. 314).

Equally important, Garcia’s (2004) personal narrative paper presented at the 2004 American Educational Research Association (AERA) conference captured growing sentiments of leaders investigating and evaluating literacy through the norms of “culturally and linguistically diverse [people]” (p. 34). He analyzed literature from national literacy organizations such as the National Adult Assessment of Literacy (NAAL). Garcia’s particular emphasis honed the opinions of corporate executives about “predefined” (p. 36) curriculum, teaching, and assessment. In addition, his exploration was able to trace “a system of false meritocracy” (p. 36) by the instituting of standardized and norm-referenced tests that “result in a population distribution along a normal curve”

(Miramontes et al., 1997, p. 175, as cited in Garcia, 2004, p. 36). Essentially, this became another form of sorting and tracking students by way of an assessment vehicle to ensure educational structures remain consistent with the dominant culture's "suppressive and dehumaniz[ing]" (p. 39) practices.

Garcia (2004) also articulated a common mantra originating from a "broad socio-historical context" (p. 34) that reflected the extent to which the "politically grounded" (p. 34) dominant culture embedded their status quo. His findings speculated that educational leaders possess the power to affect the enhancement of individual lives by the way they *acknowledge* (emphasis added) the limitations of poor literacy development. However, through his experiences he denoted several "blatant examples of inequity in education" (p. 35) such as: "students internalization [of] the dominant culture's values and beliefs" (p. 35)...the premise of "*No Child Left Behind* [and how it has] overlooked high levels of inequity...endemic to high levels of socioeconomic inequity" (p. 35)... "teacher education programs [that] foster dependency on predefined curriculum, outdated classroom strategies and techniques" (p. 36)...[and] standardized testing (p. 37).

Literacy and Entitlement

Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, and Reinhardt (2010) traced issues relating to student entitlement behaviors in higher education to determine whether a relationship exists between students assuming the role of "consumers" of their education or "purchasers of the commodity" (p. 344). The researchers hypothesized that faculty and administrator analyses of student needs did not align with students' perceptions of education. The shift toward students taking control of their educational pursuits leans toward their regulation of collegiate experiences by way of determining their desired outcome rather than the

governing body's infrastructure. The study's outcome was to add to the developing body of research on the issues surrounding entitlement, as illustrated by students' behavior and their perceptions of institutional learning and the response of educators to their collegial performance.

Jackson et al. (2010) held focus groups and semi-structured interviews for a small body of 52 first-year, mostly female, self-selected participants from a range of multi-disciplinary fields. The respondents were invited to participate in six one-hour recorded discussion sessions with structured interview questions, as well as to complete a 10-question demographic questionnaire. Each thematic session, with a maximum of 10 participants, was intended to address students' insight and behaviors toward education, finances, self-efficacy, and learning.

Jackson et al. (2010) believed their phenomenological approach to the study would generate a description and "serious consideration" (p. 355) regarding the significance of the construct of this student populace. They uncovered support for their hypotheses that students desire not to be mandated toward the traditional model of faculty-centered instruction, yet they glean and develop their knowledge through a student-centered model of instruction. The study was limited, in part, by the number of respondents, the lack of statistical variations, the informal data collection procedures, and the researchers' limited description of student entitlement. Jackson et al. revealed that, without the intentional inclusion of students' inquiry questions and answers being the impetus behind the decision-making process toward remediation reform initiatives, the battle toward faculty's self-governing course structure will remain a principle pedagogic right.

Literacy and Meritocracy

Boyer et al. (2007) studied the significance of postsecondary institutions providing remediation courses, but their main focus was on faculty workload and assessment techniques. The researchers hypothesized that the key to developmental students' success in academia depends upon faculty commitment and pedagogical approaches. The researchers asserted that analytic skill development is a tool needed for academic success and, thus, should be a primary consideration toward assessing student achievement. In the study, the researchers defined faculty workload as the number of courses taught and the number of contact hours and credit hours provided to the student. They also differentiated between the workload of private and public and two- and four-year institutions. The ranking of the questions posed to faculty was determined by essay, short answer, and multiple choice questions.

Boyer et al. (2007) utilized a preexisting data set from 1999 from the *National Study of Postsecondary Faculty* at two- and four-year institutions. The study was guided by four supplemental questions from the source that included 18,000 faculty and staff from 865 institutions of higher education; however, details were unclear as to the number of actual questions that were used. The variables included in the study consisted of demographics of faculty, institution affiliations, assessment knowledge, and workload variations. The demographic analysis concluded that the average instructor age is 55 and the majority of faculty members are White females from two-year institutions. The researchers surmised a variation between the two-year community college institutions' and the four-year institutions' assessment strategies to gauge learning by way of using research papers. Additionally, faculty members teaching remediation in public schools

showed a 40% increase in contact hours with students compared to the faculty teaching in private institutions. Similar findings in the two-and four-year college were attributed to the “open-door policy” (p. 612).

The researchers also asserted the difficulty in maintaining an affirming educational environment in the two-year community college setting due to the increased number of students needing remediation compared to the four-year; however, the number of remedial courses being taught was the same across the four types of institutions. The assessment technique used by the researchers was a rank order for each institution. Competency-based assessing “carefully specified objectives” (p. 612) was found by the researchers to be more applicable to the research questions to determine whether summative assessment defines learning. Three primary areas of concern included the method of data collection, the age of the data, and the number and nature of the questions posed to existing data. The researchers used one source to report the findings from the research coupled with dated statistics.

Literacy and Early Learners

A comparatively different viewpoint from the current literature presented was the work of Cummins (2011). The importance of this study for this review of literature was to identify the early learners’ “construct of literacy engagement” (p. 142), and to uncover early learners’ “primary detriments of achievement” (p. 142). His work about literacy for early learning marginalized populations sought to ensure students had access to “a rich print environment [to] become richly engaged in literacy” (p. 142). Although this may be true, his focus appeared negligible from other studies because of its explicit “logic dictate” (p. 142). Although he used over 30 pieces of 21st century research, combined

with research findings from multiple organizations such as Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and socioeconomic status (SES), he noted that his perspective received multiple criticisms from educational researchers (e.g., Berliner, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2010 (p. 143) due to his “blanket generalization that U.S. [k-12] schools were failing and highlight[s] instead the fact that underachievement [poor literacy development] is concentrated in schools serving low-income and racially/culturally marginalized students” (p. 143).

Cummins (2011) highlighted the importance of “literacy engagement” (p. 142) as the language not formerly used in policy creation or educational debates about “reading instruction” (p. 142). Although Cummins was a proponent of evidence-based practices, his arguments suffered the basic tenets from literacy research articles about being the “social arrangements, culture, cognition, economics and other domains...[that are] central to the genesis of modern literacy studies” (p. 27).

Literacy and Capital

Literacy and Social Mobility

Perhaps the single greatest stain in the American collective consciousness since slavery is a deep-rooted organized construct of “capital [growth] that results in inequality,” (Piketty, 2014, p. 2). American capitalism is driven by contradictions “between human solidarity [and the] alienation [of diverse populations]” (Freire, 2000, p. 48). Are we a collective society? Or are we individuals fighting for individual wealth? Literacy is fundamental to capital growth and development in a knowledge-driven economy. And, an understanding of its influences determines the way in which wealth,

opportunities, and privileges are distributed (Rex et al., 2010). Research by Piketty (2014), *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, supported the supposition that income disparities are a relevant focus, such that “the structure of inequality, that is, on the origins of disparities in income and wealth between social groups and on the various systems of economic, social, moral, and political justification that have been invoked to defend or condemn those disparities” (p. 19) may explain and identify part of the widening capital gap and the reason literacy is the instrument in addressing such differentials. Thus, this body of literature focuses on the ontological link between personal beliefs and public behaviors: Intragenerational literacy — individual’s educational mobility throughout the course of his/her lifetime.

Intragenerational Literacy

Consecutively, hooks (2005b) wrote *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* which targeted alienated populations, specifically Black people, who have forgotten the ramifications of insufficient literacy development and this underdeveloped skill’s manifestation in a meritocratic capitalist society. She suggested that Black intellectuals have a burgeoning responsibility to enlighten kinships to the scope of 21st century racism embedded institutionally through poor literacy development. Hooks’ argument resulted from the belief that, “In American society where the intellectual—specifically the Black intellectual—has often assimilated and betrayed revolutionary concerns in the interest of maintaining class power, it is crucial and necessary for insurgent Black intellectuals to have an ethics of struggle that informs our relationship to those Black people who have not had access to ways of knowing shared in locations of privilege” (p. 54). Conversely, Ruddell (2007) scrutinized literacy research and stated in

her *Essay Review* that education leaders, educators, education administrators, policymakers, education researchers, national literacy organizations, and several literacy research communities lack the inclusion of diverse perspectives in systemic programming of nonverbal influences related to literacy development.

Literacy in the 21st Century

Perhaps one of the most comprehensive research articles exploring literacy issues in education is from the work of Rex et al., 2010. Rex et al. completed a discourse analysis of 300 studies from scholars within and outside the field of education who were interested in literacy development over the last 10 years. Early preschool to the adult learner represented the span of the study. The authors selected peer-reviewed journals and several research databases such as JSTOR to retrieve pertinent articles from scholars; however, they excluded cognitive science researchers. Rex et al. stated that a common theme emerged in terms of the approach of scholars to understand literacy development, and those authors who contributed to the literacy dilemma discussion. From their research, eight questions emerged about literacy:

1. Whose literacies count?
2. Which literacies count?
3. What are literate identities?
4. How are they constructed, and by whom?
5. How are disciplinary knowledges, discourses, and identities constructed?
6. How can schools provide students with access to school-based literacies?
7. What are the shifting roles of literacy teachers and learners within and outside of school?

8. How does discourse analysis research address movement within and across literacy sites and practices in a contemporary, globalized, and increasingly digitally influenced world? (Rex et al., 2010, p. 98)

By using a “heuristic distinction between studies” (p. 94), Rex et al. (2010) discovered that despite the “historic inequities that have prevented achievement of that goal [literacy]” (p. 111), 21st century literacy is being explored by a “cadre of researchers studying commercialization, digitization and relocation” (p. 110) to create new theorization and frameworks relating to literacy from the influences of a globalized world.

Civic Engagement in Rural Communities Toward Literacy Improvement

Rural Communities

Research about rural communities in the South has been involved in debates about literacy issues (e.g., disparate expectations, resources, marginalized populations, meritocratic conditioning), along with “socio-structural factors of Black incarnation, urban residential segregation and intergenerational illiteracy” (Ntiri, 2013, p. 160). These discussions are a compelling issue to develop cultural relevancy, or “culturally competent practices” (Collins, 2011, p. 201) and approaches that community members can use to understand and to view deficits within the infrastructure of a community (Collins, 2011; Cummins, 2011; Kuecker, Glen, Mulligan, & Nadarajah, 2011; Larson & Dearmont, 2002; Saal & Dowell, 2014).

As stated earlier, leaders in rural communities have a daunting task. Despite limited resources, isolation, and homogeneity, they must shape their communities to

engage in the new economy. When community leaders understand the importance of literacy development and accept their public responsibility to develop it, they take action.

Interdisciplinary Alliances

Interdisciplinary alliances, community agencies, and community leaders are increasingly pushed to collaborate and to create partnerships to achieve education for all in a knowledge-driven economy. However, rural communities in the South historically have faced different challenges from their metropolitan counterparts. These communities have consistently lagged behind in access to affordable and adequate “health care, education, career opportunities, and communication” (Ziegler & Davis, 2008, p. 25).

According to Bracken (2008), rural communities struggle with “low population densities, limited resource bases, relative isolation, and cultural or ethnic homogeneity” (p. 83), making the diffusion of knowledge and skills difficult. Further, occupations in the 21st century require greater literacy and critical thinking skills. Work is more abstract and entrepreneurs and employees need to learn quickly to adapt to changing markets. Rural communities that struggle with issues of equity are marked by struggling public schools (Strange, 2011); low educational attainment levels (Su & Jagninski, 2013); poverty (Fluharty & Scaggs, 2007); a stagnant economy (Fluharty, 2002); poor employment growth and minimal population growth (Crookston & Hooks, 2012; “*How increasing income inequality is dampening U.S. economic growth,*” 2014); high crime (Tunnell, 2005), destructive leadership; (Lovell, Crittenden, & Stumpf, 2003; Surface, 2014); and culturally insensitive practices (Collins, 2011).

Findings from community literacy research have indicated that the rural South “continue[d] to lag behind in economic and educational opportunities and resources”

(Ziegler & Davis, 2008, p. 25). This theory is based upon their pose as an agrarian social order with limited aspirants toward education; lack of opportunities; isolation; “strong religious beliefs” (Bracken, 2008, p. 83); and high poverty (Bracken, 2008; Miller & Kissinger, 2007; Ziegler & Davis, 2008). Further, the problem that small southern rural communities face with literacy development and the ramifications from social reproductive practices are the traditional mores from which education is distributed, as well as the perception of Southerners’ role as keepers of “culture, tradition, and history” (Ziegler & Davis, 2008, p. 25).

Response of Community College Members Toward Practicing Transformational Andragogy

Community Colleges

The purpose of this portion of the literature review is not to illuminate the insurmountable amount of failings noted in the literature about community colleges, but rather to augment the perspectives of community college advocates as they forge ahead as leading institutions in improving teaching and learning in postsecondary education. Thus, as Kirst and Venezia (2004) asserted, the need is well overdue to use community colleges to assist in addressing and developing stratagem to improve college readiness and “establish[ing] and support[ing] cross-sector commissions” (Kirst & Venezia, 2004, p. 8).

Despite this body of literature on literacy research and community literacy, little attention has been given to defining community literacy and the conflict between community members and the mission of the community college, such as barriers to the institution, demographic stigmas, or those faculty representing oppositional behaviors

toward “individuals over the beliefs and values they hold” (Levin, 2006, p. 63). The query then becomes similar to arguments by Freire (2000) and hooks (2010) that inadequate literacy development is used as a repressive method interrelationally related to education, politics, economics, and authoritarianist practices.

Community College Assumptions

Community colleges are to serve individuals by responding to the educational needs of its constituents. As noted by Levin (2006), two central missions are: “(1) the preparation of a competitive workforce, and (2) the operation of a public institution at the lowest costs possible” (p. 67). A major assumption from education stakeholders is that community colleges are increasingly driven by the needs of non-profit, governmental, and semi-governmental domains. This assumption requires that occupational and professional relationships ensure community growth and development. According to Rusch and Horsford (2009), lawmaking agencies are aligned with human capital growth and equality, community engagement through communication technologies, inclusion and multiculturalism, and are subject to integrity in community college leadership to “help to frame an individual’s identity...and create habits for future engagement in a democratic society” (Miller & Deggs, 2012).

Literacy Trends

This section comprises a combination of popular press books and additional research studies aligned with synthesizing the community college condition. “An institution [should be] dedicated to the principle that no individual eighteen years or older should be denied the opportunity to attempt a college education regardless of aptitude or previous academic preparation” (Richardson, Fisk, & Okun, 1983, p. ix). The assertion

that college, particularly the community college as an open-access institution of higher learning is the place to identify, create and invoke equalizing learning environments in order to promote a democratic citizenry, suggests that institutions of higher learning are the conduit to solve “complex, holistic, real-world problems” (Arum & Roksa, 2011, p. 23). Also included in this is the onus of remediation. The lack of student scholarship development can no longer be the sole responsibility of the student. Moreover, “we need to first identify the specific factors associated with variation in student learning across and within institutions” (p. 19). For the current examination of literature, the scrutiny of inequities in the American infrastructure resulting from the use of education, specifically poor literacy development and the safeguarding of repressive practices and ideologies, may provide insight into a discriminate scholastic phenomenon leading to a weakening capitalistic society.

Summary of Literature Review

In this body of research, advocates of the community college approach literacy development through a demographic and economic crisis lens. They respond by way of evaluating the problems of the educational system and the need for innovative solutions. From the standpoint of illiteracy, their evaluation has suggested that stakeholders approach curriculum and pedagogic practices of faculty through a social justice and equity lens (Brown, 2006; Gadsden, 1992; Garcia, 2004; Ntiri, 2013; Pane & Salmon, 2009). At the onset of the study, I believed that many influences needed to be considered when researching how academically deficient students in higher education demonstrate inadequate literacy development through poor study skills, socioeconomic condition(s), parental education attainment, environment, collegiate expectations and behaviors, and

faculty pedagogic practices. I knew there was no absolute cause, nor one predictor that suggested a model to correct the insufficiencies that lead to a student's deficit. However, that which could be ascertained from considering the demography of the student and the school culture perhaps may assist in addressing "attitudes toward issues of diversity in education [or more specifically literacy development]" (Brown, 2006, p. 700) and how community leaders' use of social reproduction models to "manage financial and social class practices" (Leung, 2011, p. 222).

Insufficient evidence is expected toward uncovering the relationship between postsecondary particularly community college, students' levels of literacy and the perspectives of faculty who teach them. It is preferable and easier to analyze various systems of inequality rather than to analyze individual literacy development patterns. However, the growing concern for practiced inequality and its consequence between community groups' knowledge about literacy, as well as community agency support, necessitate a study of literacy at the demographic and community college level.

The grand dynamics behind inadequate literacy development that drove embedded, self-determined southern repressive traditions no longer can be ignored in a 21st century consumerist society. While modern research continues to articulate the difficulty in measuring achieved literacy acumen, researchers have believed the ills that accompany poor literacy development are proportionally excessive in the South and correspond to poverty, social and race inequalities, low self-efficacy, oppression, rejection, and alienation (Graff, 2010; Lewis, 1997; hooks, 2005; Freire, 2000)—a nihilistic pose resulting from neglecting and discounting the significance of under-resourced populations.

Education advocates claim the American education system was established to coexist and to align with economic, social, technical, scientific, and industrial sectors in order to ensure stability and consistent upward mobility opportunities for some, but not all. Although the American education system has consistently undergone comprehensive coast-to-coast reform initiatives to safeguard a capitalistic social order, ignoring and excluding marginalized populations in the reform is an “exercise of domination...[by] indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression” (Freire, 2000, p. 78). Basic economic development tenets, to include the use of education, particularly literacy, may explain the reason economic, academic, and social gaps continue to widen. This notion suggests that many of the social ills currently challenging the American way of life are a result of the educational system’s ineffective structure. Thus, illiteracy can be denoted as an embedded polarization mechanism to maintain “dominant elitism” (Freire, 2000, p. 78).

Historically, the concept of literacy development within a community was dependent upon identifying those who had the right to be literate. This ideology was deemed appropriate in order to maintain an adherence to “guaranteeing a caste-like status” (as cited in Harris, 1992, p. 277). The result involved a continuous effort to maintain marginalized populations from becoming aware of “the power of literacy [that would] effect essential political, cultural, social, and economical change” (Harris, 1992, p. 276). This indicates that, historically, literacy operated from a constructivist paradigm; i.e., one could ascertain the literacy levels of an individual or populace based upon the “range of social and economic problems” (Ladson-Billings, 1992, p. 312) within the community.

While many influences have contributed to the problems faced by rural communities, particularly when reviewing their education systems, one significant problem in small southern rural communities is the lack of aligned expectations among community leaders, its members, and its agencies. Thus, when links to bridge the literacy development gaps between community leaders, members, and agencies are not closed, the economic and social implications and consequences within the community are noticeable. Undeniable widespread agreement exists among small southern rural community policy makers, community leaders, education professionals, and legislators that education and the policies set forth to improve community literacy have reached a difficult dilemma. Kirst and Venezia (2004) contended that the “fissure between K-12 and postsecondary education in the U.S. stems, in part, from the laudable way the nation created mass education systems” (p. 3).

Current research has been limited in the examination of the way small southern rural community leaders and agencies remain explicit in integrating literacy barriers by which Blacks specifically remain aloof to the “social entrapment by which [they] are made content with [their] life conditions” (as cited in Rivera Appendix: Thomas, 1993, p. 7). Further, the literature has dismissed the examination of institutionalized leadership practices that allude to sustained subjugate practices in order to preserve elitist ideologies, as demonstrated in the formation of the education system (Thelin, 2014). However, several relevant articles emphasizing conventional, alternative, and radical approaches to transformational andragogy by exploring equitable leadership, have deliberately constructed an alternative approach to current research.

Accumulated evidence, as well as literacy development theories, have taught that literacy development is a powerful instrument of economic, social, and cultural change and was historically neglected or postponed in southern rural communities (Fluharty & Scaggs, 2007). Also, the evidence from studies of literacy development contended that literacy is not used as a transformational practice in nonmetropolitan southern communities (Miller & Deggs, 2012; Eddy, 2007; Watts, 2012). In rural communities in the South, reading and writing are the sole requisites to maintain an agrarian social culture. Although current trends have shifted and economic growth and development have become dependent upon a knowledge-driven workforce, literacy development in many rural communities remains mired in the past (Ziegler & Davis, 2008).

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this single-site case study is to examine the interrelationships between community domains engaged in literacy development and to understand the choices made by community leaders related to literacy. Therefore, the central research question focuses on do or how do community leaders understand and respond to the challenge of low literacy rates, followed by four research questions. First, how do community leaders in Timner, Kentucky, understand literacy and its practices?; second, what personal and professional experiences have guided leadership practices?; third, on the continuum from intransitive to transitive consciousness, how do leaders describe the issues in Timner, Kentucky; and fourth, does or how does literacy development affect the mission, goals, and outcomes of various community domains, particularly Timner Community College? Although literacy development in rural communities remains a challenge (Bracken, 2008), leaders must respond to inadequate literacy rates because literacy development is essential for economic growth in an evolving knowledge-driven economy.

The Qualitative Paradigm

Chapter I established a significance and a need to study the way in which leaders in a small southern rural community make choices based upon their knowledge of literacy. Chapter II established a literature-based foundation that highlighted adult literacy development research, yet included a void in the epistemological and ontological views of community leaders in relation to their literacy development. In addition, the literature examined the interrelationships between community domains engaged in literacy development and the choices of community leaders. In this chapter, I focus on a

qualitative research paradigm for the investigation of Timner, Kentucky's, community members' perceptions and interpretation of inadequate literacy development and the way that understanding is used to weave policy and procedures into practice from their respective positions. In order to constrain resources such as time and expense, a data gathering protocol was developed. The following terms were essential and were defined at the onset of the study, prior to interviewing and collecting documents: defining the case; defining community literacy, community leadership, intergenerational literacy, and intragenerational mobility; creating research questions; determining data sources; and choosing a pathway to honor the participants and to report the findings. Once Timner community members' literacy development perspectives were obtained, I was then able to delineate terminology for intergenerational and intragenerational social reproduction practices. This was in response to Brown's (2006) transformative leadership conceptual framework, Knowles' (1984) andragogy theoretical framework, Mezirow's (2000) transformative learning framework, Piketty's (2014) economic theoretical framework, and Collins' (2011) social reproduction theories.

Given these points, I also sought to examine and to query my personal literacy development in order to articulate and to become more aware of my biases toward the topic. This reflection led an investigation of ways community members and leaders interrelated, engaged, and understood literacy development. More specifically, an understanding was desired relative to the manner and ways Black community members respond to and understand decisions related to their literacy levels. An examination was needed on whether Black community members are aware of the use of literacy to maintain and to manage their economic circumstances, and ways these local practices

affect their behaviors that responded from a hegemonic culture. The examination of interrelationships between community domains engaged in literacy development became the nexus of the study. These theoretical frameworks are used in Chapter IV to analyze transitive and intransitive consciousness effects on poor literacy development.

Implications of this new knowledge is discussed in Chapter V.

Qualitative methodological strategies and procedures were used in this study to portray the interrelationships between community domains engaged in literacy development, and social reproduction structures in order to identify the choices made by community leaders in understanding literacy. I began the study by questioning the manner in which I wanted to proceed in finding evidence to support my supposition of poor literacy development in Timner, Kentucky. Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) described research as a “systematic investigation or inquiry whereby data are collected, analysed [sic] and interpreted in some way in an effort to understand, describe, predict or control an educational or psychological phenomenon or to empower individuals in such contexts” (p. 2). Thus, a qualitative research paradigm was determined as an approach to the study that “facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 544). Case studies in particular are not intended to be an isolated source nor a narrow lens that examines perceptions of “specific historical events, or as a teaching strategy to holistically understand exemplary ‘cases’” (p. 544). The essence of research grants the researcher the opportunity to construct the “how and why” (p. 545) of behavior and perceptions from participants encased within a situation.

Baxter and Jack (2008) referred to two qualitative researchers, Stake (1995) and

Yin (2003, 2011), as they determined the “philosophical underpinnings of when to use a case study approach” (p. 545). They pointed out four design and discussion patterns to be considered when approaching a case study:

1. “When the focus of the study is going to answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions;
 2. When the manipulation of behaviors cannot be [allowed];
 3. When the researcher wants to cover contextual conditions in order to gain relevancy of the phenomenon; or
 4. When the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and the context.”
- (p. 545).

For this study, I investigated the phenomenon of poor literacy development in a rural community, and the leadership domains that are engaged in the lack of literacy development. Further, I anticipated that my introduction into qualitative research methodologies would assist me in the retrieval of multiple facets of community literacy, community college methods related to literacy development, and community leaders’ perception of the literacy phenomenon through information such as interviews, documents, and auto-ethnographic ideologies. The “context within which it [illiteracy] occurred” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545) was of interest to me as a novice qualitative researcher because I would be able to learn ways to explore “complex interventions, relationships, communities, or programs” (p. 543) engaged in insufficient literacy development. Thus, as previously stated, a case study is a common qualitative research approach to gain an in-depth understanding of a complex, functioning, social phenomenon. In this case, I was interested in community members and their practices used by multiple community domains (e.g., government agencies, the library, public

schools) that may contribute to inadequate literacy development in one small southern rural community.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

Education, or more precisely literacy development, has been the nexus to establishing a knowledge-driven economy (Piketty, 2014). The ability to connect theory to practice rather than using literacy to “shape disparate social processes” (Collin, 2013, p. 27), may suggest the need for an ongoing discussion. According to Patton (2002), “Qualitative inquiry typically focuses in-depth on relatively small samples...selected purposefully” (p. 230). Patton continued to discuss *information-rich cases* by stating:

Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance for the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling. For example, if the purpose of an evaluation is to increase the effectiveness of a program in reaching lower-socioeconomic groups, one may learn a great deal more by focusing in depth on understanding the needs interests, and incentives of a small number of carefully selected poor families than by gathering standardized information from a large statistically representative sample of a whole program. The purpose of purposeful sampling is to select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study. (p. 230)

Hence, by utilizing qualitative research methods, I can “analyze” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545) the phenomena of inadequate literacy development in a small southern rural community. My approach to the study was an interwoven theoretical framework from four theoretical perspectives: Brown’s (2006) *Leadership for Social Justice and Equity*, Andragogy, transformational education practices (Knowles, 1984); critical social theory

(Mezirow, 2000); social reproduction (Collins, 2011); and economic development (Piketty, 2014) as the conceptual framework. A pragmatist paradigm was utilized to understand the choices made by community leaders related to literacy; i.e., the pragmatist paradigm places “the research problem as central and applies all approaches to understanding the problem” (Creswell, 2003, p. 11 as cited in Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, p. 4). Social reproduction theories were used (Collins, 2011; Freire, 2000; hooks, 1980; Ntiri, 2013; Leung, 2011) as the lens for questioning literacy challenges based upon transitive and intransitive consciousness (Brown, 2006). From these methods, a decision was made as to the qualitative research methodology that would detect interrelationships between community domains engaged in literacy development, a case study.

Case studies explain “how” or “why” questions. As such, I anticipated I would be able to explain how or why the community of reference continued to experience literacy development problems. As data collection and social reproduction analysis occurred, related literature was reviewed in order to guide the study’s conceptual framework from Brown’s (2006) construct of *Leadership for Social Justice and Equity*. The assumption was made when the study began that the conflict between Black community members’ literacy values, and the inferences from community leaders about them, could only be partially understood if examined solely from documents or an idealist paradigm.

In addition, according to Baxter and Jack (2008), a point often overlooked is that once the case has been determined, it is important to consider that which the case “will NOT be” (546). It is important for the researcher to avoid falling into the mire of attempting to calculatedly answer the question as to the reason the selected phenomenon has occurred. Learning to ultimately offer insight into the core characteristics of the

concept was the intent; and to that end, culture was difficult to define and even more difficult to measure when “people of a culture [guardedly] have shared meanings” (Starcher, 2005, p. 70).

Therefore, this qualitative research study was the first to examine how the influence of social reproduction on interrelationships between community domains engaged in literacy development, and how community leaders’ understood economic development as it related to their level of literacy. To address this concern, the data were based on interviews from 11 community members who were interrelated by way of the local community college, library, justice system, non-profit agencies, government, four-year schools, and political affiliates. Excluded from the data were religious links (e.g., clergy, priests); military officials; K-12 administrators; law enforcement officials; and social work professionals. This was not intentional. In order to gain an in-depth “philosophical underpinning” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545) of the poor literacy development phenomenon, recording the interviews was necessary, but those participants declined due to the required procedures.

This research was a bounded study (Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2009). It was bounded by location. It was located in a small southern rural community in Kentucky identified as Timner. By “binding the case” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 546), isolating a location, the scope of the study remained reasonable, and I was able to reconstruct the “breadth and depth of the study” (p. 547) in hopes of explaining the nexus of the phenomena. Further, according to Baxter and Jack (2008), determining the “type of case study” (p. 547) was as important as the previous criteria: “determining the unit of analysis” (p. 545) and “binding the study” (p. 546). Due to the isolated location, scope of the study, and the

ability to obtain in-depth information about the issue, problems were uncovered in the literature. These problems consisted of researcher bias when studying literacy development; an unreliable and measureable definition of literacy for the 21st century, leaders unfamiliar with their literacy biases particularly toward Black people (Saal & Dowell, 2014); social reproduction practices; and interrelationships between community domains engaged in literacy development.

Brown's (2006) model of *Andragogy of Transformative Leaders* was chosen as a conceptual framework to guide data analysis (see Figure 1 for Brown's Conceptual Framework). Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) stated that case studies operate from a constructivist and pragmatist paradigm, indicating that case study researchers recognize that reality or truth is dependent upon the perspective of the individual. Therefore, for this study, understanding the way in which leaders perceive literacy may explain the manner with which literacy development was articulated to community members in Timner, Kentucky.

The Researcher as Instrument

While conducting this qualitative research case study, I considered myself an instrument of the data collecting process because my observations and interpretations of the data were subject to my background, life experiences, and influences (an auto-ethnographic analysis). The study was conducted after becoming aware of an unequal distribution of educational opportunities for an underrepresented population, more specifically, Black people. A need existed to understand how interrelationships between community domains engaged in literacy development, including the way literacy is practiced to give rise to social reproduction structures. Therefore, in the interest of the

current study, it was important to intentionally detach my opinion(s) as to how community leaders made choices toward (e.g., political supports, housing mandates, educational doctrine, media predispositions, etc.) that could be considered directly related to poor literacy development. A need also existed to garner my early assumptions as to why the lack of a “sociopolitical — the development of an informed intellectual consciousness of how the dominant culture oppresses to maintain the status quo” (Garcia, 2004, p. 34) continued to remain an issue among the Black population in the community, until more data had been gathered.

More than two decades ago I would not have considered social reproduction or social inequality to be a significant issue in education because it is the transformational agency used to change such ideologies and practices. Therefore, at the onset, I was aware that I had to acknowledge my own personal life experiences impacted by inter-relational community domains that influenced my literacy development, as part of the process to trace the outcomes of the study. As a result, I was able to begin by identifying my own cultural biases of educational merit through an emic and etic lens. I first sought to understand the significance of my investment in education (an etic examination) and then I began to recognize through my early educational tenure (e.g., tutoring, adjunct teaching) the distortions and subjectivities that were commensurate with community members’ perceptions (an emic examination).

I grew up in the urban-center of Denver. My parents exposed me and my older sister to a myriad of social activities and experiences (e.g., theater productions, ballets, debutante balls, sporting events (I was a runner and my father exhibited superior athleticism in baseball, football, and basketball); and the family attended reading series

events, cultural events, collegiate events, and vacationed both conus and abroad. I attended a private school, and both my parents were educated and teachers. My father received a Ph.D. in education, and my mother's undergraduate degree is in British Literature. I have an older sister who studied at a prestigious university in Colorado and received her juris doctorate. All of my childhood friends completed high school and continued to college. My household construct was characterized by outsiders from the same ethnicity in the southern region of the United States as "unusual," "privileged," "unrestricted," or "not normal." This was because we are a Black family. For the record, these actual terms were used by extended family members and associates who questioned our family motives, cultural identity, and professional pursuits.

My professional career began in the rural south as a tutor and adjunct instructor in higher education at the community college level. Unfortunately, at the beginning of my professional career, I began to agree with my colleagues and community members that "value-based education" was the sole indicator to grasp an understanding of cultural differences in regard to literacy development. In essence, my White counterparts both academically and socially assumed that under-educated community members (e.g., Black people) do not value education, which may explain the reason "their knowledge was so low." For example, I often heard the argument that low academic performance is due to a lack of parental involvement, and I agreed. Underrepresented families were criticized for not valuing education and failing to support the local school system; again, I agreed. I was frequently asked, "Why do Black people value work more than education," I was suspicious from the query. I wanted to be able to articulate through this study the tenuous triangle between community members, the community college, and community leaders,

and the way each member in his or her respective domain understood literacy, which subsequently shaped the meaning of class inequities and social mobility. It was not until my Midwestern urban upbringing began to conflict with my southern rural experiences and was able to recognize academia as being one of several domains that challenges leadership choices related to literacy development. Academia initially was thought to be the essential domain to identify, understand, and ensure economic growth and development in small southern rural communities. I discovered I was correct in thinking the academic domain would allow me to recognize portals leading to poor literacy development; however, I was mistaken in believing no unspoken community interrelationships are involved in maintaining social reproduction practices. In other words, I aspired to name the multiple forms of oppression and cultural conflicts that affect under-educated community members, including me both personally and professionally.

Research Design

Qualitative research methodologies were employed to discover the way in which the social phenomenon of poor literacy development practices within community domains advance over time, and how community members interpret the phenomenon once introduced to the problem. Due to the illuminating nature and multiple dimensions and interpretations, community literacy, college, and leadership as a construct was difficult to study. Thus, the investigation of Timner, Kentucky's poor literacy development practices evolved from an existing theory with the purpose of building upon theoretical models (e.g., community leadership, adult learning, social justice and equity, economic development, and social reproduction). Therefore, a qualitative single-site case

study approach was used to examine interrelationships between community domains engaged in literacy development.

Site Selection

The historical context (e.g., the demography of slavery and literacy development) of this particular research study was crucial in understanding how community members perceive literacy and the manner in which their respective positions engage in literacy development. It was understood that “not reflecting on, discussing, and/or addressing issues of race, poverty, [literacy], and disability only further perpetuates the safeguarding of power and the status quo” (Brown, 2006, p. 702). The following criteria were considered for site selection: role of the researcher, convenience and access to data, availability and familiarity of the participants, representation of the phenomenon at large, and “a willingness to put aside many presumptions while [I] learn” (Stake, 1995, p. 1)...[and] to find [my] own perplexities in the lives of others” (p. 7). This case study was relevant to local community constituents and internal academic communities, all having a vested interest in the topic.

The culture of institutionalized literacy development was explored to discover the challenges that confront community leadership from community members with poor literacy development. One primary reason for conducting the research in Timmer, Kentucky, was because I was a resident. I was also integrated into the community and had an established relationship with the interview participants; and I believed I would receive an honest and in-depth interpretation of the literacy dilemma from the community members. Limited bias was acknowledged due to my involvement in community activities and employment at the community college; however, I believed that my unique

perspective on the issue would help to explain the complexity of the case. Further, due to my experience, value of education, relationship with community members, rapport with former colleagues, my perspective on intergenerational literacy knowledge, and the historical context upon which the community developed, and my curiosities would determine the analytic strategies needed to retrieve rich data from Timner community members.

Timner, Kentucky

Timner, Kentucky, is a small, rural, southern community in Western Kentucky 25 miles from a major military installation, 75 miles from the nearest metropolitan center, and 20 miles via two-lane roads from the nearest interstate highway. The town was established in 1796. Utilizing Kentucky census data, in 1990 Timner included 29,809 community members; in 2010 Timner had 31,577. Its population has remained stagnant, while both the military installation and a nearby town have grown rapidly. The racial composition of the city in 2010 was 31.9% Black, 61.1% White, 3.5% Hispanic, and 1.1% Asian. There were 13,096 households from 2009-2013, of which 25.5% lived below the poverty level; and the mean per capita income averaged \$20,193.00 (U. S. Census).

Timner Public Schools

Timner's public schools have not performed at proficiency levels for several years, indicating that Timner was required to create a comprehensive improvement plan or relinquish local control to the state of Kentucky to operate the system. For the purpose of this study, it was important to examine Timner's academic performance from the Kentucky Schools Scorecard. This document was utilized as a foundation to shape and

identify ontological and epistemological assumption arguments from Brown's (2006) *Leadership for Social Justice and Equity* that was used as the conceptual framework. The results of Timner High Schools' Black and White students were tracked for three consecutive academic terms (2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014). For the academic year (2013-2014) at Timner High School #1, the average reading score was 18.1 (4 points below the ACT Subject-Area test). The Black students' score was 16.7 and 19.2 for White students, indicating that only 25.6% of Black students were college ready by the Kentucky benchmark score. At Timner High School #2, Black students scored even lower with an average score of 15.9, and only 17.4% were college ready, while 51% of White students were college ready. The evidence of the gap between White and minority groups lowered Timner County ratings.

In the December 2015 Kentucky Department of Education Comprehensive Improvement Plan (KDECP) for the district of Timner Kentucky, the document stated the county taught over 9,000 students. At that time the district consisted of Timner, Kentucky eight elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools, of which 33% were African American, 6% were Hispanic, and 52% were White. For the 2015-2016 academic year, one middle school closed and was replaced by an elementary school. The district also served students who attended the Career and Technical Center, The Gateway Academy to Innovation, Alternative School, Day Treatment Facility, and the 21st century Academy, which was denoted as an alternative program for students at risk from graduating high school. The document further touted the importance of their affiliation with the neighboring military installation.

The KDECP document indicated that the poor performance levels were due to

“high poverty (74% free/reduced lunch) and high student mobility. Over the past several years there has been a population shift toward the southern end of the county that has required the realignment of services to best meet the needs of our student population.” (p. 8) Timner also has a community college. The 2010 Fact-book posted on their webpage showed that the institution of reference was a community college with an enrollment of less than 3,500 students in a city of less than 35,000. The mission of the college, as posted on their website, stated the following about the goal of the institution:

[It] is an inclusive, *student-centered educational institution* that provides accessible, innovative, and comprehensive learning opportunities within a supportive community that encourages academic excellence. The college sustains strong educational, community, military, agricultural, and economic partnerships to improve *quality of life* in the southern ...region.... (Anonymous, 2009) (Emphasis added)

Timner Community College

The community college likely was the recipient of some of the 25.6% of Black students and 51% of White students as postulated earlier from the Kentucky Benchmark Score, who would be considered prepared for college. However, the students who did not score “proficient” needed professional and educational credentialing in order to enter the workforce. They also may have enrolled in the college because of its open-access mandate. The college was postured to prepare students to compete in a knowledge-driven economy; however, leaders in the community college may have been pressured from community leaders to maintain the status-quo. Brown (2006) elaborated on the supposition by noting: “One

reason that the ‘gaps’ are so persistent, pervasive, and significantly disparate is that ‘American schools have been pressured to preserve the status quo’ (Oakes, Quartz, Ryan, & Lipton (2000), as cited in Brown, 2006, p. 701). She continued with: “The historic marginalization of underprivileged students and the perpetuation of the status quo have served to benefit the same students and families for hundreds of years while simultaneously ignoring the needs of low-income Black, Brown, Native, and Asian students and their families” (p. 701). Although inadequate literacy development has not been sufficiently studied in terms of assigning attitudes, perspectives, beliefs, and abilities about the issue to community leaders and members, the study offered transformational leadership, andragogy practices, social justice and equity, economic development, and social reproduction as themes to understand literacy development in Timner, Kentucky. Extant literature was examined related to community leadership, social justice and equity, and a qualitative interview protocol to identify interrelationships between community members and agencies and their understanding of the value of literacy development. Also examined was the possible widespread effects from a lack of awareness of the problems in the community resulting from poor literacy development and implications leading to a social justice issue.

Participant Selection and Data Collection

Participant Selection

Eleven interviews were conducted with community members and leaders, after which the transcripts were reviewed. Data sources were utilized from the following: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS); Kentucky Department of

Education data (e.g., Timner Schools Scorecard); Timner County Community Early Childhood Council (TECC); Timner County Library (TCL); Timner Literacy Council; ACT College Benchmarks; Timner Community College's organizational philosophy statements, remediation curricula, admission policies, and Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) document; U.S. Census on Timner's demographic makeup; employment announcements; local leadership program offerings; and local agencies organization identity and philosophy statements. This methodology was appropriate for the study on Timner, Kentucky, a small southern rural area with poor literacy development. The emerging concepts would be difficult to uncover in large metropolitan regions. As the study began, and upon a critical self-reflection on my core assumption of the development of poor literacy in the community, a self-identification query was employed. I questioned my beliefs regarding Timner community members' understanding of the meaning of literacy development, and then narrowed my focus to examine the interrelationship between community members, the community college, and community leaders who held positions reliant upon engaging various literacy levels. This construct was helpful when creating a list of potential participants who I believed to be representative of the study's focus.

Patton (2002) often stipulated that, within a qualitative study's interview structure, a reliance on small samples is seen because the participants are afforded the opportunity to provide extensive information related to the topic being studied. The study was conducted in Timner because of the relationships that exist between me and the participants, which allowed me to "enter into the other person's perspective" (p. 341). An established level of trust was present from over 15 years of relationship building. A

personal, professional, and social network also existed, and it was possible to gather in-depth and extensive data about the literacy issue in Timner. In addition, upon learning of the context for the study, one participant suggested an interview be conducted with an individual unknown to me; he responded affirmatively. Fifteen individuals were contacted, and 11 were interviewed: a judge, the Timner librarian, assistant librarian, former resident, university campus director, university academic advisor, banker, former mayor, city councilman, a recent college graduate who returned to Timner to work, and a business owner. The participants who chose not to be interviewed cited concern for their safety if discovered after the study's publication; they were apprehensive regarding others learning about their participation due to their experience based on the topic and/or were reluctant to speak by recording.

Race was not the principal criterion I used in the selection of participants. However, I did want participants who were able to articulate characteristics of their social group that distinguished them from others. Also, participants were sought who could identify and name their literacy development methods in order to, "find out from them those things [I] cannot directly observe" (Patton, 2002, p. 340). The examination of literacy development through the interrelationships between community domains was a complex undertaking, e.g., claiming an employment status determined, in part, social acceptance within a particular group. However, literacy development ensured social acceptance within multiple groups and secured ascriptive reproductive positions. I realized that social reproduction through community domains is a community member phenomenon, rather than a systematic or methodical framework for the study.

The case study employed a design in order to conduct in-depth interviews to “identify the patterns of experiences participants brought to the [community], what patterns characterized their participation in the [study], and what patterns of change [were] reported by and observed in the participants [lives based upon the topic of the study]” (Patton, 2002, p. 250). The purpose of the research design ensured that data collected to examine community domains engaged in literacy development “illuminated an inquiry question” (p. 248). Interviewees were identified through purposeful sampling. Patton (2002) theorized that “theory-based sampling is a more formal basic research version of criterion sampling [examines ways in which] the researcher samples incidents, slices of life, time periods, or people on the basis of their potential manifestation or representation of important theoretical constructs. The sample becomes, by definition, representative of the phenomenon of interest” (p. 238). Based on the conceptual framework of Brown (2006), the technique used to gain information-rich narratives for the study was a theory-based sampling construct. Patton stated:

A more conceptually oriented version of criterion sampling is theory-based sampling. The researcher samples incidents, slices of time, time periods, or people on the basis of their potential manifestation or representation of important theoretical constructs.... When one is studying people, programs, organizations, or communities, the population of interest can be fairly readily determined. Theoretical sampling is what grounded theorists define as ‘sampling on the basis of the emerging concepts, with the aim being to explore the dimensional range or varied conditions along which the properties of concepts vary. (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 73, as cited in Patton, 2002, p. 239)

Data Collection

This qualitative case study involved the collection of interviews and documents describing educational and literacy missions, goals, and practices. Patton (2002) asserted that “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases,” (p. 230). I selected participants utilizing a purposive selection technique; I sought to select information-rich cases in order to explain the questions under study. The intent was to discover, understand, and gain insight into the phenomenon of poor literacy development and its use as a social reproduction practice in several community domains. In particular, leadership practices were of interest in the following domains:

- community college;
- secondary schools;
- library services;
- chamber of commerce;
- justice;
- government;
- 4-year schools;
- non-profits; and
- media.

Data collection techniques included transcripts from interviews, semi-structured interviews, community documents, an ethnographic examination, and archived documents. The primary sources of data were derived from semi-structured interviews with: community members (see Table 2 for a list of participants), community leaders, Timner Schools Scorecard, accreditation documents, the Integrated Postsecondary

Education Data System (IPEDS), institutional policies, popular press books, and significant archived documents in order to triangulate the research (Patton, 2002).

Table 2

List of Research Participants

Participant	Participant Designation	Participant Position Code	Code
Former Mayor	Civic domain	White male-community leader	WMCL(1)
Assistant librarian	Civic and non-profit domain	Black female-community leader	BFCL(1)
Judge	Judicial domain	White male-community-leader	WMCL(2)
Regional campus director	Postsecondary education domain	White-female-community leader	WFCL(1)
Regional campus advisor	Postsecondary education	Black female-community leader	BFCL(2)
Banker	Non-profit and industry domain	Black female-community member	BFCM(1)
High school graduate	Secondary education domain	Black male-community-member	BLCM(1)
Librarian	Non-profit domain	White-female-community leader	WFCL(2)
City councilman	Civic domain	Black male-community leader	BMCL(1)
Journalist for the local newspaper	Media domain	Black female-community member	BFCM(2)

Interview Protocol

A semi-structured interview approach by “carefully and fully wording each question before the interview” (Patton, 2002, p. 344) was utilized to glean specific information related to literacy development and the meanings associated with social reproduction, economic development, community leadership, and transformational education theories. This method also allowed participants the opportunity to identify important cultural and community structures that shaped their lives. As a novice researcher I desired to become familiar with ways to identify injustices through inadequate literacy development; however, care was used to avoid the tendency to shape participants’ responses in order to obtain the expected result. Thus, as qualitative studies allow the researcher to understand the participants’ experiences within the context of their particular situations, multiple sources ensured validity, corroborated information, and provided rich in-depth documentation (Patton, 2002). The interview questions were shaped to solicit a myriad of storied experiences about education in a rural community. The questions about their literacy development, particularly from their respective positions, were employed to articulate that they understood the meaning and interpretation of literacy.

Participants were interviewed in their natural settings (e.g., their office, home, place of employment, school, etc.). Potential participants first were contacted by telephone after which an appointment was scheduled for the interview. Individuals who agreed to participate were given the choice of being interviewed at the local library, my home, their business office, or the community agency with which they were affiliated. Prior to the interview, participants were assured that their identities would remain

confidential. Interviews varied in length from 20 minutes to over one hour. Interviews were tape-recorded, and reflective and clarity notes were made during the interview. The interview protocol essentially was designed to elicit perceptions of poor literacy development in Timner from community members and leaders. Specifically, the protocol was to examine through symbolism (e.g., values, beliefs, meaning, behaviors, and basic assumptions) a shared cultural meaning and identity of literacy by community members and community leaders in the establishment of Timner.

Patton (2002) suggested the use of probing techniques to gather more detailed information, but this method was not needed. Due to the participants' relationship to me the researcher, they believed they were free to verbalize and it would not affect me or the study. They provided rather racially suggestive, exploitive, and privileged opinions. Thus, clarification was not sought from the participants' principles, as they were comprehensible and duly noted. With the exception of two interviewees, community members participating in the study were from the area. They supplied rich dialogue, unique understandings of literacy and community literacy development, sometimes harsh yet intriguing narratives, and evidence to support institutional cultural constructs on the development of literacy in Timner. However, researcher probes were used to garner additional information for clarification of the meaning of literacy and to provide input on its importance through their interpretation. The following list includes examples of probes used to clarify meaning to determine "what dimensions, themes, and images/words people use among themselves to describe their feelings, thoughts, and experiences" (Patton, 2002, p. 354):

1. What do you mean by that statement?

2. Would you explain how that experience affects you today?
3. What did you do then?
4. What were you thinking at the time?
5. Give me an example.
6. Walk me through the experience.

Each interview was tape-recorded and transcribed for precise measurement of data. The qualitative data were not analyzed through a computer program due to the expense, time constraints, and the desire to gather the breadth of data obtained during the research project; “putting together what is said in one place with what is said in another place, and integrating what different people have said” (Patton, 2002, p. 380). Upon completion of the interviews, all recordings were transcribed (Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995).

Document Analysis

As part of the data collection process, information was gathered about Timner, Kentucky, through artifacts from the community, such as: newspaper articles; museum observations (e.g., personal community member pieces and first-person perspectives); papers; booklets; permits; and articles, etc. on the culture. Official college policy statements were collected and examined including the colleges’ academic fliers, Board of Trustees By-Laws, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation mandates from their Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) goals and learning outcomes, academic catalog, strategic planning process flow chart, admissions and records, tuition and fees from the webpage, remediation course schedule, academic advising handbook, academic program handbook, mission and value statements, and faculty credentialing standards. This examination determined whether the documents reflected the responses

from participants. The study was conducted in a modern technologically savvy culture; however, documents were not pursued through emails, blogs, or social networking sites, nor through forums such as Skype or WebEx. Data that would tell the story of the emergence of poor literacy development within the community and the lives of the community members, rather than the way technology could illuminate more implicit literacy problems.

Census data were utilized that described Timner's unemployment rate, age of the community members in the labor force (which designated community members' places of employment), household earnings, high school dropout rate, crime rate, and the number of schools in the district. The data were theorized from Piketty's (2014) description of economic class and the structure of inequality from the standpoint of social reproduction through poor literacy development from his statement: "To be sure, income from labor is not equitably distributed... (p. 241)...[and] the most striking fact is no doubt that in all these societies, half of the population own virtually nothing" (p. 257). Data were collected that included the history of the community.

I visited Timner's local museum and read several archived newspapers to support and to enhance the understanding of social reproduction. By searching for small items to make clear to the reader the way in which community domains engaged in literacy development, accounts and practices were located that implied class-based economic development discussions and described plans to act on community goals (e.g., the argument for re-naming the central bypass after an African American icon, business endeavors, upward mobility schemes, capital building, and establishment milestones).

Coding Procedures

Important areas on which document analysis was focused were based on constructs from Brown's (2006) interwoven theories of critical reflection, rational discourse, policy, and praxis derived from research on adult learning, transformative learning, and critical social theory. As data gathering concluded, an exit strategy was developed. Patton (2002) explained that "completion of data gathering [happens] having become fairly knowledgeable about the setting being observed...and confirming observed patterns" (p. 323). The study was completed when repetition was noted regarding major themes about community literacy development and concepts about community leaders understanding of literacy. When the interpretation and analysis of retrieved information from documents and interviews became redundant, and data analysis interwove with data collection, the evidence for the study concluded.

As the design portion of the research methods was exploratory in nature, data were coded through an a priori process in order to identify emerging themes for inter-relationships, categorizations of literacy perceptions, and interpretations of community members' poor literacy development. An a priori codebook was developed from the combined lens of adult learning theory, transformative learning theory, and critical social theory to analyze, describe, and interpret the documents through an interwoven conceptual framework consistent with ontological and epistemological literacy development assumptions. After careful analysis of the recorded interviews and collected documents I: (1) assigned theories (adult learning, transformative, critical social) to apply to responses collected from interviews and documents; (2) ascribed personal reflections in the margins of notes; (3) identified recurring phrases patterns, themes, and

relationships from the interviews and documents; (4) categorized specific patterns and themes using Brown's (2006) ontological/epistemological assumptions related to critical reflection, rational discourse, and subsequently policy to praxis; and (5) formulated and constructed theories based on patterns (Patton, 2002). A key for the vitality of a rural community with a community college was the ability to identify the social engines that drive the community, "not just economically, but in terms of interactions and community engagement (Miller & Tuttle, 2007, p. 118).

Census data were reviewed and used to describe Timner demographically (population, unemployment rate, crime in the state, crime in the county, age in the labor force, household earnings, etc.); IPEDS data, the Kentucky Schools Report Card data; the college's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) accreditation mandate; Timner Chamber of Commerce data (narratives about the community from its multiple publications); the Timner New Era (its local newspaper); and documents relating to social reproduction challenges such as their YMCA debate and the re-naming of its bypass. At the root of the in-depth interviews and document accumulation and analysis was an interest in understanding the literacy development experience of community members and leaders. The meaning from participants' experiences that subsequently managed the community's growth socially (Collins, 2011); economically (Piketty, 2014); and through racial challenges (Freire, 2000) was an important interrelationship to be examined between the community domains. Participants were asked to reconstruct their literacy development experiences during the interview in order to reveal the complex intersection among their life experiences, identity, intergenerational educational perceptions, and intragenerational

mobility expectations. Those individuals who consented to participate in the study understood their anonymity would be maintained, as well as the location of the study.

Trustworthiness

Researchers build trust with participants of a study by using information collected to avoid hurting, demeaning, or denigrating those involved. Researchers also build trust with the participants assuring that the evidence collected will not be used to manipulate any predispositions toward the topic being investigated. I was transparent with participants about my relationship with literacy development and the domains involved in my growth. My relationship with literacy was explained by using personal experiences, a technique to employ credibility in the research project (Patton, 2002). Also, member checking was used cautiously as a technique with which to confirm accuracy of the information shared from the participants' perspectives and to ensure credibility of interpretations and findings (Patton, 2002). As stated previously, the topic was a sensitive issue for community leaders and members. Some questions divulged racially prejudiced anecdotes from some of the participants. As a member of the group against which some participants were adversarial, it was important that I use multiple techniques to gain trust, accuracy, credibility, and value to the investigation.

Although follow-up contacts were member checks to increase internal validity and validity in general (Patton, 2002), the tenuous triangle between community members, the community college, and community leaders and the use of multiple sources and documents that aligned with the interviewees' statements increased validity. A journal was maintained of my feelings and reflections from the interviews, and the audio-recordings were transcribed.

Communicating the authenticity of the narrative through rich descriptions and research objectives for articulation were the responsibility of me. Although my personal experience and member checking focused on thematic content and context, the organizing mechanism from an a priori coding technique integrated personal, methodological, and thematic lines of inquiry. This process allowed a search for meaning to understand social reproduction through literacy development in Timner.

Ethical Issues

Participation in the research was voluntary, and all individuals were assured of confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity throughout the process by written, continuous verbal and evidential means. An informed consent document was distributed to all interviewees. All publication will include no information of Timner, Kentucky, that may identify the participants. The names were not used in the research results, and a pseudonym was to be used in describing the location of the study. Research records and transcriptions from interviews were stored securely and will be destroyed in May 2018 in accordance with IRB guidelines.

The participants were coded by number rather than by name and were portrayed accordingly in the research results; i.e., the first interview was coded 01. All consent forms were placed in a separate file, and transcriptions were written and stored securely in a locked location. Research records and transcriptions will be destroyed in May 2018 in accordance with IRB guidelines. Through these procedures the rights of the participants were protected.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

The purpose of this single-site case study was to examine the interrelationships between community domains engaged in literacy development and to understand the choices made by community leaders related to literacy. Therefore, the central research question was: How do community leaders understand and respond to the challenge of low literacy rates? and was followed by four research questions. First, how do community leaders in Timner, Kentucky understand literacy and its practices?; second, what personal and professional experiences have guided their leadership practices?; third, on the continuum from intransitive to transitive consciousness, how do leaders describe the issues in Timner, Kentucky?; and fourth, does or how does literacy development affect the mission, goals, and outcomes of various community domains, particularly Timner Community College? Although literacy development in rural communities remains a challenge (Bracken, 2008), community leaders must respond to low literacy rates because literacy development is essential for economic growth in an evolving knowledge-driven economy.

This research was a single-site case study of community literacy in a small rural community in Western Kentucky. The study was structured to examine the interrelationships between community domains engaged in literacy development and to identify the choices, expectations, or initiatives used by community leaders in order to identify recurring themes related to literacy. This study will add directives, recommendations, and emphases to literacy research that can articulate the way in which to examine social reproduction in the rural south. The research was conducted in Timner, Kentucky, a small, southern, rural community with a community college. The poor

literacy development themes were derived from document analysis of official community documents and interviews based on the perspectives of community members. In order to organize the discussion, a brief epistemological assumption of community literacy development was provided, after which the following central research question, and an additional four research questions were addressed. The central research question was: Do or how do community leaders understand and respond to the challenge of low literacy rates? The additional questions were:

How do community leaders in Timner, Kentucky, understand literacy and its practices?

What personal and professional experiences have guided their leadership practices?

On the continuum from intransitive to transitive consciousness, how do leaders describe the issues in Timner, Kentucky?

Does or how does literacy development affect the mission, goals, and outcomes of various community domains, especially Timner Community College?

Research Question One (RQ1): How do community leaders in Timner, Kentucky understand literacy and its practices?

Four themes were found in answer to RQ1. The participants' answers were divided and placed into four thematic categories resulting from the challenges that constituted Timner's literacy culture: first, a critical conscience reflection and the community leader; second, social reproduction agents and community leadership; third, sociopolitical and sociocultural community constructs; and fourth, ascriptive literacy development. The four sections presented the different and tenuous White community leaders' and members' views of the literacy problem in Timner from Black community

leaders and members. Through the lens of poor literacy development, the participants articulated whether they believed it to be at the core of the community's differing social constructs (i.e., racial injustices, job opportunities, housing area designations, religious affiliations, and social status, etc.).

A Critical Conscience Reflection and the Community Leader

Small, southern, rural communities historically have been understood and described as the heart of the American conscience. The founding of many rural communities from the slave trade augmented a community's culture, mission, and identity. Timner, Kentucky, has been posited as one such community. Timner evolved because of several distinct oppressive practices (e.g., slave labor and extensive tobacco farming), all based upon cultural traditions and a shared meaning of community perpetuated by its community members: They understood the significance of maintaining injustice by constraint, oppression, and domination; e.g., a White male community leader stated:

Timner is just different. I mean people talk about our quote unquote racial issues and yes I guess we do have them. It seems to be a divide whether it's racial or whether it's economic because we have a lot of poverty, and that goes across racial lines...we have a very big disparity between who has and who doesn't.

While a Black community leader questioned the acknowledgement of the issues, she directed her concerns toward a willingness to recognize them by stating:

I don't know people who are open and willing enough to address it [race disparities and poor literacy development] because you have to acknowledge it. We have some problems here. Sometimes I wonder if in this rural community if

anyone is really interested in being literate and being exposed to literacy.

(BFCL1)

A basic assumption about literacy development in southern rural communities is that which individuals are taught to read (e.g., the Bible). This assumption was as significant as those who would be allowed to learn to read (e.g., Black people). Literacy development occurs in social, historical, and political contexts. In order to recognize the conditions imposed against its development, negative consequences must direct the process (the prompting of hegemony). From this perspective and from the context of community literacy, poor literacy development referred to that which leaders *do*, rather than solely that which they *believe*. Brown (2006) suggested that leaders should not be trained to deliver the same ideals or set of practices. She suggested that individuals can see their beliefs through their choices.

By being actively engaged in a number of transformative learning strategies requiring the examination of ontological and epistemological assumptions, values and beliefs, context and experience, and competing worldviews, future leaders will be better equipped to understand, critically analyze, and grow in their perceived ability to challenge various forms of social oppression including racism, sexism, heterosexism, anti-Semitism, ableism, and classism. (Brown, 2006, p. 706)

At times it was unclear as to the linkage of outcomes of poor literacy development to the responses of community members. However, the interrelationships between community domains “suggest that there is an ontological link between personal beliefs and public behaviors” (Brown, 2006, p. 706).

Social Reproduction Agents and Community Leadership

Timner has experienced struggles that were recognized and imposed by cultural conditions against a willingness for an equitable level of access to educational resources and opportunities, affluence, and impartial leadership toward its community members. Brown (2006) stated that, “Although an awareness of and openness to issues of diversity and culturally inclusive education is an important prerequisite of administrators’ ability to lead for social justice and equity, it is only a prerequisite” (p. 703). The first research question asked: How do community leaders in Timner, Kentucky, understand community literacy and its practices? A former community member reiterated a common belief among some small, southern, rural community leaders who equate and symbolize literacy development with a non-academic producing outcome: sports and money. A former Black male resident and high school graduate of Timner recounted:

They [White community leaders] don’t expect much from us growing up especially in a city that idolizes their athletes. I was one of the top athletes coming out of here. I think that made me want to go and want to do better—it was sports and the money that comes from it. It’s like we are factory workers. We just don’t own the factory. (BLCM1)

A White male community leader recalled:

My Dad would take me as a boy, maybe a high school boy, and he and I would go over to [an all-Black Timner high school] to watch the basketball players and we would be the only White people in the gym. So my Dad, in his own way, introduced me.

My Dad had a dry cleaning business. The men who worked at the dry cleaning plant pressing and dry cleaning were Black and their sons played basketball. [One day] we [all] got in the same car to watch a basketball game. That was a real big deal back then for people to be in the same car to do something like that, so that's a really good memory that I have.

A White female community leader noted:

There wasn't this distinction between Black and White so much. One of the first friends I made was a little Black girl who played basketball. Our dads worked together. She was always my friend in school. We didn't hang out together, but I went to her basketball games, and we always had this great relationship, and I always knew she was one of those good friends who would always be there.

Brown (2006) believed that "exemplary leadership helps point to the necessity for change and helps make the realities of change happen;" however, "...not reflecting on, discussing, and/or addressing issues of race, poverty, and disability only further perpetuates the safeguarding of power and the status quo" (p. 702).

A reflective account of poor literacy development experiences suggested a way in which to examine Timner community leaders' explanations about their understanding of literacy. Also, this reflective approach explained the way Black community members' affected by a cultural and historical representation of the community's values (e.g., distribution of power and social status) misunderstood equality. Timner community leaders had not evolved to "the process by which adults question and then replace or

reframe an assumption that up to that point has been uncritically accepted as representing commonsense wisdom” (Brookfield, 1995 as cited in Brown, 2006, p. 709).

The Timner community began as a result of an influx of slave labor producing a market for tobacco. Black people in the community historically were a subjugated people, while Whites dominated the direction and ethos of the culture. Thus, the intuitive practices of literacy development for all community members began inequitably. A Black female community leader from one of the agency domains provided insight into the significance of Timner’s origins — the slave trade and its impact on literacy development. She explained:

You should want literacy. With a plantation mentality, you wouldn’t. You wouldn’t want a division. I am not sure how to build those opportunities [literacy development] from the way the system is set now because some people are not in a position to be vocal for fear of whatever. I think I understand a little bit more now. There is that divide. It’s that only the 1% can have this [literacy]. We [White community leaders] can’t expose everybody to that because we really don’t want a literate community. We [White community leaders] don’t want to have all these kids [Black] going to college, do we? So that 1% owns what is in this community.

(BFCL1)

Black community leaders not only stated an awareness of poor literacy development as a nexus to the problems in Timner, but also they indicated the importance of some community leaders resisting equilibrium by maintaining an adverse and tacit interrelationship between slave mores and literacy development.

“Ennobling” was the response to slavery from a White female community leader on two issues: (1) What was it like growing up in Timner? and (2) Describe how you have been educated to understand the history of this community’s population. She articulated the racial divide that Freire (2000) posited as “the conflict of lies in the choice between...acting or having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressors” (p. 48). She further extrapolated:

What I thought was ennobling was [the profession of] being a slave and coming out of it—coming out the other side. I think anything that is painful when you come out of it anything that is hard and is painful if you come out of it intact that it ennobles you, and I think suffering ennobles you. (WFCL2)

A Black male community leader remarked:

Okay, my honest feeling is that the homegrown [legacy slave labor community members] is an option that will outgrow its ability to be relevant. I have great concerns with our local education system and I have grown up here being a part of the segregated system and now a consolidated system.

Given the intensity and extent of illiteracy in Timner, the perspectives from the leaders about the problem prevented their actionable knowledge. Community leaders emphasized formidable challenges to be acknowledged in order to overcome a historical backdrop of oppressive practices. However, community members “cannot slowly organize the people, but must enter into dialogue with them, so that the people’s empirical knowledge of reality, nourished by the leaders’ critical knowledge, gradually becomes transformed into knowledge of the causes of reality” (Freire, 2000, p. 134).

In Timner, Kentucky, when discussing the alignment of systemically embedded oppressive practices with literacy development strategies in order to understand and acknowledge the literacy issues among community members, poor literacy development did not appear at the forefront of conversations; rather, productivity surfaced. A “false generosity” (Freire, 2000, p. 133) promoted the humanization of oppressive practices. A White female community leader expressed her “false generosity” (her perception of ennoblement), or noblesse oblige. The illusion of working toward change when individuals actually are working toward assuaging their White guilt can be recognized by her statement:

I knew Black people when I was young. I shouldn't name the whole name but [personal name] used to look after me while my mother worked. She was a fine woman. I loved her to death and her kids' outcomes didn't turn out as she would like...she worked...work was kind of a given for a lot of women in this community. So, you know struggles I think ennoble you, not necessarily the hard work but I think hard work makes you a better person too. (WFCL2)

Community leaders were given the opportunity to observe through a reflective lens that signaled a deliberate and strategic approach to social reproduction, which could be articulated as an intentional transference of inequitable practices from one generation to the next. The deliberate oppressing of one ethnic population over another in order to maintain social institutions, ideas, positions, and traditions sustains inequality. When examining Timner's leadership, a social reproduction construct did not disrupt the evidence of an oppressive status quo from poor literacy development among community members, yet it suggested “the hegemonic aspects of dominant cultural values”

(Brookfield, 1995, as cited in Brown, 2006, p. 709). When a White male community leader suggested productivity rather than improving literacy, particularly by stating his pawned work ethic of working “alongside Black-skin” community members, his hegemonic ideologies or “docile pawn[s] of the elites” (Freire, 2000, p. 37) signaled a warning to examine the way in which a dominant culture maintains oppressed practices through social reproduction:

The people here, a lot of people here had grown up on farms. They were used to working hard. People who had worked at factories worked hard, taught their children to work hard. Hard work has been a part of our community as far as I can remember, and I never lived on a farm, but I have friends who lived on farms. They worked hard and when I would work on farms there would be tenant farmers that would be Black skin tone who would work alongside of us. They worked so hard. Hard work is a really, really good thing. I think sometimes the time required for thinking—brainstorming can kind of get put aside. (WMCL1)

Sociopolitical and Sociocultural Community Constructs

Eddy (2007), a community college scholar, characterized the rural community as having “decreasing populations, increasing poverty, limited economic growth and limited access to cultural events” (p. 271). Her interpretation of rural communities associated well with Brown’s (2006) social justice construct for educational leaders, in that an “increase...of sociopolitical and sociocultural constructs” should occur in order to “acknowledge the importance of understanding and discussing such difficult issues related to race, class, gender, and difference” (p. 712). As such, this indicated that Timmer, through the lens of critical social theory, was explored from the question: Can

community leaders be change agents if they do not critically examine their past experiences? One White male community leader responded by sharing a story about a past experience involving “these people” [Black community members] in an effort to “demythologize” (Brown, 2006, p. 710) his past practices that may have been anchored in suppressive intentions:

We had maids in our house. We had maids and cooks from time to time. We weren't wealthy, but we had major cooks in our house, and I could remember they were Black. And what I could remember especially was how much they loved me and how much I loved them.

I can remember sometimes, especially in the winter when it would get dark earlier, and maybe my mother was going to take them home, or maybe my dad and I would ride along. It would only be a mile away and yet it was a totally different deal. You would have these people in your house all day long. It was like your grandmother or something and you would just love her and then you would drop her off at a little shotgun house, and you could smell the coal burning. I would have that kind of experience.

I can remember playing football and walking home. I can remember feeling like a minority walking down Central Avenue because when you got a little bit deeper down Central Avenue it was all-Black and as a White boy walking down there I would say the Lord's prayer: 'Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,' but I never had any trouble or anything at all. [Not the Lord's Prayer, suggesting “an ontological link between personal beliefs and public behaviors.” (Brown, 2006, p. 706)]

I had just very little association with people of color other than these ladies at our house and the men at the dry cleaning business, and a little bit with their sons, but not much. (WMCL1)

Ascriptive Literacy Development

Timner community leaders were committed to the values of an ascriptive culture and invested in this practice through education and local appropriations (e.g., library). Ntiri (2013) rejected the ascription argument of literacy deficits among African Americans as “not the result of genetic shortcomings or linguistic interference, home environments or cultural orientation but it is of disproportionate opportunity” (p. 163). Thus, when recalling specific incidents from life experiences, many of the interviewees believed a similar understanding of their literacy development issue through reflection, such as from this White female community leader:

From my position, I wonder, and I don't know, but I wonder if it was decreasing the standards so they [educational institutions] would be more accessible, which is worse for the kids rather than better. I think young people rise to the challenge. I don't think you have to lower your standards for anybody. I think they will do just fine. You keep our standards they will meet them. They will surprise you. I think lowering expectations is not good for any of us. Sadly, I think expecting more is better regardless if it's school or on the job. It's the society. I think there are many reasons, one of the important reasons, is that even though my parents did not finish school and reading as an activity [was not enforced] in and of itself perhaps reading for pleasure, there were more important things to do like clean the house, iron, you know, do your chores and all that. (WFCL2)

Research Question Two (RQ2): What personal and professional experiences have guided their leadership practices?

In answer to RQ2, three themes emerged. The participants' answers were divided and placed into three thematic categories resulting from the challenges that constituted Timner's literacy culture: first, experiential guided leadership; second, social capital and the White male; and third, literacy and the Black experience. The three sections presented the way in which Timner community leaders were guided in their respective positions by their personal literacy development experiences, and how their decisions' impact on community members' growth and development. Through the lens of poor literacy development, the participants articulated how their understanding of the challenges of Timner's distribution of power through social reproduction and how the leaders transitively targeted literacy development practices upon specific populations. An example of social reproduction through the distribution of power from one's personal and professional experiences could be ethnocentrism, "the predisposition to regard others outside one's own group as inferior" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 6). In terms of community leadership, Brown (2006) asserted that transformative leadership is a "process of experiential learning, critical self-reflection, and rationale discourse that can be stimulated by people" (p. 706). RQ2 included seven participants and their acknowledgement of expectations, perceptions, and behaviors of community members that "set [their] line of action" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 5).

Experiential Guided Leadership

Participants were asked to reconstruct their experiences in order to reveal the complex intersection among their life events and intragenerational mobility expectations.

In Timner, a natural ethos of “imposed limitations on one group by another” (Ntiri, 2013, p. 159) based upon community leaders’ personal experiences consistently articulated literacy development “as an instrument for the reproduction of social inequality” (Ntiri, 2013, p. 159). A Black female community leader provided her rationale for an “undiscussable critical issues mediated by race”:

I think maybe the majority of people [Black people] think the way I think, but I think some of them have learned to accept that role. They accept being in that subservient role in this community. They accept things that they shouldn’t and they should voice their opinion. I don’t know if it’s just fear or not.

An experience that triggered her leadership praxis involved:

I know when I first moved down here in the 90’s the late 80’s I ran for [office]. Now I wasn’t from here so everybody kept saying you’re not homegrown. You’re not from Timner so how dare you run for [office]. You’re not from here and I heard that from Black people. White people probably thought it, but I didn’t care. I ran and won. But people were surprised that I won. My thing is that mentality-- that mentality that you stay in your place. Still that plantation mentality [says] you shouldn’t be doing that.” (BFCL1)

According to Brown (2006), leaders should serve as “change agents that analyze the cultural aspects that have permitted long-standing social inequalities to not only proliferate but also become institutional ideological belief systems” (p. 702). Thus, in the context of community leadership in Timner, what personal and professional experiences have guided leadership practices? As Timner began from the service and agriculture industries—the slave trade and the growing of tobacco, “critical reflection [were] to

externalize and investigate power relationships and to uncover hegemonic assumptions” (Brown, 2006, p. 709).

Labels were imposed on certain community members to maintain a socioeconomically disenfranchised and scholastically retarded people aligned by oppressive practices, and “the very structure of their thought[s] has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped” (Freire, 2000, p. 45). The second response to RQ2 included that of one participant. The significance of interpreting one community leader’s response with critical social theory in mind explained and established a common theme among the White participants in the study in the way “microaggressions present in speech, gestures and other interactions that may belie their sincerity” (Ntiri, 2013, p. 161). Beginning with the discussion about her experience in developing relationships with minorities, she stated:

You know, I may need more education more along that line because we have talked before and I know I tend to be a little naïve in my outlook. I have never worked with anyone regardless of their color who was any different than I was. I mean, I take that back, I worked with a lot of Indian people and I don’t know if they were any different than I was or it was my perception. Their customs were different you know they would go into approved marriages that were perhaps arranged when they were small, but other than that, no one was any different than I was except for their culture. (WFCL2)

Question: Tell me about your education in the schools please starting with elementary.

Response: One year I got sent over to Westside. [West Side is a predominantly Black neighborhood] (WFCL2)

Question: Where is West Side?

Response: My parents moved, and then I was in a different district. West Side was the poorer kids. I was young and snooty. (WFCL2)

Question: So you knew that the families that went to Westside were different?

Response: I don't remember hearing my parents talk about different neighborhoods, or one being worse or better than the other. I have no memory of ever hearing anything of that nature, and it might be that I just assumed it. I have no idea how it entered my mind. (WFCL2)

Question: What do you think is the driving cause of this community's low literacy levels?

Response: I think there are many reasons. One of the important reasons is that even though my parents did not finish school and enjoy reading as an activity in and of itself, there were more important things to do like cleaning the house, ironing, and doing chores. (WFCL2)

The literacy outcomes of community members from the perspective of leaders not only provided detailed and thought provoking answers to RQ2, but also they shared a unique lens with which to realize an institutionalized culture still firmly grounded in fundamental and historic subjugation values. From the participants' stories, descriptions, and beliefs, literacy development for all of Timner's citizenry may serve as an instrument and model for an in-depth interpretation or a "critically transitive consciousness" (Brown, 2006, p. 711) examination into changing the community's literacy culture.

Social Capital and the White Male

A White male leader equated his literacy development from the support of his family, particularly his middle school English teacher mother. As a leader in the community whose position could “selectively shape and delimit” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 5) disenfranchised community members, he indiscriminately expounded upon his privilege and his lack of believability in those he viewed as “mere objects of their own action” (Freire, 2000, p. 169). The participant stated:

Living in Timner we have a very large African American population, and so I had Black friends from elementary school all the way up through high school. I was in class with African Americans every day. That was normal here. Everybody knows you here. I went to Catholic Church—there were very few. I know I had advantages that other kids didn’t. (WMCL2)

My high school education prepared me for college—prepared me for everything. [Today], for a single [Black] mom who’s got 3 kids and has to go to work and put food on the table; I mean let alone know I am supposed to do your homework with you, they are tired. So many kids don’t get what I call the extra boost at home that they probably need at school, and sometimes that is no fault of the parents. They are working two jobs and doing what they can. I know my kids get a quality education [they attend a private school], but we still work with them at home. We are doing their homework, we are studying, and we are going over chapters with them. They are reading their books to us. It’s tiring—it takes time, but that’s just what you do. (WMCL2)

A young Black male who was a former athlete in a secondary school in Timner agreed with the White male leader's argument. He naïvely believed he "technically made it" by the manner in which the oppressor "changed the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them" (Freire, 2000, p. 74). The interest of the majority coincided with the interest of the minority because the normed culture of exploitation and objectification was met and understood by both groups:

Our household isn't set up to where the parent can sit down and talk to the kid.

And the kid can't go to school and learn what he/she needs to know. Moms and dads work in the factory because they have to pay the bills. They are not at home because they work odd hours. We don't get an education past slavery. I am better than what is put in my head that I am, but we come with the struggle. So, I guess we have to stay there since we come from it. So, I don't expect better. I don't as long as I get by. As long as my bills can get paid, I am good. And the factory can pay my bills.

Literacy and the Black Experience

The White Timner leadership thought that poor literacy development was not the consideration to necessitate an inclusive and economically stable community. The consensus was work: productivity rather than focus on education. This meant for Black community members that they would be perceived as producers rather than significant participants due to the historic ethos of the community. A White male leader said:

It would be hard for you or anyone to get me to say anything that's not good about productivity. I think work ethic and grit and determination are extremely important. Some of it has to do with people just being lazy. I wouldn't say we

have had extremely wonderful school teachers, principals, board of education members, but we also have a lot of people who didn't value education. (WMCL1)

In addition, the label affiliation among community members in terms of literacy development began an identifier trend among the populace. Black people in Timner with poor literacy development often were termed "lazy" because of an institutionalized condition targeting them. Others demonstrating poor literacy development were often termed "un-prepared," and community leaders with poor literacy development were termed "ill-informed." A Black female leader believed the best life for the Black population is to get an education and leave the community:

We have to educate. Yes, education is freedom to these young kids to get out of this community if they want to leave it. (BFCL1)

Research Question Three (RQ3): On the continuum from intransitive to transitive consciousness, how do leaders describe the issues in Timner, Kentucky?

In answer to RQ3, eight themes were noted. The answers were from six participants and their knowledge of intransitive and transitive literacy practices. They were divided into eight thematic categories of findings from the challenges that constituted Timner's literacy culture: first, focalized literacy; second, literacy development as a culture of silence; third, intransitive and transitive consciousness defined; fourth, intransitive consciousness; fifth, transitive consciousness and athletics; sixth, transitive consciousness and institutionalized mechanisms; seventh, inferential literacy development; and eighth, literacy as a transitive assumption. The eight sections delineated the views of different and tenuous community leaders regarding the literacy problem in Timner based upon systemic character traits.

RQ3 was the most important question for the study. Community leaders played a key role in ensuring that its members are linked to an equitable distribution of the community's capitalistic industries and that no division of labor exists through oppressive practices. Therefore, when investigating a continuum or the range of literacy development practices in Timner, the tendency may be to reflect on the historical precedence of literacy (e.g., in which poor literacy development is used to maintain separation between races; class stratification), rather than searching for an understanding of whether a community member is literate (able to read and write). A review of the political and/or policy practice landscape that contributed to Timner members' significantly low levels would follow. However, a power asymmetric could frame an argument that demonstrates cognizant and deceptive ideological mechanisms inherent to poor literacy development that consciously reproduces a social and cultural reproductive climate. RQ3 bated the question of an inherent pledge of equilibrium. Through the lens of poor literacy development, the participants articulated on a continuum from intransitive to transitive consciousness the way in which the accumulation of power consigned to one population from the service of another and explained the misunderstood paradigm of social equity. RQ3 also explored the reason Timner exhibited poor literacy developed community members, despite that its community leaders touted the importance of community literacy.

Focalized Literacy

One White male leader believed community literacy meant “an emphasis in our community for people who are low on the totem pole and for those people to be helped and to be encouraged to read and to be taught. Unfortunately, we are faced with this

technology.” However, on the continuum from intransitive to transitive consciousness, and the context from which a community prepares its leaders, Brown (2006) ascertained that research is limited on effective programs “heeding a call to action...[to] meet the needs of the 21st-century leader” (p. 704). This indicates that, for leaders in rural communities such as Timner, the practice of “changing the way in which people see themselves” (p. 708) and of interpreting “expectations framed within cultural assumptions and presuppositions” (p. 708) literacy development, for example, will “influence meaning derived from their experiences” (p. 708). This practice eluded one participant when she commented:

I don't ever remember racial tension. There was never strife, there was never anything like that at my high school. It just didn't exist. Nobody even thought about it. I mean it just didn't exist. Everybody was just a kid. You just went to high school. There was no distinction. (WFCL)

As a consequence, Timner community members' literacy development could remain unequal because the goal of literacy becomes limited by predispositions set within the subjugate culture; i.e., the leaders' of Timner utilized intransitive conscience practices to maintain the status quo. The significance of understanding poor literacy development in Timner on a continuum from intransitive to transitive consciousness is the relevance of an individual's literacy evolution. More specifically, how did leaders in Timner explain its issues or problems? Through intentional positioning, this question produced that which Freire referred to as “focalized” subjugation (p. 141):

One of the characteristics of oppressive cultural action which is almost never perceived by the dedicated but naïve professionals who are involved is the

emphasis on a *focalized* view of problems rather than on seeing them as dimensions of a *totality*. In “community development” projects the more a region or area is broken down into “local communities,” without the study of these communities both as totalities in themselves and as parts of another totality (the area, region, and so forth)—which in its turn is part of a still larger totality (the nation, as part of the continental totality)—the more alienation is intensified. And the more alienated people are, the easier it is to divide them and keep them divided. These focalized forms of action, by intensifying the focalized way of life of the oppressed (especially in rural areas), hamper the oppressed from perceiving reality critically and keep them isolated from the problems of oppressed women and men in other areas. (Freire, 2000, pp. 142-143)

Literacy Development as a Culture of Silence

The culture of silence and a fear of adverse consequences amongst the powerless symbolize the way in which on the continuum from intransitive to transitive consciousness and the historical and social roots of academic sabotage support Timmer’s status quo. In Timmer, how did leaders describe/interpret the issues, particularly when institutionalized conditions, poor literacy development and practices, were used to constrain, oppress, and dominate? One Black female community leader elaborated that the transference of knowledge is “focalized” through a transitive practice of manipulation through fear. Brown (2006) referred to such assertions and claims in her transformative leadership framework as “a critical reflection...to externalize and investigate power relationships and to uncover hegemonic assumptions” (p. 709). One participant remarked:

Fear of reprisal: maybe that is it. I am not sure because some people are not in a position to be vocal for fear of whatever because I worked at [a nearby military installation], and I had no fear because I knew these local people couldn't hurt me—they couldn't mess with my livelihood, and I know in some cases some folks would hold back because of that. But I had no fear because I worked for the federal government. I lived here, this is my home, but I always felt like I could speak my mind. There was no way they were going to hurt my livelihood or my husband's. (BFCL1)

Balanced against the statement from the community leader was that she failed to realize she was operating from a literacy-deficit model by maintaining Timner's cultural reproduction construct. Her criticism of "they" can easily frame her argument to demonstrate her victim's pledge. It also indicates her lack of understanding of Timner's deceiving cultural mechanisms used to invest in a system that rewards for reproducing and not questioning dominant mechanisms designed to produce more power for the principle group. Macedo (1994) surmised that, "...communities must perpetuate the dominant ideology based on a web of lies so as to provide individuals with an objective that enables people to deceive their conscience and conceal their true position and their inglorious modus vivendi, both from the world and from themselves" (p. 39).

Intransitive and Transitive Consciousness Defined

Brown (2006) proposed that intransitive consciousness examines an individual's interpretation of problems based upon the realities of the sociopolitical and sociocultural environment. Transitive consciousness is the action taken toward terminating or continuing the practices that shape the disposition.

Intransitive consciousness. Brown (2006) discussed a critical social theoretical approach of transformational leadership through intransitive and transitive consciousness. In doing so, cultural symbolism — in Timner it was the placement of leadership to dominate indirectly (intransitive), or directly (transitive) — was the integration of interrelational literacy values. This capital and academic controlled practice accounts for the way community positioned its leadership to define its discourse center, conscious oppressive action toward poor literacy development. One way an intransitive conscience thought can be explained is through the interpretation of materialism and its symbolism from a Black male community leader:

It kind of does something to you when you can't buy something. Everything is relatively reasonable. You know you see some shoes; they are not too much. You want a new shirt, it is not too much. [Timner] isn't going to charge you an arm and a leg. But out there [outside rural communities] you gotta have it because they [people outside rural communities] don't have no bull crap clothes.

(BMCM1)

If honestly viewing the history of Timner, an emphasis would be seen that the African American population was inept at constructing laws to avoid being enslaved; they were unable to create policies that did not relegate their livelihood or identity to ghettos and segregated neighborhoods; and they could not create legislation making it a crime to be educated. Timner was “founded on a culture of hegemony that privileged and assigned control to the White patriarchy and relegated other racial, cultural, and gender groups to a culture of silence” (Macedo, 1994, p. 44) and a culture that replaced literacy development with materialism. One could assume that “they don't have no bull crap

clothes” due to the association with education, income, and status, all of which are missing.

Transitive consciousness and athletics. Throughout the history of the United States, the White dominant culture has devised a myriad of barriers to prevent Black people from becoming educated and from gaining social equity. Literacy occurs in social, historical, and political contexts, with the basic assumption the material individuals are taught to read is as significant as the fact that they can read. Scribner (1984) believed that “literacy inevitably involves social analysis: What activities are carried out with written symbols? What significance is attached to them, and what status is conferred on those who engage in them” (p. 8).

As Blacks historically have been barred from an education, on an educational continuum scale the denial of learning to read and write could be considered an intransitive conscious practice. The current culture of sports participation, for the Black population particularly, could be considered a transitive conscience practice and has steadily and increasingly shifted the culture of academics. Although the Black male participant understood the value of education (he played basketball and football in high school in Timner), his expectations beyond sports and his perspective of his future remained deluded due to his community experience (i.e., he was expected to play sports and to get a job in the factory upon graduation, if he graduated) and due to his anticipated low literacy level. He stated: “[I’m] not smart enough to play sports in Vegas, so you know you gotta really pay attention in [high] school because you need a job when you are finished.” Sports participation could be viewed as the current form of a guarantee to

equal access without developing one's intellectual capacity: "You need a job when you are finished."

Transitive consciousness and institutionalized mechanisms. The African American population has not been protected from the effects or causes resulting from poor literacy development. Although this research does not encompass the early onset of "...the abysmal state...of black education in the U.S." (as cited in Pane & Salmon, 2009, p. 282), it extrapolates on the consequences from such neglect. Literacy practitioners can now contextualize trends "resulting from discontinuities between the larger society and African Americans" (Ntiri, 2013, p. 159).

From this point it is understood that power is used to control under-educated populations. Literacy development challenges in rural communities in the South evolved through an intransitive (intuitive) practice linked to social, economic, and political implications. By consistently reproducing a culture of literacy challenges, the Black population struggled within the dominant culture's ideology, literacy versus productivity practice. The current national demand for equitable access to education, and the workforce from under-resourced marginalized populations, have changed the culture and environment of such rural communities to a transitive (intentional) practice of subjugation. Timner's cultural ideology did not warrant an equitable community. Essentially, can one expect an equitable access construct from an unequal educational structure? The actual educational question and challenge for those vying to understand the culture of poor literacy development in rural communities is to understand the reason most of its members were unaware, or refused to be aware of the ideology responsible for reproducing the culture. In Timner, it would be considered slavery.

Inferential Literacy Development

To ascertain the needs of community members, it is important to understand their learning experiences predicated upon involvement in developing and integrating into an academic culture. One of the questions asked of a White male leader concerned his awareness of negative assumptions about marginalized community members interconnected by “social, cultural, political, philosophical, and economic contexts” (Brown, 2006, p. 734). Of relevance regarding his understanding the ways in which public policy promotes equality of opportunity by directly and intentionally connecting change efforts linked by subjugation, and the way those changes affect specific groups, or more specifically the marginalized Black population in Timner, is the identification of the range of considerations leading to his policy decisions. The query initiated his cultural insensitivity toward marginalized constituents. Also of concern was his awareness of the effect of policy creations on the Black population through an intransitive consciousness — passive discourse of community issues—and subsequent engagement practices. This participant recalled:

I had people advise me not to campaign in the minority community [because] a lot of them don't vote, can't vote because they are felons. My first year in office I created a department to transition the inner city...we targeted properties that were vacant, dilapidated, that made parts of our town look like a third world country. (WMCL1)

Underlying intentions, values, and beliefs are essential in authenticating community members' assimilation into the community's norms. Based upon its evolvement through oppression, this occurred in Timner by “critically examining evidence arguments and

alternative points of view (Mezirow, 1997, p. 6)...we can encounter a new group and create new negative meaning schemes for them by focusing on their perceived shortcomings” (p. 7). Conversely, a Black female community member related the same campaign to upgrade the community a bit different. She remarked:

There was a middle school in the heart of the Black neighborhood. A whole parking lot was the school. We used to sit on the wall at that school. It had an upstairs, multiple levels, and all those sorts of things. They [local leadership] tore down houses and [the school and] they used them for their parking lots.
(BFCM1)

It was evident in Timner that the leaders felt an obligation to community members to make community improvements. However, the dominant political discourse used a transitive consciousness approach to change as a reminder of their power. As literacy development is a link used to eradicate social injustice, inequality through social reproduction, oppression, alienation, and the preservation of sameness, Timner’s leaders ascribed to privilege, cultural imperialism, and marginalization, which is the intransitive social pattern of injustice embedded in the community’s cultural norms. Although the intent of the leaders may have been to ensure that all members had a voice, or at least were heard during the decision-making process, they were unable to support the population of their choice because the decisions or actions from which the culture was structured would prohibit it. This observation was noted from the two participants’ comments when their opinions of the same event were explained in different ways.

Literacy as a transitive assumption. When functional literacy is described as the ability to read and write and to make meaning of words and concepts in a communicative

manner, evidence of subversive outcomes (i.e., poor literacy development) conveyed from transitive conscience behaviors could be predicated upon a leader's grasp of literacy. Mezirow (2000) contended that transformative learning occurs when "adults have acquired a coherent body of experience — associations, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses — frames of reference that define their life world" (p. 5). Timmer community members' and its leadership's experiences included "oppressive sociopolitical constructs" (Brown, 2006, p. 711). The ethos of its hegemonic culture fit into the members' beliefs/values. In Timmer, it is important to note that a White male leader and political activist indicated that a delay occurred in segregating the schools after the Brown v. The Topeka Board of Education decision, the requisite for racial integration of all public schools. He made a transitive assumption about the marginalized population and the reason they worked hard. His assumption was that the marginalized population would rather work in assigned industries (e.g., farming, factories) as opposed to receiving an education, which would create options and different opportunities. The significance of his assumed beliefs (intransitive consciousness) was from an oppressive construct:

It's real hard to answer that question from my perspective. [Question: How do you think the community's history of farming affected the current knowledge-driven economic market?] We recruited a lot industrial [businesses] from foreign countries, and some from here in the states. Interest rates were low, and a lot of new jobs [were created]. Agribusiness is still huge here. We talked a lot about the work ethic of the people here. A lot of people here grew up on farms. I never lived on a farm. They were used to working hard. People who worked in factories

worked hard and taught their children to work hard. Working hard has been a part of our community as far as I can remember. There would be tenant farmers that would be Black skin tone who would work alongside of us. They worked hard.
(WMCL1)

The White male's experiences and living in a culture dominated by a "complex web of lies" (Macedo, 1994, p. 39) and ruling elitist, led him to believe that "side-by-side" work without equal access to the resources that distribute the wealth, and the associated social equity, would suffice as dignity, respect, quality, and equality. His blinders to mechanisms designed to produce power demonstrated that poor literacy development was embedded in his transitive (action-driven) conscience.

In contrast, a Black female leader indicated an intransitive idea about the reason Black population worked "hard" by stating:

They would say, 'you dumb, you won't have anything. You will not go no further than the farm...factory...they would say that. [In terms why literacy development remains a problem.] Black parents didn't show up [to school functions] because they were working. 90% of them were working all the time probably at the factory. (BFCM1)

Another Black female commented:

I think we first have to acknowledge that that attitude ["master and the servant—slave mentality] does exist, and they [the dominant White-establishment] may deny and say that's not the way it is, but it is that way. That's what I see.
(BFCL1)

Freire (2000) specified a transitive literacy assumption when he stated: “It is only when the oppressed find the oppressor out and become involved in the organized struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in themselves. This discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection; only then will it be a praxis” (p. 65). For a community to claim its culture as one that inherently develops its community members’ human potential, evidence of literacy development must be at the center of its policy and praxis construct.

Research Question Four (RQ4): Does or how does literacy development affect the mission, goals, and outcomes of various community domains, especially Timner Community College?

Four themes surfaced relative to RQ4. The documents analyzed and participants’ answers were divided and placed into four thematic categories resulting from the challenges that constituted Timner’s inadequate literacy culture: first, Timner’s Justice Center; second, Timner’s Chamber of Commerce; third, Timner’s Schools Scorecard; and fourth, Timner’s Community College. Twenty public documents were analyzed that related to RQ4 and included three participants and their knowledge about community literacy and policy generation. The four sections delineated the way in which Timner’s community domains interrelated and created a culture that fostered literacy development. Through the lens of poor literacy development, the participants articulated and the documents demonstrated that literacy affects the mission, goals, and outcomes of various domains, and how equity and literacy issues are framed in public documents.

As RQ3 examined community leaders' and members' predispositions toward issues related to poor literacy development, RQ4 reviewed community domains from a political and policy practice landscape that contribute to such predispositions. It was explained from RQ3 that a power asymmetric could frame an argument of cognizant deceptive ideologies toward a certain population. With RQ4, the findings in official institutional and community documents, state-level school report cards, and other public documents explored the way equity and literacy issues are upheld to foster such ideologies. This social and cultural reproduction construct "explained how [community leaders] expectations, framed within cultural assumptions and presuppositions, directly influence the meaning they derive from their experiences" (Brown, 2006, p. 708). In order to connect subjugation mired in old myths and stereotypes with compressed community growth and development, equity and literacy issues framed in public documents could illustrate the nexus to a hegemonic culture.

Justice in Timner

From his research on critical literacy, Macedo (1994) speculated that poor literacy development embedded in "cultural reproduction...uses institutional mechanisms to undermine independent thought...[and] collective experiences function in the interest of the dominant ruling elites rather than in the interest of the oppressed groups that are the object of the policies of cultural reproduction" (p. 14). His thoughts were based on his belief that the United States was founded on a culture of hegemony that relegated the disenfranchised to a culture of silence. Researchers studying the effect of poor literacy development on rural communities such as Timner stated that community members tend to rely heavily on government services; have negligible academic support, usage, or

awareness (library services, parent-teacher conferences, and/or teacher partnership, health screenings, participation in school events, special student service, and tutoring services); have low income levels; and have negligible healthcare. Therefore, in order to fully understand and to focus on poor literacy development, it is essential to trace its evolution from a leadership for social justice and equity framework (Brown, 2006). It is necessary to identify and to describe the justice, local association and business interests (chamber of commerce), educational, and collection of literacy practices (library services) from those who participated and dictated cultural control — through literacy, capital development, and social control or social reproduction.

Where does Timner leadership rank in terms of a philosophical understanding of justice in quality, access, and efficiency with that which is known about poor literacy development? Accumulated evidence from literacy research theorists, as well as theories on literacy development created from promoters of social justice, teaches that literacy is a powerful instrument for economic, social, and cultural change and historically has been neglected or postponed in southern rural communities (Fluharty & Scaggs, 2007). Why then, in the 21st century, does a disconnect exist between the way Timner's White population interprets their educational experiences and the way Timner's Black population views their educational experiences? If scholars have determined that literacy development is the route, or instrument toward "economic, social, and cultural change," the lack of reproduction and transference of preventive poor literacy development practices could be considered or portrayed as "power relations between schools and [community members]" (Brown, 2006, p. 712) in order to maintain social class

stratification. A community leader from the judicial system in Timner stated the following about literacy development in Timner:

The word education is paramount. I'll be honest, I am not totally aware of the way they do things here. When I was in high school in the late 80's early 90's, I think I was really lucky. My teachers were task masters and wonderful people. I see them out now and I thank them and they will tell me 'that thing you wrote or that speech you gave was really good' and I say, "you taught me really well."

When you learn to read, I just think it helps your overall critical thinking. I don't know how much of that we are doing today. I don't know the curriculum. My kids go to private school. They do not get the same [curriculum] as in public school. I like the level of education they are getting. The kids are distinguished, proficient. Literacy is an indicator. It's an indicator of overall intelligence. It's an overall decision-making indicator. When people make bad decisions, it's not because they're stupid necessarily, they just don't have the foundation to make better decisions and whether or not that is through literacy [development], parenting, or through somebody at church or somebody at school or wherever, they haven't had the skills given to them or taught to them. I think being able to read and being able to comprehend and communicate and write is a very powerful thing. I think words matter.

I think words matter when I write. My words matter, they have to be understandable concrete and real to people, and I have to be able to effectively communicate. I have the background. (WMCL2)

At times, adults experience difficulty articulating the steps taken to develop their literacy acumen (i.e., fluency skill development, passage inquiry, phonemic awareness and terminology, decoding, etc.). Rather, they are more proficient in linking the environment and/or the culture in which they may have developed their literacy skills. The participants for the study were the same. The outcome from this lack of knowledge may constitute the “de facto social construction of not seeing” (Macedo, 1994, p. 17); hence, when the participants’ stated, “I am not totally aware of what they do here”; or “ I don’t know how much they are doing today”; or “people [with poor literacy development] are not necessarily stupid, they just don’t have the foundation to make better decisions, and whether or not that is through literacy [development], parenting”; or “through somebody at church or somebody at school or wherever, they haven’t had the skills given to them or taught to them.” The analysis of the participants’ literacy development experiences indicated that they are unfamiliar with the impact of their literacy development experiences on their decision-making practices within their respective positions. Thus, they could encourage an investment into “the doctrinal system that imposed a willful blindness to realities” (Macedo, 1994, p. 17).

Timner’s Chamber of Commerce

In 2010 the Timner population was composed of 31.9% Black, 61.1% White, 3.5% Hispanic, and 1.1% Asian (U.S. Census data). According to the Timner Chamber of Commerce website, it was founded in 1888 and, as of this writing, had a membership base of 900. The Chamber staff included nine members with zero Black representation and nine White representatives; 12 Board of Directors to include one Black female; and the Chairman’s Club (consisting of six interrelational community domain leaders —

electric company, hospital, banking, Chamber board member, and a construction company representative); all were White. In order to fully understand and to have a poor literacy development focus, it is essential to trace its evolution from a leadership for social justice and equity framework (Brown, 2006). It was necessary to identify and to describe the Chamber of Commerce, an inter-relational partnership between business and individual benefactors whose intent was to develop a community's growth and economic initiatives, to understand "the process of transforming meaning structures...rational discourse validates meaning by assessing reasons. It involves the weighing of supporting evidence, examining alternative perspectives, and critically assessing assumptions" (Brown, 2006, p. 721, p. 723). Thus, when cultural symbols from the mission statement "provide service and vigorous leadership on behalf of our members" and the values statement includes moving through "an economic, political social system based on individual freedom," the values statement that referred to action steps to reproducing the original mission, all embedded within capitalism, could invariably be viewed as the parameters with which to maintain a dominant discourse.

The collection of ideological manipulation from the Timmer's Chamber of Commerce mission statement, vision statement, values statement, and leadership statement dictated cultural control through literacy (basic ability to read and write), capital development, social control, and social reproduction:

Mission: To provide service and vigorous leadership on behalf of our members resulting in a prosperous economy for all citizens in [Timmer].

Vision Statement: To move [Timner] forward through an economic, political and social system based on individual freedom, incentive, opportunity and responsibility.

Values Statement: The core values outlined in this statement are the attitudes and behaviors we expect from ourselves and each other on a daily basis as we work together to accomplish the mission of the [Timner] Chamber of Commerce.

Deliver Leadership: Encourage personal and organizational excellence with a bias for action; insist on giving our best effort in everything we do; accept responsibility and be held accountable for recognizing opportunities; take calculated risks; and make decisions based on the best information available;

These statements are interrelated by not only a large business membership, but also a *selected* leadership from an already established subjugate, power-driven, unequal culture. One can easily frame an argument to demonstrate that poor literacy development leads to blind loyalty and to an inability to recognize support of overt and/or covert social reproductive practices.

Paulo Freire (2000) stated: “History out of context is not history” (as cited in Francisconi, 2008, p. 5). Relative to the Chamber of Commerce and the curator for Timner’s museum, the history of the community appeared to be shrouded and different within their descriptions. The following statement was found on the Chamber of Commerce website, under “About.” From a “Welcome to [Timner]” double-sided paper written by the curator, two statements were found:

Chamber of Commerce: “[Timner] was settled by a couple name Wood from Tennessee.”

Curator of the museum: “[Timner’s] first settler was Wood from North Carolina.”

Curator of the museum: “The first settlement in the county was made by Davis and Montgomery.”

Using Census data and the University of Kentucky Libraries database, the second census indicated that Timner had 2,021 Whites and 297 slaves. The county population was 11,676 by 1860, “excluding the slaves.” Timner was founded and developed by slaves. Artifacts such as old farm buildings, the continued farming of tobacco (the leading product in the area since it was colonized), a confederate monument, and a yearly celebratory event called The Night Riders were utilized as established portrayals of a community built on subjugation and on inadequate literacy development.

Really and truly for the first decade of my life and living in such a segregated society, I had no real contact with anyone outside of the Black community. So there was a type of cover. I grew up in a community that was self-sufficient as far as the grocery store, the medical community to education. So really, I didn’t have to go outside my community. Race was a problem for adults it wasn’t for children. (BMCL1)

“We must explore the historical and sociological roots of all academic departments” (Francisconi, 2008, p. 5). In Timner, it would not only be beneficial to explore the roots, but it would be beneficial to explore the literacy development of its leaders who have been strategically placed in the community to possibly maintain a subjugate culture.

Timner Schools Scorecard

On Timner’s Board of Education webpage, the vision for the system is noted: “Transform the educational environment to meet the ongoing demands of 21st Century

learning so that all students are engaged in a high quality, equitable education and are prepared for community and global responsibilities.” However, Timner is in trouble. For the study, the results of Timner high schools’ Black and White students were tracked for three consecutive academic terms (2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014). The following was taken from the Kentucky Department of Education’s (KDE’s) website:

Each year, School and District Report Cards are posted. These Report Cards provide information about each school and district, including test performance, teacher qualifications, student safety, awards, parent involvement and much more. The School and District Report Cards were established by statute, KRS 158.6453, and regulation, 703 KAR 5:140. Additionally, the Report Cards must incorporate the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

In the Kentucky Department of Education Comprehensive Improvement Plan (KDECP) report from December 2015 for the district of Timner, Kentucky, the document indicated the county taught over 9,000 students. At that time the district included eight elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools, of which 33% were African American, 6% were Hispanic, and 52% were White. For the 2015-2016 academic year, one middle school closed and was replaced by an elementary school. At the time of the study the school district had six board members including the Superintendent; two were Black and the remaining were White. In addition, the system indicated the poor performance levels were due to “high poverty (74% free/reduced lunch) and high student mobility. Over the past several years there has been a population shift toward the southern end of the county that has required the realignment of services to best meet the

needs of our student population” (p. 8).

Tinner Community College

Relative to the Community College 2010 Fact-book posted on their webpage, the institution had an enrollment of less than 3,500 students in a city of less than 35,000. The college was governed or accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and in 2011 participated in its 10-year reaccreditation process. A requirement for accreditation is that the college chooses a specific issue or problem to address that was agreed to need improvement. This document is called a *Quality Enhancement Plan*, and SACS considers it “the heart of the Commission’s philosophy of accreditation.” Tinner Community College developed such a plan with a goal of addressing poor literacy development issues within the academe. From its Executive Summary, the newest initiative was to:

...focus on reading comprehension to support student learning and academic success. The plan ultimately hinges upon faculty development as faculty members assume a critical role in students’ academic achievement. Once the QEP is implemented, faculty members will be prepared to incorporate reading strategies within their curricula and provide students with authentic, content area reading material that will increase reading comprehension. The QEP will also address the need to encourage a culture of reading.

The vision was to become a “...premier community college, strengthening community and challenging students to maximize their potential.” The college’s plan to accomplish its objective was through 11 value statements:

Open access balanced with excellence

Student success

Education and lifelong learning

Stewardship of human, fiscal, capital and environmental resources

Integrity

Community engagement

Leadership

Personal responsibility

Continuous improvement and responsiveness to change

Inclusion and multiculturalism

Partnership with the military community

The topic was chosen from a multi-layered participation team spearheaded by the president. The team members included faculty, staff, students, community leaders, and members from education coalitions and P-12 councils. The topic of literacy development was selected because the team understood that the high illiteracy levels, and the conditions that encapsulated them, were neither inescapable nor isolated from Timner.

The figures from the college's 2011 QEP document stated:

...over 50% of [Timner] students are over the age of 25...49% of first-time [Timner] freshmen test into developmental reading courses. Even when students are remediated in reading, they often still struggle...and only 56% of [Timner] students who have passed the final developmental reading course...end up passing their first social or behavior science course within three semesters. In addition to this, many students who are not placed in developmental reading classes, and come to [Timner] with the necessary ACT scores or pass the

COMPASS reading portion still have trouble with college-level work once they start taking advanced program or degree classes. This is reflected in [Timner's] overall retention rate of 47.6%. ("Degree-Seeking Retention" grid, 2006 to 2009, Fall to Fall retention of credential-seeking, full and part-time students—Institutional Effectiveness office).

Using surveys; focus groups; and anecdotal suggestions from faculty, staff, and students, the team (now a committee) chose the topic of *Reading for Effectiveness, Information, and Enjoyment* as the encompassing focus to improve reading comprehension. From that point, the committee plotted a five-year plan to improve students' reading comprehension levels from an assessment and student learning outcomes rubric. The goal was to achieve a 10% increase in levels from the first year of established baseline data through the utilization of a reverse relationship between Bloom's Taxonomy and a student's percentage of reading comprehension competencies. This indicated that the lower the level of critical thought, the higher the expectation for noticeable improvement.

If the goal in comprehensive reading reformation policy was to move students through the remediation sequence as swiftly as possible in order to avoid high attrition, it would continue to be unmet. The relationship between remediation and the strength of the college's QEP initiative would not meet the fundamental problem of poor literacy development, as the far-reaching issue of adult literacy should include the literacy development experiences and culture in which it was derived from the educators, networks, and stakeholders or, more specifically, Timner's community leaders and members, in order to establish relationships that continue to be unaddressed. The onus of

remediation cannot be the sole requisite of the student. Further, the lapse in scholarship and skill development, coupled with instructor pedagogy, cannot be isolated or framed as the reason for a student's inadequate literacy development.

Reform methodologies, particularly in southern rural communities such as Timner, appear to assign the problem to community domains, rather than the investigation of embedded ideologies of poor literacy development through subjugation. For example, which population would benefit from a remediation cycle? This is a symbol and practice of ascription through a transitive conscience philosophy. If the dominant population benefits economically from an ascription assignment, social reproduction is maintained.

As such, in Timner: In what ways are equity and literacy issues framed in public documents? The evidence is clear and available; however, the severity of the education problem highlighted in Timner schools excludes any initiatives toward "preparing leaders to serve as change agents" (Brown, 2006, p. 702) by analyzing the cultural aspects of inequality and subjugation permitted from long-standing "institutionalized ideological belief systems" (p. 702). "Although current school reform efforts use different approaches to improve teaching and learning, all depend for their success on the motivation and capacities of local leadership" (pp. 701-702). Literacy has been defined by a cognitive practical skill development premise: the ability to read and write. It fosters economic growth and development as its community members develop. As reading and writing are considered to be a basic rudimentary definition of literacy, one may consider the need to un-culturize its meaning and to operationalize a process to articulate a 21st century definition to address the academic, social, and economic challenges leading to

poor literacy development. If a continuance of the original definition, as well as a continued alignment to its precept, are maintained, transformations facing the education reform movement will remain elusive: “literacy or productivity” (Lewis, 1997, p. 392). Is then the overarching conundrum of the 21st century the exclusion of literacy development as the anchor to an equitable and quality of life position?

In Timmer and from the evidence collected, educational and economic achievements that would produce an intellectually competent and competitive workforce should be centralized as the mission of educational institutions, community leaders, and community members. Achievements should respond through acknowledgement of the cultural conditions that maintain poor literacy development by all Kentuckians. The United States Department of Education and the National Institute of Literacy reported that 32 million adults cannot read indicating that 14% of the population is illiterate, and 21% read below the fifth-grade level. The National Center for Education Statistics noted that, in 2003, 384,301 adults (persons age 16 and older), or 12%, were illiterate; the population was able to read functionally only at the 4th – 5th grade levels and perform the basic prose of literacy (e.g., write one’s name, fill out a job application or credit card, read a bus schedule, sign a permission slip, etc.). From the same year in Timmer, 6,677 (14%) were illiterate. In 1998 The Task force on Adult Education received a directive from the Kentucky Senate to establish and to “develop recommendations and an implementation plan for raising the literacy level and educational attainment of Kentucky’s adults who have not graduated from high school or who have poor literacy skills” (as cited in Legislative Research Commission. (2000). *Adult education and literacy in Kentucky* (Research Report No. 296, p. ix). The report stated: “Kentucky

receives both federal and state funds for adult education and literacy...\$21 million annually...serving 40,000 Kentuckians per year, or only about 5% of the target population” (p. x). While the body of work contributed initial directions to understand the widespread issue of poor literacy development in Timner, the work also reflected a community that continued to experience traits from its historic past. These were portrayed by the manner in which leaders and community domains combined their services to maintain a culture that emphasized a quality of life for one ethnic population sustained through domination over all others. The primary control mechanism used to ensure this interrelational continuity among the entities was poor literacy development.

The challenge to locate the core of the problem was due to the complementary yet diverse perspectives reflected in the different roles and strengths of community leadership, the fundamental mission of the community college, and the multiple domains that coordinated strategies to meet the needs of oppressed populations. The challenges pale in comparison to the many harmful outcomes to maintaining such a hegemonic culture in the 21st century; i.e., a primitive social identity, a spiraling economy in growth and development, an illiterate adult population in a knowledge-driven global market, misunderstandings, misperceptions, and inaccessibility to modern thinkers and achievers due to an isolationist paradigm. The community must invite leadership that is consistently perceived as a change agent throughout the community and the state. The Community College should develop a reputation as an institution that understands the needs of its community members and constituencies by disseminating equilibrium across its colloquial, written, hiring, curricular, and leadership domains. Community members will

continue to face challenges from past ideologies of literacy until they become “aware of the causes of their condition...[and not] accept their exploitation” (Freire, 2000, p. 64).

Summary of the Findings

The research questions examined in depth the identification of ways community documents and all participants for the study interrelated and engaged in literacy development. Also, the questions examined community leaders’ and members’ understanding of the choices they made from their respective positions related to their level of literacy. The challenges facing Timner’s growth may result from poor literacy development as an evolutionary practice toward inequality, its distribution of power through social reproduction practices, the accumulation of wealth through meritocracy, the dissemination of social patterns or mores through the agenda of the community college, and community leadership domains engaged in intransitive conscience literacy practices. These topics, regardless of sensitivity, should be discussed openly, which will provide community leaders and members with opportunities to learn more about the repercussions of continued poor literacy development. Previous research has shown empirical theories that expose the issues at their academic nexus, rather than their core. The interpretations were based on an alignment with documentation from various community domains. Equity and literacy issues that were found and charted from public documents may illuminate that social reproduction practices from Timner’s community domains remain a transitive praxis.

Due to the negative outcomes created from poor literacy development, “forty percent of Kentucky’s working age population ages 16 to 64 function at the two lowest levels of literacy—individuals are not able to read at all or have very limited to moderate

reading ability” (as cited in Legislative Research Commission. (2000). *Adult education and literacy in Kentucky* (Research Report No. 296, p. 5). Leadership from various domains (education, business, etc.) believes that “the South needs to organize to meet the needs of the undereducated adults, stating that nothing should be more central to the mission of education than responding to the needs of those who need it the most to function in the economy and who need it to make the economy function” (p. ix).

An important phenomena discovered from the study that pertains to “responding to the needs of those who need [literacy development]” reveals that, of the 11 participants who agreed to be interviewed, all but one grew up in Timner, were educated in the Timner school system, and now work and maintain various leadership roles in Timner. Relative to “long-standing social inequalities...[that] become institutional ideological belief systems” (Brown, 2006, p. 702) in Timner, poor literacy development remains a constant because the focus of education is to maintain tradition (i.e., education for the ruling class, employment for the ruling class, and high standards of living for the ruling class), rather than equilibrium for all community members. I also became aware of a disconnect between policy makers and their intended constituents, as well as the sundry lifestyles of the Black populace who often were labeled as inferior and/or defiant. This awareness brought about the recognition of the ontological views of community leaders toward underrepresented populations. In fact, my dissertation committee chair suggested on several occasions that my reluctance to engage multiple oppressive practices were clouding my understanding of that which was occurring in the lives of community members.

Poor literacy development in Timner could be described as a collective origin of oppression in order to build class inequities in educational attainment; employment opportunities; social mobility; and, most important, a system of governance based upon cultural hegemony. This interpretation demonstrates a perception and practice of servitude extended to one social group from another. Also, literacy development often has been understood as the nexus to a quality of life and the agent that determined economic and social assignments within communities. In Timner, tobacco symbolized a once expansive capitalistic norm rooted in racial supremacy ideologies. Particularly striking was the symbolization of tobacco barns throughout the community. They appeared to be a mark of control that has been challenged in recent decades. Despite the fact that community leaders needed community members aligned with similar institutionalized social and economic values and beliefs, much of the dialogue for this study was directed toward community leaders' level of literacy (i.e., degrees earned, their definition of literacy, and their literacy development perspective) that governed policy, procedures, and practices. This perspective was useful when examining the outcomes and ways in which poor literacy development intertwines with community domains engaged in literacy. This is particularly important when literacy development was essential for continuity and change in Timner's race relations and attitudes because descendants of slave owners have continued to reside in the same social and historic domains.

Literacy scholars have acknowledged influences from state and federal governances in the education process; however, less attention has been paid to community leaders' experiences and their decision-making principles resulting from their understanding of literacy. The current discussion lacks the broad-based understanding of

the choices of community leaders related to literacy that would synthesize research across academic, social, and political domains. However, within the context of a narrative, Chapter IV has described core characteristics that illuminate the challenges influenced by poor literacy development. This study allowed the historic muting of Black voices to be absent. The consequence of such ideologies and practices are articulated further in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this single-site case study was to examine the interrelationships between community domains engaged in literacy development and to understand the choices of community leaders related to literacy. Therefore, the central research question was: Do or how do community leaders understand and respond to the challenge of low literacy rates? and was followed by four research questions. First, how do community leaders in Timner, Kentucky, understand literacy and its practices?; second, what personal and professional experiences have guided leadership practices?; third, on the continuum from intransitive to transitive consciousness, how do leaders describe the issues in Timner, Kentucky; and fourth, does or how does literacy development affect the mission, goals, and outcomes of various community domains, especially Timner Community College? Although literacy development in rural communities remains a challenge (Bracken, 2008), community leaders must respond to the challenge of low literacy rates because literacy development is essential for economic growth in an evolving knowledge-driven economy.

An in-depth single-site case study was conducted to better understand the way in which members from a small, southern, rural community managed, adapted, and constructed the origins of its social condition. I framed the community's cultural literacy meaning as the community developed. Founded on an organizational and leadership social justice and equity theory, as well as Timner community members' ontological/epistemological assumptions guided by literacy development experiences, the investigation involved poor literacy development research questions.

Findings were aggregated through the following domains: cultural literacy development; defining community literacy; literacy development experiences from community leaders (examined to explain cultural hegemony); social reproduction; transitive and intransitive consciousness; and the community college culture and the way it fosters literacy development as studied through published policy documents (i.e., institutional mission and values statements, college preparation courses, programs; educational supports, and the Quality Enhancement Plan). These domains explain college leadership and community members' understanding and shared meaning of literacy.

Discussion

A fundamental challenge exists in southern communities to address the issues of authority, power, economic development, inequality, and hegemonic cultural ethos. At its core is the use of literacy development to control and to silence a “liberating dialogue” (Freire, 2000, p. 65). When considering ways to offer solutions to communities' growing poor literacy developed citizenry, particularly in small, southern, rural communities, it is important to possess an awareness of their definition of literacy, its distribution, and its development. A defeatist, demeaning, and domineering practice in Timmer caused a specified group of individuals to be subservient to another group. However, of more significance was the *cultural* meaning of literacy.

When mired in past economic contributions from an oppressed group, poor literacy development shaped the “cultural symbols charged with emotional significance” (Francisconi, 2008, p. 5); i.e., the linear pattern of oppression. Literacy development was for the ruling governing class, labor was for the oppressed class, and economic development promoted volume rather than value for the human condition. This structure

gave rise to the importance of power over the powerless through mistreatment and inadequate literacy development. Change is critical, and the focus of the cultural meaning of literacy can begin to challenge and to break the infrastructure of poor literacy developed communities such as Timner. Generations of presumptions results in a difficult, slow, and reluctant community to adapt to new ideologies. To eliminate oppression:

The process...must not employ the methods of dehumanization...implant in the oppressed a belief in freedom, thus thinking to win their trust. The only effective instrument is a humanizing pedagogy in which the revolutionary leadership establishes a permanent relationship of dialogue with the oppressed. In a humanizing pedagogy the method ceases to be an instrument by which the teachers (in this instance, the revolutionary leadership) can manipulate the students (in this instance, the oppressed). (Freire, 2000, pp. 68-69)

Implications for Community Leaders

When the value of education is viewed through community literacy development (i.e., the education of multiple ethnic groups and various socioeconomic conditions contributing to community growth and development), an examination must involve the experiences of its community leadership on a continuum, rather than the issue from a sentient framework. In Timner, sentience toward poor literacy developed community members was acknowledged; however, civil liberties toward equitable opportunities had been consistently and consciously ignored or denied to under-educated individuals. As such, leaders may have been unaware (intransitive conscience) that their personal literacy development experiences created cultural meaning for the community, thereby sustaining

an ethos of those who should be educated, the reason, whether it (literacy) remained relevant, and maintaining the status quo? Stakeholders and educational practitioners should be guided by principles that literacy development “measures performance and progress in terms of impact on the quality of life and economic well-being [sic] of: individuals, communities, regions, the Commonwealth as a whole” (as cited in Legislative Research Commission. (2000). *Adult education and literacy in Kentucky* (Research Report No. 296, p. 37).

Education should not be used as an instrument to maintain separation, governance, and social reproduction for the controlling group. Yet, connotations suggested that community leaders’ principles resulted from collective power, opinion, purpose, and intellect. This collective power supported the civic, social, and economic contributions of the controlling class by exploiting the oppressed. In order to remove this culture of institutionalized social support from a weave of subjugation, the social fabric of the culture (i.e., poor literacy development praxis, outdated beliefs, and stereotypes) should be replaced by equally distributed literacy development practices. The oppressed must “[not]...remain unaware of the causes of their condition...” (Freire, 2000, p. 64). In order for a community to claim that a cultural shift has occurred, evidence of the change must be present: “change of assumptions, change in perspective, and change in behavior” (Brown, 2006, p. 719)

Implications for Practice

One of the most significant findings included the cultural meaning of literacy development that contributed to the control of community leaders over under-educated community members either directly or indirectly. By examining the issue of poor literacy

development guided by a values and beliefs context, behaviors and practices were identified that shaped the economic and social positioning of Timmer's elite:

Encouraging the development of informed beliefs on critical educational issues first necessitates the identification and understanding of those beliefs. By being actively engaged in a number of transformative learning strategies requiring the examination of ontological and epistemological assumptions, values and beliefs, context and experience, and competing worldviews, future leaders will be better equipped to understand, critically analyze, and grow in their perceived ability to challenge various forms of social oppression....” (Brown, 2006, p. 705)

In order to conduct in-depth research on southern rural community growth and development, it was discovered that literacy practices need to be the core of the study: “Deep-seated social, economic and cultural barriers—many dating back generations—lead people to undervalue education” (as cited in “Adult Education and Literacy in Kentucky Research Report No. 296,” 2000, p. 1). Also, various community domains (i.e., political, business, civic) perhaps may create a system that operates hegemonically. Timmer's cultural identity could be ascertained as one that designed, developed, and implemented an environment that practiced a subversive and selective educational system. No reported decision-making conflicts were seen among leaders (in terms of discussing the needs of the under-educated), no pedagogic/andragogy restructuring conflicts among educational leaders, no accountability from community leaders' or administrators' conflicts, and no leadership strategies for transformation conflicts despite the abysmal results and outcomes from various community domains. These results may be an indication of the way in which the origins of a social condition remain, and an

implication for practitioners to investigate.

Brown (2006) linked the importance of understanding “the exploration of new understandings, the synthesis of new information, and the integration of these insights throughout personal and professional spheres can lead future educational leaders to a broader, more inclusive approach in addressing issues of [poor literacy development] and equity” (p. 703). The following narrative demonstrates that poor literacy development embedded in a communal structure can shift to reject inequitable ideologies by examining, in this case, individual/household literacy development (a small interrelational domain).

Framing a Community’s Cultural Meaning

The interview protocol used for evidence gathering began my quest to understand poor literacy development in small, southern, rural communities, particularly eye opening from an outsider to southern culture perspective. Examining the ramifications of inadequate literacy development is a well-studied phenomenon in the field of education. It has become clearer from such documented examinations that the chasm continues to widen relative to individuals who suffer from the results of poor literacy development from those who evolved without such deficits. The establishment of resources to improve the conditions of those lacking literacy skills has been misguided, particularly when examining cultural hegemony that relies on poor literacy developed populations.

Transformative learning theories have succinctly honed and changed my beliefs, attitudes, values, and perspectives about the significance of literacy development, as a 21st century educational leader. Interpreting and articulating this ideology to an academic audience in the rural south has been an arduous and ongoing process. However, the

privilege of influencing a generation of pliable thinkers was an honor. I am committed to continually developing my intellectual acuity on the interrelationships between community domains engaged in literacy development and I intend to disrupt the norm with this study by uncovering the paths that lead to literacy hegemony in a small southern rural community.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of the current research was to examine the interrelationships between community domains engaged in literacy development and to understand the choices of community leaders related to literacy. This perspective responded to the need for critical discourse to determine the way in which poor literacy development in Timner, Kentucky, continues to be impacted or influenced from a linear pattern toward power: (1) community leadership deciding those who have a right to become literate (social reproduction); (2) community leadership maintaining the cultural meaning of literacy from a past hegemonic ideology (Brown's 2006 theoretical leadership for social justice and equity framework); and (3) community leadership maintaining class and social mobility inequities that reject growth and economic development in a democratic multicultural society (economic development theories).

Brown (2006) argued that community members should be able to assume that its leadership will respond to problems, such as poor literacy development practices, by maintaining "positive attitudes and increased intellectual flexibility, tolerance, and respect...[in order] to behave appropriately and constructively in educational situations involving diverse backgrounds" (p. 732). However, from my perspective, leadership acknowledged the sentience from community members with poorly developed literacy

skills, yet they continue to ignore their personal liberties. By not redefining, analyzing, and transforming the ethical and social implications of poor literacy development, community domains will continue to promote exploitation through ascription. This issue should be studied and understood on an intransitive to transitive conscience cultural continuum, rather than as a process toward improvement; i.e., the cultural implications of poor literacy development require an ontological and epistemological examination that links literacy development experiences. Multiple forms of oppression may create the cultural meaning of literacy for a community.

Other areas of research are needed on ways to identify oppressive barriers leading to poor literacy development. Cultural processes in the education domain could be understood (e.g., the reason all community members have a right to an education) in order to develop new pedagogy to align the purpose and meaning of literacy in a competitive global market. This is important for education stakeholders seeking significant educational reform. Another study that further expands beyond the current research would be a multi-site case study approach to analyze multiple small, southern, rural communities that remain mired in negative predispositions from the past. Such a study would provide similar interpretations of the same key constructs and potentially could highlight the way southern ideologies about literacy retard their growth and development. Equally important is the significance of leadership training for social justice and equity on a transformational literacy development continuum. Leaders provide multiple interpretations of the same problems arising from poor literacy development (i.e., incarceration, low income levels, illiteracy, welfare dependency, unemployment, health issues); however, the evidence of their (leaders) experiences could

expand the approach to literacy development initiatives. Last, an investigation into literacy's relationship to religion could concentrate on an inverse association between poor development and a belief in established community norms. Under-educated community members believe their education acumen is adequately extended from a spiritual context and conveyed by the ruling class. These studies could provide analyses of the meaning of cultural literacy development, multiple southern rural communities' development practices, and the experiential learning of community leaders involved in poor literacy development outcomes.

EPILOGUE

In 2010 I was an instructor at a small, southern, rural community college (about 6,000 students) teaching a developmental reading course. At the beginning of the term I assumed the responsibility of instilling a climate of collegiate harmony, trust, and absence of chastening to ensure maximum learning. Enrolled in my course in spring 2010 was a mid-50-year-old White male. I will refer to him as Sam for the purpose of this narrative. Sam was aware that the learning community is structured; however, in my estimation he continually pushed to be recognized as harboring racist ideologies. He would not shake my hand before or after class, as I had done with all other students as a civility gesture; he would murmur and squirm in his seat as I lectured and students addressed my questions; he would not look at me, take notes, or open his textbook; and he sat with his arms folded the entire class period. Sam never looked at me or anyone else in the class. Additionally, he did not complete written assignments and further exasperated the class climate by being rather contrary during discussions. I observed patterns in his behavior that alluded to his disdain for certain ethnic populations; but, I was uncertain as to the populace he referred.

The second week of class I announced an assembly and celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday along with other campus news. The student interrupted by saying, "Why can't we just stop talkin' about 'Afro-American' issues and all that civil rights stuff?" I did not respond; however, I now knew the race about which he had predetermined ideologies — mine. He began spewing his childhood trepidations such as, "I grew up hating Black people, my momma hates Black people, my whole family hates Black people," and "*My family 'hate' them people and I grew up around people who hate*

them people” (emphasis added). He further stated, “No-one I knew all my life been around them people or [even] like them, or spent time with them or ‘nothin’.”

That day the lecture focused on the pathways of learning, and the point at which and the way breaches occur in one’s literacy development. The student was clearly experiencing conflict with his prior knowledge and the uneasiness of expanding his limited insight. One of his classmates, a Black female student asked him a question based upon one of her newly discovered pathways of learning, which was to apply new information to past experiences and to examine the two through complex reasoning. The student asked, “What part of what you learned in your past holds true today?” The volatile student stood, turned, and pointed at her and said, “You don’t know me, you don’t know my family, you don’t know about how I grew up,” She stated, dolefully, “but you are talking about me.” The class was completely awestruck and silent during this ongoing diatribe, and I wondered why, yet recalled that I set the climate to allow students to work through their breach in learning without condemnation. More than that, I realized the students demonstrated a practice of accepting deprecating comments from an individual associated with a governing system that had consistently institutionalized disengagement and marginalization. As such, this was normal and acceptable!

Sam then turned to me and said, “Ms. Perdue, what is happening here, explain it again!” I knew at this point I had one of two choices: (1) immediately dismiss the student, call security, and dis-enroll him from the course; or (2) remember what I believed academia to be, the transformative agent that facilitates and promotes critical thinking, complex reasoning, and the severance of literacy struggles instilled by *illiterate* community domains. I chose the latter. Academia, in my estimation, is the single

comprehensive entity that promises to enhance students' human capital: knowledge, skills, and capacities that will be acknowledged in their lives, families, and communities. I had one hour remaining to begin the shift in Sam's thinking. I continued to provide probing literacy development questions that I attached with his conflicting past experiences. Shortly thereafter, Sam slumped in his seat to resonate on the new phenomenon he was experiencing, poor literacy to literacy, and said, "I get it, I have been wrong. I learned wrong." I then proceeded with another scenario based on his experiences and asked him to walk through and to analyze the norms that have predicated his beliefs and subsequent practices (an intransitive to transitive continuum). He accomplished it flawlessly and recognized that which shaped and defined his life experiences. Transformation began. As always, the concern confronting educators is assessing student learning, particularly in engagements such as described. At the end of the class as students were leaving, Sam approached me, extended his hand, looked me in the eye, and said, "Thank you for what you did for me today."

I am fully aware and remain conscious of the ways in which the walls of the classroom threaten the transformation of lives. I also am aware that poor literacy development has taught society the power of exclusion and that equal dissemination of knowledge is not America's custom or strength. Whenever possible I encourage students to develop, extend, and test their insights against a broader worldview. By examining instinctual and distorted awarenesses (intransitive to transitive consciousness) about literacy development (i.e., those who should and should not become literate), a culture of transformational literacy may emerge. Literacy development inter-relationally embedded in all community domains (leadership, community agencies, educational institutions, and

community members), in my opinion is decidedly the practice to transform from one guided by oppression and institutionalized hegemony to one driven by inclusion, innovation, and a predictable and economically strong infrastructure benefitting from all its highly literate community members.

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APPENDIX
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

Interviewer: Denise Perdue

Interviewee _____

Title/Position _____

Degree _____

Native community member _____ Legacy landowner _____ Gender _____

Date _____ Time _____

Thank you for meeting with me today. As you are aware, I am going to ask you some questions about community literacy development in Timner. Specifically, I intend to collect research to assess the determination, resourcefulness, education value/benefit perception, or personal influence of dedicated community leaders that responds to the needs of community members. The following four constructs will be studied: symbolic meanings of social reproduction, economic development, perceptions toward literacy from community leaders, and transformative learning practices. The purpose of this case study is to examine the interrelationships between community domains engaged in literacy development, and to understand the choices community leaders make related to literacy. This qualitative cultural investigation of community literacy development will be guided by the following research questions:

The central research question for this study is: Do or how do community leaders understand and respond to the challenge of low literacy rates? Additionally I wonder:

How do community leaders in Timner, Kentucky understand literacy and its practices?

What personal and professional experiences have guided their leadership practices?

On the continuum from intransitive to transitive consciousness, how do leaders describe the issues in Timner, Kentucky?

Does or how does literacy development affect the mission, goals, and outcomes of various community domains, especially Timner Community College?

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

First I will thank participants for participating, then I will discuss informed consent with them followed by answering any questions they may have about the study. I will then secure signatures and give a copy of the informed consent to the participant and retrieve a signed copy for my records. I will explain the interview will last approximately 30 to 60 minutes. Due to the nature of the study and the concern participants were when asked to participate, I will not discuss or share the responses from others who agreed to participate in the study, why I chose him/her to participate in the study; however, I would accept recommendation or suggestions from the participant who they believe would add an in-depth discussion to the study. I will inform the participant that his/her identity, personal information, notes, the dissertation, and public reporting of the results will be kept confidential. I will inform that I do not anticipate any risks to them from the study. I will state that I hope they will directly benefit from the study, particularly by his/her participation, but also by contributing to my general knowledge of the community, community members, the state of the community from a cultural literacy perspective, and the discussion of the challenges facing the community based upon the current establishment and development issues.

SAMPLE INTRODUCTION AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Researcher (brief introduction):

- I am not from the south and I was not reared in the southern culture.
- I attended school in an urban community in Colorado, private and public.
- I moved to the south after my husband joined the military.
- I homeschooled my two children.
- I am unfamiliar with how rural community leaders educate their members, how they value literacy, and the rural community's view of education, thus I am interviewing its members.

In your home, as a child, what do you recall our parents telling you about education?

What do you remember your teachers telling you about the value of education?

Did you grow up with books in your home?

Do you remember how you learned how to read?

Do your parents have degrees higher than high school?

Did you go to the library as a child?

Was the idea of attending college understood in your family?

Did you have any Black teachers growing up?

What was it like growing up in Timner? Describe how you have been educated to understand the history of this community's population?

What do you remember any school officials telling you about education?

Did you receive information and/or help assisting you into the higher education system?

Did you attend a community college?

What was your experience like at the community college?

What did you get your degree in? Where? (received outside of Kentucky)

In your estimation, what policy changes need to be made regarding rural communities (this community) economic infrastructure to improve education development for its members?

Can you share a time when you knew policy was not the solution to the problem (poor literacy development) but an improved education was?

In your estimation, what has been the greatest obstacle in developing a multicultural-competent staff and working environment?

What do you see as the most challenging aspects of educating this community's members?

What is your definition of literacy? A community member's ability to...

What opportunities have you had working and collaborating in diverse and inclusive settings outside of your current position?