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Does Understanding the Kalamazoo Promise Impact African American Participation?

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DOES UNDERSTANDING THE KALAMAZOO PROMISE IMPACT AFRICAN AMERICAN PARTICIPATION?

by

J. Douglas Penn

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Sociology
Advisor: Thomas VanValey, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
December 2012
Since 2006, all of the public school graduates in Kalamazoo Michigan have been entitled to have their tuition and fees paid for to any post-secondary institution in the state. The scholarship program is called the Kalamazoo Promise, and it utilizes scholarships as a means to stimulate region-wide economic vitality. The Kalamazoo public school district reflects many metropolitans in the U.S. by having a minority majority, in which African Americans make up the largest single ethnic group. This evaluation of the Kalamazoo Promise is unique in that it focuses specifically on perspectives from the African American community. 35 interviews were conducted with African American students and 33 also were conducted with parents of African American, Promise-eligible youth.

All of the data was collected and analyzed by a product of Kalamazoo Public Schools (Loy Norrix, class of 1988) that also happens to be an African American. The way that the local African American community responds to the Promise is dependent upon their understanding of the Promise; their understanding is based upon the ways the Promise represented to them. Combined with analysis of relative literature and the dominant discourse, the data reveals that there is cultural change taking place in Kalamazoo. The most significant changes inspired by the Promise appear to concern
motivational measures. The Kalamazoo Promise facilitates effective change because its approach is systemic. Over time, the Kalamazoo Promise provides concrete motivation to counter the systemic oppression that is sets the African American experience.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

By no means is this list exhaustive. I must give all of the praise to Jesus who strengthens me. I thank Jethro Penn, Alva Penn, Josephine and John Ed Booker, Catherine and Riley Penn and all of my loved ones that support me from heaven. Julius and Makalynn Penn, Mackenzie Penn, my landlord – Oliver Fifer, may God bless you all. Also, I thank Thomas VanValey, Joseph Kretovics, Douglas Davidson, and Gary Miron for your compassion, patience, and ideas. Lastly, God bless all of the students and parents that participated in this project, the anonymous donors for the Kalamazoo Promise, and the many individuals and programs devoted to making Kalamazoo the community that I am so proud to call home.

J. Douglas Penn
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Kalamazoo Promise (the Promise) is a privately funded gift that has been making good on its promise to pay the post-secondary (in state) tuition and fees for all local public school graduates since 2006. The Promise has been estimated to ultimately be a $250 million gift (Lydersen, 2006). The anonymity of this philanthropic intervention means this estimate can neither be confirmed nor denied. However, it is clear that much has been given to (and therefore much is required from) the citizens of this region.

On November 10, 2005, Dr. Janice Brown (the superintendent of schools at that time) announced in a board meeting, “It’s a very simple concept. Go to school at KPS, graduate from KPS, and in your hands there will be a scholarship in the amount of tuition plus fees [based on] the number of years that you have gone to KPS¹.” (See Table 1 for the sliding scale) She was sure to stress that the purpose of the Kalamazoo Promise is not simply to enhance access to higher education, saying “Study after study indicates that an investment in education adds to the quality of our community and the quality of life for all its citizens” (Miller-Adams, 2009, p.1). Students need only meet graduation requirements (only a 2.0 GPA is required). Therefore, aside from paying for books and room and board, the graduates of KPS have an extension of their public education.

¹ Dr. Janice Brown, former KPS superintendent, speaking at a school board meeting on Nov. 10, 2005. As cited in Miller-Adams, 2009a.
Table 1

*Sliding Scholarship Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Attendance</th>
<th>Benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-12</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-12</td>
<td>95%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-12</td>
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<td>8-12</td>
<td>70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: www.kalamazoopromise.com

Cost and academic preparation have long been formidable obstacles for dispossessed families to accumulate credentials. Why bother addressing the second hurdle if one cannot see a way of getting through the first? The Promise shatters traditional barriers to college access for low-income students – the high and rising cost of college tuition and the failure of federal needs-based aid to keep pace (Miller-Adams, 2009). Now, thanks to the generous donors of the Promise, the issue of cost is moot; and students, parents, and community leaders in KPS are focused intensely on academic preparation for all students.

The Promise is a “first dollar in” scholarship (Miron, 2007), meaning the Kalamazoo Promise pays the funds directly to the post-secondary institution, allowing the individual to still receive whatever additional grants or loans they may qualify for on top of that. Students have up to 10 years to use 4 years of funding at any of Michigan’s public colleges or universities, as well as for vocational programs at community colleges. This latter feature is one of the many differences between the scholarship program in
Kalamazoo and the way it appears in most other cities that have replicated the idea (Evergreen, 2008).

For those students who are not academically inclined (i.e., not interested in a college education) the Promise still offers tremendous potential. If students with weak academic skills or little interest in a traditional course of study can persist through high school graduation, the Promise offers them the option to attend a broad range of post-secondary trade and technical training programs at no cost. For example, a five-week hospitality academy or 33-week automotive technician academy could yield a secure, relatively high-wage employment opportunity, which could make a tremendous difference in an individual’s life choices (Miller-Adams, 2009c).

The Promise is not a scholarship program in the typical sense of merit or need. Instead it is a program based on place, with the intention of using educational attainment as a means to an end – which is economic development. Its catalyst agenda is what makes it so attractive. The Promise mobilizes community resources and leadership, and utilizes private philanthropy to stimulate public sector action. It is private dollars being used to renew public support of education and community.

According to the initial evaluation of the Kalamazoo Promise by Western Michigan University (Working Paper #2: “Response from Community Groups” Miron & Evergreen, 2008), no other community has responded and had more community organizations involved in supporting families to take advantage of the Promise. The Promise and programs based on it, open new doors for the acquisition of human capital regardless of income level or academic achievement, while facilitating the creation of
economic and social assets for the community. It provides assistance for individuals and families, but places the responsibility for the success on the community.

The strategy of the donors deciding to remain anonymous also shows their foresight. The absence of distinct sources for this gift has sent local community service providers, parents, and concerned citizens scurrying to fill the leadership void.

The philanthropic visionaries of the Promise have endowed the citizens of Kalamazoo, Michigan with scholarships as a means to an end. The objective is to restore regional economic vitality and structural change. Miron (2007, p. 2) states, “While anonymous donors have generously provided scholarships for students that can gain acceptance to a community college or state university, it is the responsibility of educators, parents, and the broader community to ensure that students are ready for college”. This catalyst effect is why the donors for this social intervention have even changed the way that the impacts of philanthropic projects are evaluated (Strickland, 2008).

Significance of the Research

Although only short term outcomes of the Kalamazoo Promise can be empirically assessed at this point, it is possible to provide some baseline data for the longer-term evaluation of the Promise. Moreover, any structural implications and lessons learned in the short run should provide some information for stakeholders about the future.

Out of the 10,662 students enrolled in Kalamazoo Public Schools in the 2005-06 school year, 4,973 were African American. African Americans currently make up the
largest ethnic group being served by KPS\(^2\). While not an absolute majority in the school district, African American students comprise 46.7 percent of district enrollments which makes them the largest single ethnic group (Evergreen & Miron, 2008).

For generations, many African American youth have equated the age of 18 with a big dead end sign. Therefore, for them to have their dreams of going to college go from impossible to guaranteed, literally overnight, must have been shocking if not completely unbelievable. Since this racial group has experienced generations of persecution and discrimination, it is not unreasonable that such an announcement would be treated with considerable skepticism or even cynicism.

Promises have been made in the past and broken. Dreams have been deferred. Generations of experiencing barriers in the opportunity structure and in employment have resulted in the belief that education, individual effort, and hard work are not sufficient for success (Ogbu, 1990). Ogbu argues that there is a subsequent deep distrust in education as a path to progress and that there just is not enough perceivable evidence for them that education will improve their situation.

Miron has also suggested that a major need is to fight the perception that the Promise is not for everybody. Moreover, he reported that doubt or misinformation about the Promise was most prevalent among African American students and students coming from more disadvantaged families (Miron, 2009).

The initial results from the Promise have included many surprises. In 2009, Miller-Adams noted that approximately two-thirds of the scholarship recipients had chosen to attend a local college or university, maximizing the impact on local economic

development. In contrast, it also appears that the program has yet to have a significant sustained effect on the local real estate market. However, perhaps the biggest impact is what has happened outside of Kalamazoo. Spurred in part by the extensive national media coverage, scores of communities around the nation have created their own scholarship programs inspired by and modeled on the Kalamazoo Promise (Miller-Adams, 2009b).

Not all urban areas have local billionaires with collective consciences. Still, all of the research and the national attention that the Promise has garnered Kalamazoo may provide evidence that this philanthropic endowment ends up paying for itself in the long run. For other minority-majority metropolitans, tens of thousands of students graduating from their many public high schools each year would have better chances to proceed through post-secondary programs. A pragmatic Promise would undoubtedly revitalize our beloved cities; thereby this nation and planet.

In cities such as El Dorado (Arkansas), Pittsburg, Denver, Philadelphia, and others, philanthropists and city leaders are experimenting with innovative models for addressing the gap in educational and economic achievement that is evident in many settings.

One year after the program was announced a dozen communities had launched or were planning programs modeled on the Kalamazoo Promise. By its second anniversary, that number had doubled, and in the spring of 2008, more than 200 representatives of about 80 communities attended the inaugural conference of PromiseNet, a national network devoted to sharing experiences and information among communities that are establishing Promise-type programs (Miller-Adams, 2009a, p.64)

Unfortunately, from day one of the announcement to the present, misinformation about the purposes and intents of the Promise appears to have been widely circulated.
Nevertheless, over time, the irresistible fact that this scholarship program is universal (available to all graduates of KPS, regardless of merit or need) may lead the disbelief and distrust to subside. In addition, “Social scientists and policymakers have long recognized that universal, as opposed to income-based, policies tend to enjoy stronger support across the political spectrum” (Miller-Adams, 2009a, p.6). By providing full post-secondary scholarships, the Promise undoubtedly creates greater equality of access to higher education for all Kalamazoo public school graduates. Yet, will all take advantage? Will all have the ability to respond? Will all participate? An initial assessment of the African American community will likely be pivotal to any evaluation of the impact of the Kalamazoo Promise.

Statement of the Problem

There is nothing new about reports that African American students generally earn lower grades, drop out more often, and attain less education than whites (Coleman et al., 1966; Porter, 1974; Portes and Wilson, 1976; Kerckhoff and Campbell, 1977; Ogbu, 1978; Gottfredson, 1981; Patchen, 1982). For African American youths, the issue of poor academic preparedness is especially troublesome, particularly because the many policy interventions of the last 50 years or so have failed to solve the problem. The bottom line is that educators have the responsibility of teaching ALL children. Whenever a particular segment of the school population is not succeeding, the implication is that it is worth examining the way things are done instead of continuing with business as usual (Kunjufu, 1986; Sleeter, 1993; Boutte, 1999).
One perspective is that the traditionally lower achievement of African Americans is not due to a lack of reverence for education. Rather it is due to black students’ sharp perception that for people who look and act like them, educational efforts, credentials, and talents are not rewarded in the opportunity structure in the same ways as they are for whites (Freire, 1970; Ogbu 1978, 1990, 1992; Mickelson, 1990).

Thus the question is whether enough African Americans appreciate the life altering potentials of the gift that has fallen into their laps. Will youth still continue choosing to follow the path of the streets? Will there still continue to be a high dropout rate? Overnight, the Kalamazoo Promise leveled the playing field, as far as money for post-secondary opportunities is concerned. Yet, old cycles are hard to break. The Promise has drastically changed the opportunity structure for families in Kalamazoo, but only for those with enough courage and insight to take advantage.

According to the people that administer the program, in order for the Promise to meet its objectives, it will take more than just paying the tuition and fees of KPS graduates. The website for the program reads, “The Kalamazoo Community will become a world leader in education, investing in youth to elevate the quality of life for each resident.” ³ The mission statement reads, “The Kalamazoo Promise transforms the community and stimulates the economy through a new generation of learners”⁴.

If the goal of the Kalamazoo Promise were merely to provide a source of scholarships, then a study of its impact would be relatively straightforward. Moreover, an evaluation of its effectiveness would likely be extremely positive. However, it is clear

⁴ For details of the scholarship program see http://www.kalamazoopromise.com
that the impact of the Promise may go far beyond mere scholarships (although they alone are extremely important – certainly to those who receive them). Changes in the human, social, and economic capital within the community have the potential of maximizing the impact of this generous gift.

The focus of this research is on assessing the degree to which African American members of the Kalamazoo community understand the nature of the Promise, are equipped to take advantage of it, and “buy in” to the vision of economic vitality via educational attainment. Educationally based economic renewal for the entire region is the long term goal of the program, through scholarships that directly impact individual lives of Kalamazoo youth and their families. Yet, to get the most “bang for their buck”, the collective consciences in Kalamazoo must change in more ways than the addition of a tuition scholarship program alone can provide.

Given the proportion of the African American community in Kalamazoo, the more African Americans that understand the magnitude of the potentially life-changing, asset-building opportunity, the more the ultimate goals of the Promise will be achieved. However, families accumulating knowledge about the Promise is only half the battle. Active participation, usage, or living the Promise is what transforms the knowledge into power. Does the fear of change overwhelm the propensity to respond to, or use knowledge? The passing of time, of course, will inevitably result in more psychological walls of denial crumbling, but what can stakeholders and others do to facilitate change?
Background

The Kalamazoo Promise is a totally new and caste-breaking idea. Nothing quite like this economic development experiment has been tried before. Essentially extending the free public school model to K-16 for all students, what is happening in Kalamazoo has already been held up as a model during a global shift into a knowledge-based economy. On June 7, 2010, President Barack Obama acknowledged Kalamazoo Central High School as the winners of his first ever Race to the Top initiative, just after four years into this far-sighted program.

Initial evaluation research on its impacts gave reason to believe that the Promise clearly had helped the children that were already planning to go to college before the Promise was announced\(^5\). One of the possible implications is that those students who were already ahead would benefit, but that those who were behind (disproportionately minorities) will now be left even further behind.

Such criticisms appear to be subsiding over time as it has become evident that both middle income and low income students of the district are taking advantage of the program, and that the critical factor in whether a student attends college is the level of academic preparedness, not income level, race, or ethnicity (Miller-Adams, 2009c).

The allocated dollars can be used for any post-secondary program, not just college (technological certifications, beauty school, etc.). This is a philanthropic vision that

\(^5\) It is notable that the local newspaper, the Kalamazoo Gazette, has shown a pattern of overemphasizing the benefits of the Promise for the white middle class. For example, in an article written on October 5, 2006, the Gazette stated that “among the scholarship program’s goals is curbing the long-term trend of ‘white flight’ from the district.” (Mack, J. 2006, Oct. 5). In fairness to the Kalamazoo Gazette, it ran an editorial a few days after the announcement of the Promise that noted the importance that “not just the middle class take advantage” of the scholarship program and the concurrent obligations of the community – including the newspaper itself – to ensure this not take place (Editorial, 2005, Nov. 16)
understands the notion of “the more the merrier”. The more of Kalamazoo’s citizens that decide to take advantage of the free money to enhance their credentials, the more successful this intervention will be at boosting Kalamazoo’s economic and quality of life measures. While initial responses to such a social policy may be cynical, the most pressing question is how the community can best mobilize to make the most of such an unprecedented gift.

As of May, 2012, the program had paid out approximately 34 million dollars to KPS graduates (Jorth, 2012). This covers approximately a total of 3,600 students who had used at least a portion of their benefit (including those who are on some sort of hiatus in their academic careers, quit, or were dismissed), with 1,200 of them who were currently enrolled in post-secondary institutions throughout the state.

It is hard to imagine a child from a family that has experienced intergenerational poverty having concrete collegiate aspirations like his/her middle to upper class classmates without undergoing a significant shift in values and/or understanding. The Promise represents such a shift since it addresses fundamental value commitments and personal preferences that are rarely modified on the basis of additional data, especially the kind of data generated by scholarly research.

The Promise has been touted as a catalyst for transformative change and educationally-based economic renewal. For the full potential of this gift to be realized, it would appear that the social structure of Kalamazoo must change in more ways than the addition of a tuition scholarship program alone. Time will only tell how the process will unfold.
Research Plan

Misinformation and misunderstandings run rampant throughout all communities concerning educational policies. However, the historical experiences of African Americans leave them particularly suspicious of any social policy. The Kalamazoo Promise is no exception. It is not surprising, given the historically abused trust systems of African Americans, that there are some who think that the Promise will be “snatched away” or that it is “not for us”\(^6\).

This research project delves into the possible reasons why some parents perceive participating in this study as an opportunity, while others scoffed at it. Content analyses of parent and student interviews provide clues to some complex questions. Could the mere decision to participate in this study be indicative? Could the people that chose not to participate be the very ones that could benefit from the exchange of information the most? Also, what are some possible strategies for reconciling generations of underserved people to “buy in” to the vision of regional vitality?

From July of 2009 through May of 2011, interviews with 35 Promise-eligible students and 33 parents of such students were collected. Both the student and the parent samples are small, but efforts were made to insure perspectives from lower and middle class participants. There is also a subset of students and parents interviewed from the same family (6 of each meet this distinction).

The method utilized in this study was face-to-face interviews. These interviews were recorded with a digital recording device and later transcribed and entered into Excel spreadsheets. All participants were engaged in a dialogue that was structured by the same

\(^6\) Quotes from parent interviewees.
interview protocol (see Appendix A and B). In addition, during later interviews, some subjects were asked to focus on specific areas identified from the previous interviews that required further clarification.

One intrinsically rewarding aspect of this project is that the process of interviewing African American students and parents was more than simple data collection. It was, by design, a social intervention. Not only was the investigator (a locally-raised, African American male) collecting data for the evaluation of the Promise, the project also allowed for the dissemination of information throughout a portion of the African American community. This activist approach in itself may have served to alleviate some of the misinformation about the Promise that was pervasive. Moreover, during the interviews, the participants were stimulated to reflect upon some of their own promises regarding preparation and participation in opportunities afforded their families.

Participants in this study benefitted by having an opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns. Participants also benefitted from the interactional nature of the interviewing process. Whenever they had questions, or shared misunderstandings and misinformation, time was taken to immediately clear it up and/or point them in the right direction for accuracy.

Research Questions

The first research question has to do with how participants currently perceive the Kalamazoo Promise. What do they actually know about the Promise? What are their sources of information? How accurate and reliable are they? What are their beliefs about the relevance of the Promise to them and to others like them? How do they perceive the
impact of the Promise on African American students, families, and the African American Community at large within Kalamazoo?

The second research question concerns the nature and type of misinformation that persisted throughout the community, and why? Are there lessons to be learned that could help prevent such misinterpretations?

The third research question focuses on cultural change. Have the educational value systems of students and parents changed as a result of the Promise? Have their aspirations regarding future career goals been altered? Since the announcement of the Promise, have students and/or parents altered their behaviors regarding academic achievement and future career goals as the result of the Promise?

A fourth question turns toward a broader perspective. To what degree, if any, do the participants perceive elements of social, cultural, human, and/or economic change taking place in the larger African American community? To what extent do they attribute such changes in response to the Promise?

The final question about the Promise is perhaps baffling to some members of the community. Why would someone choose not to take advantage of the Promise? Are there other things that the community can do to help individuals identify with academic achievement?
CHAPTER 2

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following review of relevant literature and theory illustrates some of the psychological and historical impacts of inequalities in economic, social, and human capital; with a specific focus on the African American community and the Kalamazoo Promise. It unveils the nature (both obvious and hidden) of the rewarding and punishing systems that influence the life chances of African Americans and helps to explain how some are socially pressured into risking missing out on the free money available for post-secondary skills and credentials.

The information discussed below suggests why the Kalamazoo Promise may be particularly influential for African Americans. Many economists reviewed thus far agree that systemic racism, discrimination, and segregation undermine urban economic development. Because the Promise is designed to last into perpetuity, it is caste-breaking. Thus, it is counter-hegemonic and represents capitalism with a conscience. It should accelerate the catch-up time for local African Americans’ in their accumulation of wealth as well as strengthen networks of informal control that have been weakened over generations.

Michelle Miller-Adams has provided perhaps the most comprehensive piece to date on the Promise in *The Power of A Promise: Educational and Economic Renewal in*
Kalamazoo (2009a). She writes, “The Kalamazoo Promise is a cutting-edge model in addressing two of the nation’s biggest problems – maintaining economic competitiveness and improving educational outcomes” (p. 22).

Community leaders and policy makers at the federal, state, and local levels have often experimented with a variety of approaches to either stimulate local economic development or increase access to higher education (Miller-Adams, 2009a). These two priorities are almost always presented in either/or scenarios: with taxpayers, private donors, and philanthropic organizations asked to either allocate scarce resource to making a community more competitive economically or to investing more resources in education.

A tool for managing both of these challenges, simultaneously, is indeed necessary for many post-industrial communities. “The Kalamazoo Promise represents an unprecedented joining of these two agendas and suggests that the best strategies for increasing educational attainment and promoting economic development may be one and the same”. (Michele Miller-Adams, 2010, p. 6) And, “The tool being demonstrated in Kalamazoo is a large, private, and long-term investment in the educational attainment of local youth.” Miller-Adams encapsulates the very vision and scope of the donors’ gesture in the following:

The availability of full college scholarships for a sizeable proportion of the community’s young people over a several decade period has ramifications for both the educational and the economic spheres. These may include population growth in the school district (including the attraction and retention of middle-class families), greater socioeconomic integration in neighborhoods and schools, more financial resources and a cultural change in the schools, growing demand for quality-of-life amenities in the urban core, the stabilization of the real estate market, new residents drawn to a community that values education, and employers attracted by the availability of a skilled workforce. (p. 63-64)
According to Miron and Evergreen (2008), the local Big Brothers Big Sisters of America had 1,200 mentors the first year after the Promise, almost doubling the number of mentors from previous years. Kalamazoo Communities in Schools (KCIS), the nonprofit that coordinates volunteers and services for many of the district schools, saw a 134 percent increase in the hours of volunteer service (2006-07) as compared with the school year when the Promise was announced (2005-06). KCIS was reaching 92 percent more students in 2008 than it was in the year preceding the announcement of the Promise. Community involvement in schools can lead to higher academic achievement and lower risk-taking behavior in students (Nettles, 1991). Epstein (1995) theorized that children develop through the influence of the overlapping spheres of family, school, and community. While the Promise does not call directly for parental involvement programs – it is anticipated that schools, community groups, and parents themselves will all be motivated to organize and support the students.

Based on a review of 51 research studies and literature reviews of parental involvement in education, Henderson and Mapp (2002) found that families have a major influence on their children’s achievement in school and through life. When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more.

Prior to the announcement of the Kalamazoo Promise, the district needed to trim or cut supplemental services for students on an annual basis, since enrollments were decreasing each year. With the increased enrollment and revenues, the district likely will be able to strengthen and expand supplemental and nonessential services for students. More importantly, funding would be available for other anticipated increases, such as advanced placement class offerings and more staff. (Miron & Evergreen, 2007)

The Promise has resulted in a huge spotlight being shined on this city, increasing awareness and focusing attention on the disparities that exist within the community and the public school system. The U.S. Department of Education recently awarded a $348,000 grant to form a partnership among the W. E. Upjohn Institute, the Kalamazoo
Public Schools, and the Western Michigan University Evaluation Center to assess the short-term and intermediate outcomes of the Promise (Strickland, 2008).

Scholars from Western Michigan’s Evaluation Center (Miron & Evergreen, 2008) write, “While some see this as a negative consequence, the Promise itself can be viewed as a potential tool to address and resolve longstanding divisive issues” (p. iii). Their theoretical framework\(^\text{7}\) suggests that the design of the Promise should encourage shared ownership and responsibility across all sectors of the community. They go on to state “Systemic change results when all parts of the system are aligned and all stakeholder groups are focused on the same outcome” (Miron & Evergreen, 2008 p. iii).

The Importance of Research on African Americans

Before the Promise, many students in the African American community of Kalamazoo didn’t think they had a realistic choice whether or not they could go to college. Early on, it didn’t take much insight for them to see that their parents “couldn’t afford no college\(^\text{8}\)”. Generations of blacks experiencing barriers in the opportunity structure and in employment have resulted in the belief that education, individual effort, and hard work are not sufficient for success (Ogbu, 1990). So if school is not for them, then how can the Promise be?

Prior to the announcement of the Promise, Kalamazoo was suffering from population decline and urban sprawl just as many other urban areas in the post industrial Midwest and Northeast. Most of these urban areas lost population, wealth, and influence

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\(^{7}\) For their Logic Model for Evaluation of the Kalamazoo Promise Scholarship Program go to [www.wmich.edu/kpromise](http://www.wmich.edu/kpromise).

\(^{8}\) Quoted from a parent interviewee.
during the last several decades. For example, in his account of the decline of Detroit, Sugrue (1996) identified three forces that he argued accounted for the urban crisis in metropolitan areas across the nation: (1) the flight of jobs, especially the unionized manufacturing jobs that characterized the post–World War II urban economy; (2) the persistence of workplace discrimination; and (3) racial segregation in housing that led to an uneven distribution of power and resources in metropolitan areas. It is worth quoting from Sugrue at some length about the current state of the urban American landscape and particularly the role of race in shaping it:

Despite more than half a century of civil rights activism and changing racial attitudes, American cities (particularly the old industrial centers of the Northeast and Midwest) remain deeply divided by race. Poverty rates among people of color in major American cities are staggering. Vast tracts of urban land lie pockmarked with boarded-up buildings, abandoned houses, and rubble-strewn lots. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of acres of marshland, meadow, farm, and forest on the periphery of major metropolitan areas get gobbled up each year for vast tracts of new housing, shopping malls, and office parks. City governments struggle with shrinking tax bases and ever-increasing demands on public services, while wealthy suburban municipalities enjoy strong property tax revenues, excellent public services, and superb schools (Sugrue, 1996, pp. xvii–xviii).

With unemployment, racial segregation, and single-parent homes coming to dominate the older, poor neighborhoods, residents experience increased social-economic isolation from middle-class society and the economy. Moreover, Orfield (1997) writes, “Individuals, particularly children, are deprived of local successful role models and connections to opportunity outside the neighborhood” (p. 18).

Human Capital

The several forms of capital are why Roediger (1999) teaches that even if one day all people and businesses no longer discriminated based on race – whites would still have
a cumulative advantage already built-in to the social structure. In large measure, they control the economy.

Human capital can be defined as “the stock of skills that people are endowed with or acquire through investment in training and education, and which renders them more productive in their work” (Johnes, 2006, p. 4). Most economists concur that the greater an individuals human capital the more productive worker he or she will be.

Glaeser and Saiz (2003) are among the many economists who have explored the connection between workers’ skills and regional economic growth. Their findings indicate that, apart from climate and immigration, “skill composition may be the most powerful predictor of urban growth” (Glaeser and Saiz, 2003, p. 42). Cities where urban policy has been serious about establishing high-quality education systems experience a boom. However, the cities with less skilled workers “have suffered an almost unstoppable urban decline” (Glaeser and Saiz, 2003, p. 42).

Moreover, Glaeser and Saiz argue that human capital matters most in potentially declining places. Skills are even more valuable in these settings because they help cities adapt and change and are more responsive to negative economic shocks, “City growth can be promoted with strategies that increase the level of local human capital” (Glaeser and Saiz, 2003 p. 43).

Glaeser and Berry (2006) also show that regions with skilled workforces experience higher rates of population and income growth than those without these assets. They found that regions where more than 25 percent of the population had college degrees in 1980 their populations surged by 45 percent on average over the subsequent 20
years. In contrast, low-skilled metropolitan areas (those where fewer than 10 percent of adults had college degrees in 1980) grew on average by just 13 percent.

Glaeser and Berry (2006) even found that the unskilled workers located in the “smart cities” earned significantly more than their counterparts in metropolitan areas with lower levels of educational attainment. This cycle again leaves an insidious gap as the higher skilled cities continue to adapt while lower-skill cities spiral out of control.

With the longtime presence of a major pharmaceutical company (Upjohn now Pfizer), Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo College, and two hospitals, Kalamazoo has long fit the profile of a “smart city” as Glaeser and Berry (2006) defined it. Residents of Kalamazoo and Portage, the county’s two largest municipalities, far outpace both the state of Michigan and the nation in terms of the percentage of the population with at least four years of college (See Table 2). The gap grows even larger at the masters and doctorate levels.

Table 2

| Educational Attainment—Residents with Four Years or More of College (%) |
|--------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| City of Kalamazoo       | 17.0     | 26.8     | 29.8     | 32.8     |
| City of Portage         | 16.9     | 25.5     | 31.3     | 36.9     |
| State of Michigan       | 9.4      | 7.2      | 17.3     | 21.8     |
| United States           | 11.0     | 17.0     | 21.3     | 26.0     |

NOTE: All numbers are for population age 25 and above. SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau.

Economic Capital and Cumulative Advantage

Racism and notions of two separate, contradicting realities (segregation) are deeply imbedded in the social structure of this nation. Not even 50 years ago, the United
States and South Africa were the only two countries in the world where a person of African descent could not, by law, eat, drink, sit, or wash their hands at places designated “whites only”.

The opportunities for African Americans to start their own businesses were severely restricted or even forbidden by law in some states. The lack of opportunity to develop and maintain strong business bases in the past, – and the consequent inability to accumulate wealth, experience, and other resources – often times has limited the ability of African Americans to compete successfully for economic opportunities in the present (Oliver & Shapiro, 2001).

The concept of cumulative advantage helps us understand that getting rid of prejudicial attitudes or discrimination, hard as that has been and continues to be, can not eliminate patterns of racial inequality that have accumulated over hundreds of years. Cumulative advantage explains why Roediger (1999), Shapiro (2004), and Healy (2006) estimate that it would take hundreds of years, if ever, for African Americans to catch up to whites in wealth and economic capital.

Although nationwide there has been progress in reducing some of the gaps between white and black families with respect to education and income, the gaps with regard to family wealth, assets, and capital are mushrooming. Figure 1 illustrates data from 1999 on differences in family incomes, wealth, and assets.
Figure 1. Family Income and Family Wealth
Source: Panel Study of Income Dynamics, 1999 as cited in Shapiro, 2004

The median black household earns 59 cents for every dollar earned by the typical white household. However, changing the lens of analysis to wealth dramatically shifts the perspective (Shapiro, 2004). The net worth of typical white families shows that for every dollar of wealth they own, African Americans only own 10 cents.

Similarly, the figures for net financial assets reveal that the median white family actually possesses 11 times the amount of median black families with $33,500 for whites and $3,000 for blacks. These figures represent wealth accumulation between 1988 and 1999 for black, white, and Hispanic families (Shapiro, 2004). Even though all families did show some increase in their net worth and net financial assets, the black-white gap actually grew by $16,000 for net worth and $20,000 for net financial assets. While all families were doing somewhat better, the amount of inequality continued to grow.
Social Capital

Getting accepted involves the concept of social capital – a fancy term for connections (Aronowitz, 2008) – which also takes time to accumulate. For example, in *Race and the Invisible Hand: How White Networks Exclude Black men from Blue-Collar Jobs*, Royster (2003) followed a cohort of black and white workers, with identical experience and credentials, and provided empirical evidence to support the adage that, it’s not what you know – it’s who you know, when it comes to school and work transition. With all other things held equal, Royster found that white graduates were more often employed in skilled trades, earned more, held higher status positions, received more promotions, and experienced shorter periods of unemployment.

In the realm of social capital, even a name possesses power. In 2002, Bertrand and Mullainathan measured racial discrimination in the labor market. Their study, *Are Emily and Brendan More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination*, revealed some telling results.

Their research design was simple enough: First, they sent out resumes in response to help wanted ads in Chicago and Boston newspapers for positions ranging from clerical workers to sales managers. Half of the resumes they sent out had African American sounding first names such as Tremayne or Aisha, and half had white sounding names such as Emily or Brad. All other information was identical. They also sent resumes differing in names as above, plus differing in quality of work experience – half had low quality and half had high quality work experience.

What they found was that the resumes with white sounding names received 50 percent more callbacks than those with black sounding names. Furthermore, white
sounding names with high quality work experience received 30 percent more callbacks than white sounding names with low quality experience. However, black names with high quality experience received no more callbacks than black names with low quality experience (Bertrand, 2002).

Table 3 shows national unemployment rates for white and black men and women. It shows that whatever the unemployment rate was at any given time for white males or females, basically doubling that figure will approximate the unemployment rate for black males or females. Lerman (1997) argues that blacks earn approximately 75 percent that of their white counterparts. Moreover, whether the black person finished graduate school or has yet to complete high school, these figures remain fairly consistent (Lerman, 1997).

Table 3

*Unemployment Rates of the Civilian Population by Race, Sex, and Age [Seasonally adjusted]*

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHITE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men, 20 yrs and over</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women, 20 yrs and over</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BLACK</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men, 20 yrs and over</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women, 20 yrs and over</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Bureau of Labor Statistics recently released local area unemployment statistics for 2010. In the state of Michigan, from 2000 to 2010, the average unemployment rate for white men was 12.8 percent and 8.1 percent for white women (recession-like numbers). For black men it was 28.1 percent and 20.3 percent for black women in Michigan (depression-like numbers).

One Kalamazoo resident summed it all up as follows:

Well for the African American community the biggest concern is we are disproportionally poor, children who are eligible for free and reduced lunch because one, this whole new economic recession has impacted us a lot more than anyone else, but I always say we have been in recession since slavery, so we are going to have a high unemployment rate, so we are in serious depression mode, so college and universities has always been perceived as one of those miracle type goals that maybe, it’s a dream. (Parent Interviewee)

In the context of deep-seated historical inequalities, the objectives of the Promise demand a paradigm shift. The knowledge that these students now possess (for some, their entire lives) that they will have the financial means to go to college when they graduate is alone one example of their drastically different social capital compared to prior generations’. The Promise provides the incentive for the entire way the citizens of Kalamazoo view the world to change dramatically in order to participate.

Broken Promises: African Americans and Social Policy

- Making the declaration in 1776, that “all men are created equal…”
- General William Tecumseh Sherman’s Special Field Order 15, in 1865, to deliver “Forty acres and a mule” to each freed slave.
- The 14th (1868), and 15th (1870) amendments to the U.S. constitution…


10 Excerpt from the United States Declaration of Independence,
If the promises listed above had been authentic – there would be no need for a Kalamazoo Promise. The official dehumanizing of African American descendants to the status of 3/5th of a person (just eleven years after declaring all men to be created equal), branded this population with a burden unlike any others. Such contradictions are etched into the laws of the land and into local memories. The 14th amendment (granting blacks citizenship and requiring states to give equal protection to everyone), and the 15th amendment (prohibiting prevention of voting based on race, color or previous condition of servitude such as slavery) demanded such a paradigm shift in the ways we think about civil rights that they required a Civil War, Brown vs. the Board of Education, a Civil Rights Movement, and a Kalamazoo Promise.

What about the civil rights act of 1964? Wasn’t that supposed to end discrimination based on race, color, creed or national origin? Perhaps Robert Westly (2003) answered those questions best:

A crucial but seldom considered defect of all civil rights legislation is the fact that it needs to be administered and enforced. Many Blacks (and whites, too) appear to be under some delusion that once Congress passes civil rights legislation, Blacks are protected from discrimination and white racism. Nothing could be further from the truth, as the history of Black Reconstruction clearly shows. Every measure passed by Congress during Reconstruction for the social and political equality of Blacks – with the possible exception of the Thirteenth Amendment – was subverted or made null and void before the turn of the century.

The 1954 Brown vs. the Board of Education decision by the Supreme Court supposedly ended segregation in Americas’ public schools. Yet, recent research by Harvard University’s Civil Rights Project ranks Michigan as one of the nations’ most segregated states when it comes to its schools (Orfield and Lei, 2006). In fact, three of the top four are also from “northern states” – New York and Illinois (Kozol, 2005).
Leary encapsulates the experiences of African Americans in *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* (2005). She describes it as:

…a condition that exists when a population has experienced multigenerational trauma resulting from centuries of slavery and continues to experience oppression and institutionalized racism today. Added to this condition is a belief (real or imagined) that the benefits of the society in which they live are not accessible to them.

Whether the average African American is familiar with the Tuskegee Experiment, the impunity of beating Rodney King, or any of the historical events noted thus far; experience in the field verifies that many Africans Americans react with a historic-rooted distrust for authority figures of any kind (regardless of their race). For example, a 2003 study\(^\text{11}\) found that some African Americans were even fearful their doctors might use them in research that might hurt them. It really should not come as a surprise that some African Americans figure that they will get their Promise just as soon as they get their forty acres and a mule.

Inequality in U.S. Incarceration

African American youth growing up in Kalamazoo, just like any place else, ultimately face a fork in the road – one way leading toward higher education and the other to “the streets”. Cloward and Ohlin (1966) propose that conformity or deviance depends on the relative-opportunity structure that frames a person’s life. The Promise has changed the opportunity structure for Kalamazoo residents and provides the incentive for more and more to choose the path towards academic achievement. Prior to the Promise,

the streets may have been perceived to offered more equal opportunity – even though that path dead ends with death or jail.

“Imprisonment is now a common life event for an entire demographic group”

(Pettit & Western, 2004, p. 1).

Pettit and Western (2004) found that imprisonment rates and cumulative risks of incarceration were, on average, 6 to 8 times higher for young blacks compared to young whites. Table 4 shows that among all men, black men are about 7 times more likely to have a prison record. By the same token, whites in their early thirties are more than twice as likely to have a bachelor’s degree as blacks. When lack of college experience is considered, nearly a third of black men are likely to be ex-cons by their mid thirties, compared with only 6 percent of white males. They also found that, “Among black male high school dropouts, the risk of imprisonment had increased to 60 percent, establishing incarceration as a normal stopping point on the route to midlife” (Pettit & Western, 2004, p. 164).

In 2006, African Americans made up 12.3% of the population of the United States but accounted for 29.4% of the arrests for property crimes and 39.3% for arrests for violent crimes (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2007).

It is critical to keep in mind those categories of people with high arrest rates are also at higher risk of being victims of crime. In the United States, for example, African Americans are six times as likely to die as a result of homicide as white people (Rogers et al., 2001; Kung et al., 2008).
Table 4

Percentage of Non-Hispanic Black and White Men, Born 1965-1969, Experiencing Life Events and Surviving to 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life Event</th>
<th>White Men (%)</th>
<th>Black Men (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Men</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison Incarceration</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Service</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>59.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncollege Men</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison Incarceration</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma/GED</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>64.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Service</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>55.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The incidence of all life events except prison incarceration was calculated from the 2000 Census.
Source: Pettit & Western, 2004

Blau and Blau (1982), E. Anderson (1994), and Martinez (1996) argue that many poor people living in the midst of wealth come to see society as unjust and therefore are more likely to turn to crime for their opportunities. Similarly, a history of prejudice and discrimination often prompt white police to arrest black people more readily and leads citizens to report African Americans more willingly. The result is that people of color are disproportionately criminalized (Chiricos, McEntire, & Gertz, 2001, Quillian & Pager, 2001; Semuth & Steffensmeier, 2004). Such trends indicate that the Promise could be perceived as a more important opportunity for African Americans because it offers them legitimate opportunity and thus a way to avoid perpetuating such oppressive cycles.

If indeed imprisonment has become commonplace among young disadvantaged and minority men, as evidenced by the sociologists Pettit and Western (2004), Freeman (1996), and Irwin and Austin (1997), it is likely that a variety of other social problems
may have deepened as a result. For example, according to Byrd and Clayton (2000), African Americans have a life expectancy that is five to seven years less than that of whites and infant mortality rates that are over twice that of whites. African Americans, per capita, also lead the nation in the number of deaths caused by heart disease, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, hypertension, homicide, influenza and pneumonia. Combined with issues such as obesity, substance abuse, gangster glamorization and other maladaptive behaviors – missing out on the Promise would, for some, merely be par for the course.

**Deep-seated Historical Inequalities**

Since the focus is on Kalamazoo, it useful to give a clearer picture of the starkly different social economic worlds that can exist in one city. The 4,973 black students enrolled in KPS is equal to 73 percent of the black children between the ages of 5 and 17 living within KPS district boundaries (American Community Survey, 2006). In contrast, the 4,150 white students enrolled in KPS equaled only 58 percent of the number of white children living within district boundaries. White children are more likely to attend private and religious schools than are black children. Eighty-three percent of Kalamazoo’s private school students are white, compared with only 3% of private school students are black.  

The prevalence of poverty among students attending private and religious schools is also much less than in KPS, as measured by eligibility for free and reduced lunch. Fully 60 percent of KPS students are eligible for free and reduced lunch because of their parents’ low income. This compares with only 3 percent of students in Kalamazoo’s

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private and religious schools and 40 percent of students enrolled in public charter schools (Hussein, 2008). Although some students enrolled in Kalamazoo private schools do reside in Portage and other communities outside of the Kalamazoo district, it is clear that lower income students and students of color are disproportionately likely to be concentrated in Kalamazoo’s public schools.

Ideally, public schools work against social-economic isolation, providing an equal opportunity for all students and serving as a way out for children from distressed homes and communities, “In reality…schools take on the characteristics of the neighborhoods that surround them and perpetuate the cycle of decline” (Miller-Adams, 2009, p. 87). Orfield (1997, p. 38) states, “It is the rapid increase of poor children in local schools … that sounds the first warning of imminent middle-class flight”.

In 1968, the United States saw race riots throughout its urban areas. What happened in Los Angeles and Detroit will always be a part of American folklore. Kalamazoo was no different – that same year; race riots forced Kalamazoo Central high school to shut down for ten days! Table 5 illustrates the dramatic changes in the composition of the African American population and KPS enrollment since that period. The table illustrates two trends, a simultaneous increase in African American concentration and decline in white population and enrollment in the city’s core and the city’s public schools.

The decline in enrollment among white children is especially pronounced, with 14, 285 enrolled in KPS in 1970 as opposed to only 4,133 in 2000 (Miller-Adams, 2009), a reduction of over 71 percent. The end of the baby boom and a growing number of Kalamazoo residents without school-age children contributed to this shift, yet these
Table 5


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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KPS Enrollment</td>
<td>17,285</td>
<td>13,280</td>
<td>12,584</td>
<td>11,245</td>
<td>11,378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% African American</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Kalamazoo pop.</td>
<td>85,555</td>
<td>79,722</td>
<td>80,277</td>
<td>77,145</td>
<td>71,441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% African American</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalamazoo County pop.</td>
<td>201,550</td>
<td>212,378</td>
<td>223,411</td>
<td>238,603</td>
<td>244,153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% African American</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: School enrollment numbers from Kalamazoo Public Schools’ September 2007 head count (rounded to nearest percentage point)

aData for 1970 are not broken down by race; this number represents all minority students.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

numbers still reflect substantial migration out of the area’s urban core and also out of public schooling. While the population of Kalamazoo declined by 15 percent between 1970 and 2005, the population of Kalamazoo County rose by more than 5 percent over the same period (Miller-Adams, 2009). This reflects the trend of people moving to the surrounding suburban areas outside the urban core and its school district.

This pattern of core decline has occurred widely across Michigan. Table 6 shows KPS enrollments compared with demographically similar districts and Figure 2 displays how the Promise broke the pattern of decline and the subsequent growth of enrollments in KPS. It is clear that all of the other districts have continued to experience decline, while KPS actually shows substantial growth since the announcement of the Promise at the end of 2005 - an enrollment gain of 13 percent following decades of decline. In addition, the new students brought with them approximately $10 million in additional per-pupil funding from the state.13

### Table 6

*Demographically Similar Districts Enrollment 2002-03 to 2007-08*

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kalamazoo Public Schools</td>
<td>11,084</td>
<td>10,741</td>
<td>10,232</td>
<td>10,238</td>
<td>11,259</td>
<td>11,434</td>
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<tr>
<td>Battle Creek Public Schools</td>
<td>7,922</td>
<td>7,704</td>
<td>7,534</td>
<td>7,237</td>
<td>6,944</td>
<td>6,597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flint City Public Schools</td>
<td>21,007</td>
<td>20,028</td>
<td>19,025</td>
<td>18,081</td>
<td>16,636</td>
<td>15,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Rapids Public Schools</td>
<td>21,298</td>
<td>22,401</td>
<td>21,602</td>
<td>20,518</td>
<td>19,885</td>
<td>18,748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson Public Schools</td>
<td>7,213</td>
<td>7,076</td>
<td>6,776</td>
<td>6,761</td>
<td>6,710</td>
<td>6,506</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lansing School District</td>
<td>17,376</td>
<td>16,780</td>
<td>16,618</td>
<td>15,615</td>
<td>15,025</td>
<td>14,892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of Michigan</td>
<td>1,713,165</td>
<td>1,715,048</td>
<td>1,709,583</td>
<td>1,697,600</td>
<td>1,675,234</td>
<td>1,645,742</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


![25-year KPS enrollment trend](image)

**Figure 2.** W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research
The issues that KPS and the local economy face today have some of their roots in the years leading up to, and following, the school desegregation order of 1971. It took two years for the case to work its way through the courts, but in the fall of 1973, the court ruled in favor of the NAACP in *Oliver v. Kalamazoo Board of Education* and imposed a long-term desegregation plan (Michelle-Adams, 2009). Judge Noel P Fox’s opinion set a precedent concerning school desegregation throughout the United States. He stated that “the board had by its actions and inactions ‘followed a purposeful pattern of racial discrimination by creating and maintaining segregated schools’”\(^{14}\).

Considerable “white flight” out of the city and school district took place in the years immediately before and after the desegregation order, with white enrollment falling by 8.5 percent between 1968 and 1978 and by 15 percent between 1970 and 1973 (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). One of the primary goals of the desegregation order was to increase the percentage of minority teachers, which rose from 7 percent in 1970 to 12 percent in 1976 (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). However, the percentage of minority teachers stood at 17.3 percent for the 2007-2008 school year\(^{15}\), despite the current ethnic composition of the student body.


\(^{15}\) Data provided by KPS
Deteriorated Schools and Poverty

As Kalamazoo’s economy declined, its public schools deteriorated. Table 7 illustrates the Cumulative Promotion Index\(^\text{16}\) (CPI) numbers for KPS alongside the national averages\(^\text{17}\). The table shows cumulative that ninth graders enrolled in KPS as recently as 2008, do not even stand a 50/50 chance to go on to graduate. While this measure of high school completion can be affected by factors such as student mobility and by students being retained in grade, the CPI for KPS has generally been at or below 50 percent for more than ten years\(^\text{18}\).

For those who live within its borders, Kalamazoo remains a city with communities that often seem separate and unequal (Miller-Adams, 2009). Robert Putnam, a Harvard University Professor and expert on social capital who has visited the city several times, reports being surprised by the extent of what he calls the “donut effect” – a poor and black urban core ringed by middle-class and largely white neighborhoods (Putnam, 2000).

\(^\text{16}\) Estimates high school graduation rate as the probability that a student entering the 9th grade will complete high school on time with a regular diploma.

\(^\text{17}\) Editorial Projects in Education Research Center

\(^\text{18}\) See W.E. Upjohn Institute Kalamazoo Promise Scorecard, at http://www.upjohninstitute.org/promise/scorecard.html for a description of how the CPI is calculated and for KPS graduation rates over a ten-year period as determined using this methodology.
Table 7

*CPI Ten-year Trend*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>KPS</th>
<th>National Averages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>71.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>69.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>61.7%</td>
<td>68.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>66.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
<td>66.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3 illustrates how much of the school district lies outside of the actual city’s limits. Because of this fact, much of the development inspired by the Promise will likely occur in the newer, more suburban townships outside the city (Miller-Adams, 2006).

*Figure 3. Kalamazoo School District (Purple Border), Kalamazoo City (Gray Shading).*
Two highways intersect in Kalamazoo – I-94 that links Chicago and Detroit, and U.S. 131 running north to Grand Rapids and south to Indiana. Over the years, the commercial and residential focus of the community has shifted away from the downtown to areas that provide easier access. This now is where the big box stores and major chains have continued to locate, with commercial activity spreading ever farther from the core of the city.

These suburban areas are overwhelmingly white and nonpoor, a demographic makeup also reflected in the public schools. Table 8 presents some characteristics of the two largest school districts in the county – KPS and Portage Public Schools (PPS) to the south. The table shows a minority percentage in KPS four times that of PPS; and more than triple the percentage of economically disadvantaged. Only 64.4 percent of the students in KPS are reading proficient, compared over 90 percent of their southern neighbors. When it comes to mathematics, 54.4 percent in KPS are proficient, while 85.4 percent are proficient in PPS.

The CPI percentages also reveal that though not even half of the ninth graders in KPS went on to graduate in 2007, in contrast to 85.7 percent of PPS’s ninth graders. It takes more than just a scholarship to be successful in college, and with such extreme disparity in educational outcome measures, it is no wonder why many Portage residents decide to stay put in spite of the Promise.

For many years, researchers have found that the characteristics of the families and communities that children happen to be born into are strongly related to educational outcomes (Coleman et al., 1966; Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, & Aber, 1997; Lloyd, Tienda, &
Table 8

School Characteristics, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Kalamazoo Public Schools</th>
<th>Portage Public Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment</td>
<td>11,684</td>
<td>8,889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority enrollment (%)</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically disadvantaged (%)</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>20.0(\textsuperscript{a})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading proficiency (%)</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>90.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math proficiency (%)</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>85.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI (%)</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>85.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(\textsuperscript{a}\) Data provided by Portage Public Schools

SOURCE: Standard & Poor’s School Data Direct, Editorial Projects in Education.

Zajacova, 2002). In particular, low socioeconomic status, as defined by parental education and income, are inversely related to academic achievement variables.

Educational outcomes are most problematic for students living in communities and attending schools where poverty is highly concentrated. This holds true for Kalamazoo, and these are the children who could benefit from the Promise the most.

Recent estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau\(\textsuperscript{19}\) reveal that 36 percent of all children under 18 residing within the boundaries of KPS\(\textsuperscript{20}\) were living in poverty. The child poverty rate in the city of Kalamazoo was even higher at 41 percent. These extremely high rates of poverty for children living within the school district boundaries

\(\textsuperscript{19}\) Poverty figures are estimates produced by the U.S. Census Bureau from the 2006 American Community Survey. Although these estimates have a sizable margin of error, it is clear from these and corroborating data that child poverty rates in Kalamazoo are among the highest in the nation. For example, 60 percent of KPS students are eligible for free or reduced cost lunches – nearly double the figure for all Michigan students (32%). To compare Kalamazoo with other districts on this frequently used measure of poverty, see The Graduation Project, 2007. \textit{Editorial Projects in Education}. Bethesda, MD. \texttt{http://mapsg.edweek.org/edweekv2/default.jsp}

\(\textsuperscript{20}\) The boundaries of the Kalamazoo Public School District extend beyond the city of Kalamazoo. A total of 19,668 (2008) children live within the boundaries of KPS, 45 percent more than within the city of Kalamazoo.
and in the city place Kalamazoo on a par with a group of cities with the highest poverty rates in the country (See Figure 4).

![Figure 4. Children Under 18 Years of Age in Poverty](source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006)

More than half (51%) of the black children within the district were in poverty in 2006. While current data are not available for Latino children, 58 percent were in poverty in 2000. The poverty rate for white children (22%), although much lower than for blacks and Latinos, is still significantly above the national and state average rates (both 18%).

African Americans and Academic Preparedness

“The thing about the Promise, just like with football, they have to be prepared to receive it. Like when the quarterback throws that ball, and you’re the wide receiver, if your hands are down to the side you’re not, you’re not gonna catch it, you’re not gonna make the touchdown. So basically, the way to get ready is to do all of those tedious, those tiring things to get to that level of responsibility, so when that ball does come you’re ready to receive it and you can run with it.” (Parent Interviewee)

Generally speaking, people decide whether or not to pursue academic skills and credentials based upon two main factors - cost and their degree of academic preparedness. Thanks to the Promise cost is no longer a factor, thus students, the schools, and the community can now solely focus on academic preparedness.
Advanced Placement (AP) courses are generally acknowledged as some of the most challenging (and valuable) courses available. Plus, they offer students the opportunity to strengthen their academic record in preparation for college admission as well as earn low or no cost college credits (Furry & Hecsh, 2001). Colleges and universities often consider the rigor of a student’s high school curriculum, including the number of AP courses taken, in making admissions decisions. Also, they represent more opportunities for high achieving minority students to bond with fellow high achievers, enriching the caliber of their peer group and positive peer pressures. Datnow and Cooper (1998) found that African American students at elite independent schools created Black peer groups where it was “cool” to be smart, allowing them to develop ethnic and academic identities in complimentary ways.

Table 9 shows some of the improvements that have taken place in cultivating academic preparedness in the district from 2007 to 2011. Not only has there been a substantial rise in the numbers of minority and economically disadvantaged youth taking AP classes, the proportion they represent in these courses is growing as well. Current trends also show rises in teachers’ AP encouragement, the number of new AP courses added (e.g., Spanish, Art History, U.S. Government, and U.S. Government and Politics), the number of AP sections being offered, AP professional development, and AP weighted grades²¹.

Table 9

*Advanced Placement Courses Increase Levels of Academic Preparedness*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2007/08</th>
<th>2008/09</th>
<th>2009/10</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>4-Year Change:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students in AP</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>+130%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of AP Courses Taken</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>983</td>
<td>+174%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number and % of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>+311%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Taking AP Courses</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>+78.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number and % of African</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>+298%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Students Taking AP</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>20.15%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>+73.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number and % of Hispanic</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>+750%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Taking AP Courses</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>+269.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Such changes in behavior are staggering in regards to academic preparation and future goals. A 130 percent increase in the amount of students taking AP courses! Four times as many African American students taking these courses! A 311 percent increase in the amount of economically disadvantaged children enrolling and comprising 36.6 percent of the AP enrollment! All within a four year period!
Critical Pedagogy

The oppressed suffer from the duality which has established itself in their innermost being. They discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. Yet, although they desire authentic existence, they fear it. They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized. (Freire, 1970, p. 30), (author’s emphasis)

Any attempt at interpretation of African American perspectives concerning schooling must begin with a critical assessment of the schools themselves. The term “critical pedagogy” has undergone many transformations. Traditionally, it refers to educational theory, teaching, or methods that are designed to raise critical consciousness regarding oppressive social conditions (Stevens, 2002).Critical consciousness, in turn, refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality (Freire, 1970). Critical pedagogy, therefore, provides us with a perspective and a language for identifying the schools’ role in perpetuating oppressive social conditions.

Bourdieu (1977) describes the way dominant groups impose their meanings on others through schooling.

In a society in which the obtaining of social privileges depends more and more closely on possession of academic credentials, the school does not only have the function of ensuring discreet succession to a bourgeois state which can no longer be transmitted directly and openly. This privileged instrument of the bourgeois sociodicy which confers on the privileged the supreme privilege of not seeing themselves as privileged manages the more easily to convince disinherit that they owe their scholastic and social destiny to their lack of gifts of merits, because in matters of culture absolute dispossession excludes awareness of being dispossessed (Bourdieu, 1977).

Giroux (1983) argues that the traditional sociology of education has ignored the latent effects of schooling that shape the “deep grammar of the existing social order” (p. 3), which perpetuates its own view of the world as if it is only natural. As Giddens
conceptualizes it, “ideology refers to the ideological, this being understood in terms of the capability of dominant groups or classes to make their own sectional interests appear to others as universal ones” (Giddens, 1979, p.6). Michael Apple argues, “There is a complicated politics… in which dominant groups are attempting to redefine what we actually mean by democracy, equality, and the common good” (Apple, 1997, p.1).

According to Giroux:

Schools, in these perspectives, are seen merely as instructional sites. That they are also cultural and political sites is ignored, as is the notion that they represent arenas of contestation and struggle among differentially empowered cultural and economic groups (Giroux, 1983).

The concept of the “hidden curriculum,” (which is often not so hidden) has received a variety of definitions and analyses. However, one common thread that runs through them all defines the hidden curriculum as “those unstated norms, values, and beliefs embedded in and transmitted to students through the underlying rules that structure the routines and social relationships in school and classroom life” (Giroux, 1983, p.47). It refers to the subtle forms of domination and social control that teach people how to be “in their place.” Traditional education functions to provide different forms of schooling to different classes of students.

How is it that people actually choose to fulfill the stereotypical roles as they are prescribed? Freire (1970) is perhaps the most profound theorist of this era for his ability to explain this complex phenomenon in plain terms. Ideas concerning self-fulfilling prophecies aren’t anything new. However, Freire explains why they work. In his view, the only alternative to internalizing prescribed roles is the novel idea that you are actually responsible for your own actions. Attributing problems to circumstance and/or one’s
environment causes a lot less anxiety than blaming one’s self. Because of contradicting realities that African Americans have faced historically, adversarial sentiments are commonly expressed about the entire schooling process.

Gramsci’s concept of hegemony came from his realization that the elite minority of the world had shifted away from using brute force to control the masses to a more subtle form – teaching the masses that those in power deserved to be in power. Moreover, those who are oppressed deserve to be oppressed. In other words, the dispossessed somehow internalize their oppression. The Kalamazoo Promise is what Gramsci would consider to be counter hegemony because it addresses both structural and ideological change. Though the concept of hegemony is far too complex to deal with in detail, one tenet is useful: How do we participate in our own oppression?

The work of Mickelson (1990) argues that individuals have at least two attitudes toward education – abstract and concrete: the shared pervasive value system that is grounded in the hegemonic ideology of the dominant group (abstract), and the subordinate value system based on the exigencies of day-to-day living (concrete).

Abstract attitudes reflect the societal consensus about the role of education as a bridge to adult roles; concrete attitudes exist because on another level there is social conflict over the value of education for people from minority and working-class backgrounds (Mickelson, 1990).

Freire (1970) talks about how in the initial stages of liberation, instead of thinking, “how can I liberate myself from this oppressor,” individuals somehow identify with the oppressors, and in fact tend to use oppressive power as their measuring stick of adulthood. Power is something that is irresistible. People can not help but notice and admire the ability of someone to control the social structure or the ability to get things
done. The oppressor has become their model of success (“to be is to be like”). Freire teaches that the first thing that the oppressed must do is expel the oppressor that is inside of them.

One would think that oppressed peoples would remember how it made them feel and would be the last ones to take on the oppressors’ ways. Yet, it appears that the reality is that people who have formerly been oppressed often end up being more oppressive or sub-oppressive than the original oppressor/s. Plain and simple – hurt people, hurt people.

Kozol’s *Shame of the Nation* (2006) made it clear that even elementary children can perceive when they are being treated like objects being thrown off into the back of a garage, for they can not help but notice the stark differences certain children receive in their schooling. Motivational theory helps in understanding that many children (albeit maladaptive) resist such overwhelming injustice in the only ways they know how.

**Motivational Theory**

Statistics show that many students, and in particular a disproportionate number of African-American students, are not succeeding in American schools today (Haynes & Comer, 1990; Knapp, Shields, & Turnbull, 1992). The works of Covington (1984, 1992) and others offer motivational explanations. By removing the dead end sign which many students equate with reaching the age of 18, the Promise also removes what many scholars in the field of motivation refer to as “negative motivation”. The financial realities that (pre-Promise) made collegiate aspirations seem like they were for other kids, are now only imaginary. Still, negative motivation also includes student indifference and a lack of preparedness which are often motivated behaviors, that is, active attempts to
salvage a sense of worth when the likelihood of failure is overwhelming (Brophy, 1983; Covington, 1984, 1992; Dweck & Pempechat, 1983; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1984; Stipek, 1984).

Advocates of motivational theory suggest a self-appraised hierarchy, in which students rank concepts such as ability above other concepts such as effort. In this view, self-worth and ability are based upon things that are structural, perceived as a given, and as something beyond our control – such as genetics, the social economic status of our parents, or the Promise.

Many young people are already motivated, but their motivation is maladaptive, based on the need to protect their academic self-worth rather than on an interest in learning. Students know, through generations of experience, that scholarships based on merit or need are not likely to accommodate everyone’s dreams. By removing the pervasive barrier of finances, the Promise has also removed a negative and powerless association with collegiate aspirations. Therefore, it has directly invested into students’ academic self-worth, and therefore, their motivation.

Ogbu’s oppositional culture theory (1990) says that involuntary minorities (those brought to this country not by choice but through slavery or conquest) have developed survival strategies, some that facilitate academic success, and others that obstruct it. These strategies include: collective struggle, hustling, emulation of Whites, and camouflage, or adopting what is called pejoratively an “Uncle Tom” attitude. He writes:

Since the disadvantages faced by immigrant minorities [those who came here by choice] can be rationalized as products of their immigrant status, immigrants can imagine overcoming them with hard work and more education: tenants of White middle-class folk theory. Meanwhile, involuntary minorities try to show with their actions that they come to school with distinctive cultural and language patterns. In
the school environment they will often defend their attitudes and behaviors, even if the consequence is academic failure (Ogbu, 1990).

According to the self-worth theory of achievement motivation (Covington & Beery, 1976; Covington & Berry, 1976; Covington, 1984, 1992, 1997), the critical factor in determining student attitudes and behavior is a sense of self-worth. In turn, the key to self-worth is students’ perceptions of their own ability, especially in comparison to others.

In a hierarchy of self-worth criteria, students would list ability first, followed by performance and effort. Before the Promise the parents of many students didn’t have the ability to pay for college. Now, children go through school with the knowledge that they have exactly the same financial ability for post-secondary education as their classmates. So, in this one concrete area, peers are just peers; and students are not forced to face – day in and day out – the collegiate aspirations of some of their peers, or that it might be construed to mean that their peers are somehow superior to them.

Berry (1975) explained the theory as the equating of ability with worth, and claimed that this is what lies at the heart of self-worth dynamics. Students learn to avoid shame and humiliation due to failure by choosing not to try. This is a matter of saving face, where a sense of pride takes precedent over possible, yet unlikely, accomplishment through effort. The problem with this strategy is that teachers expect students to at least try and will often punish them if they do not.

This is the “double-edged sword” of the theory (Covington & Omelich, 1979). In order to protect their sense of worth, students may avoid the likelihood of failure at going to and through college by not working towards it. However, by not trying to achieve
academic success, the students risk criticism and other possible consequences imposed on them by their teachers and by their family.

Because the Promise has changed the ability landscape to reduce the likelihood that students will develop a failure orientation, many students now have the ability to attend college. Some of them are even the first members of their families to be able to do so. However, according to McCarron (2006), first generation college students also face considerably more obstacles to degree completion. In some cases, attending college can even put students in a tense family situation.

They have a fear that their families will disown them, or they’ll feel alienated, as if they are trying to be better than their other family members…[So] success is a traitor, but failure lets down their family…[And] they’re afraid of looking stupid. They have a lack of confidence. It’s scary to dream because what if you blow it? (McCarron, 2006)

There is, of course, a degree of risk-taking involved. The degree of risk the Promise presents is determined by the emphasis on academic achievement in the individual student’s social structure. With the opportunity to be the first in their family to even go to college, many youth in Kalamazoo daily face degrees of culture shock.

Negative motivation and the protection of academic self-worth relate directly to lower performance in schools. There are some educators who claim that inner-city African American children do poorly in school because of an identity crisis caused by racial discrimination and the consistent use of Euro-centric curricula in American schools (Cummins, 1986; Ogbu & Matute- Bianchi, 1986). According to this way of thinking, both sets of circumstances have disempowered African American children, lowering their sense of academic self-worth and resulting in lower academic achievement (Teel, 1998). This in turn has a cyclical effect because they salvage their identities at home by
identifying with their parent/s, who have only been taught the same things (Collins, 2002).

Intentionally or unintentionally, the hidden curriculum and its outcomes feel the same. The idea is that our schools have merely objectified recognizing and sorting certain talents and abilities as opposed to cultivating or nurturing them. Such tactics and their cyclical consequences dehumanize not only subordinated groups, but they also disillusion others:

When white children are denied the richness of music, literature, lifestyles, values, and perspectives of other ethnic groups, their potential understandings are limited. Additionally, such an approach (intentionally or unintentionally) gives white children a false sense of superiority which may later lead to prejudice and racism. (Boutte, 1999)

Collins (2002) thinks it is important to emphasize the original reasons for schools in the first place – social control, maintaining the status quo. She feels that every teacher must acknowledge the reasons and foundations on which our school system was originally based. Only then, can they begin to understand some of the behaviors that they see in their classrooms.

Schools, for many students, particularly those from the lowest socioeconomic level of society, offer few opportunities for self and social empowerment. For these students, schooling is a place that disconfirms rather than confirms their histories, experiences, and dreams. In part, this alienation is expressed in the high rate of student absenteeism and school violence, and in the refusal of many students to take seriously the academic demands and social practices of schools. (Giroux, 1984, p.189)

Thomas (1980) and others have demonstrated a strong relationship between student attitudes towards school and towards themselves as learners on the one hand, and their achievement motivation and academic success on the other (Anyon, 1981; Brophy, 1987; Covington, 1984; Giroux, 1984; Ogbu & Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Weinstein, 1984).
Children can choose to “shut down” the learning process if they don’t see any value in the effort required or if they are sure they will fail (Atkinsom, 1957, 1964; Brophy, 1987; Covington, 1984, 1992; Weiner, 1972)

Before the Promise, dreams of going to college for many Kalamazoo residents were just that – dreams. Children grow up knowing that they are pretty powerless when it comes to resources, and it is a matter of the circumstances they were born into. After the Promise, it is merely a matter of getting accepted and the entire realm of choices throughout the state is available. This means that the locus of control is much more internal – “It’s all on us now”22.

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22 From the student interviews
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Conceptual Framework

Throughout this study, it is assumed that the Kalamazoo Promise has changed the social structure to some extent. Nevertheless, based on the amount of time spent in KPS and the amount of payout that the students require for their post-secondary institution’s tuition and fees, there is variation. As with many other things, the Promise is what you make of it. As indicated earlier, structural changes made by the Promise appear to be counter-hegemonic. Figure 5 illustrates the logic of its impact. The question is whether an accurate understanding of the Promise impacts on either/both student and parent aspirations, and ultimately participation in post-secondary education.

Figure 5. Conceptual Framework
The independent variable is the degree of understanding that students and/or parents have regarding the Promise. Thus, the hypothesized relationships are that the degree of understanding of the Promise has a positive relationship with an increase in the educational aspirations of the students and the parents. It is, of course, the implicit assumption of the Promise that increases in educational aspirations will have a positive relationship with participation. However, since participation means utilization of the Promise in any form, evaluation of the links between student and parent aspirations and participation are beyond the scope of this project, and will require a longer term analysis than is possible at this point.

Deeper probing into the concept of aspirations suggests that understanding of the Promise involves more than just exposure to knowledge and/or information. If, for whatever reason, a student or parent does not identify with the Promise (meaning they do not perceive it as being “for them”) then exposure to knowledge does not necessarily lead to understanding, nor will it positively impact their aspirations.

Ideally, students accept the premise of the American Dream that education is a vehicle towards success and upward mobility. This belief is shared by many Americans and does not vary much at what Mickelson (1990) calls the *abstract* level of aspirations. However, she writes that, “Abstract attitudes, therefore, cannot predict achievement behavior.” (p. 2) Simultaneously, all students embody a *concrete* level of aspirations, “which reflect the diverse empirical realities that people experience with respect to returns on education from the opportunity structure.” (p. 2).

Thus, the opportunity structure shapes concrete attitudes. The research plan was designed to extract and assess the concrete attitudes of the African American participants.
sampled. Questions #26-33 (below) are a series of questions designed to stimulate critical thinking as the students are moved from thinking about the abstract to the concrete:

Have you given much thought to what you would like to do as a career? If so, what are your plans? If not, why?

Tell me what you would like your life to be like when you are older, say 30-35 years old. What would you like to be doing with your days when you are this age? Please be as descriptive as you can.

Thinking about the lifestyle you just described, can you tell me what needs to happen before then so that you can live out your plan?

Who are the key players to you reaching this lifestyle? What role does each play in getting you to where you want to be as an adult?

What sort of grades do you earn at school?

In which classes do you typically earn the highest grades? The lowest grades?

Have you chosen to take college prep courses? How about Advanced Placement courses? Why or why not?

If you plan to attend college, can you tell me how you are preparing?

(see Appendix A – Student Interview Protocol)

The concept of aspirations is understood to be constructed in, and influenced by local contexts (Miron, Jones, and Young, 2009). Since the Promise is likely to affect the landscape within which youth and parents identify goals, and invest themselves in practical activities to meet their identified objectives, their aspirations exist in a dual context, one before the Promise and one after. By the same token, aspirations involve two other related concepts: “inspiration”, related to identifying short-term and long-term goals; and “ambition” in the form of volitional strategies to maintain momentum towards these goals (Plucker & Quaglia, 1998; Schallert, Reed, & Turner, 2004).
This link between inspiration, which is abstract in nature, and ambition, which is more concrete, is where the critical gaze for this study focuses. Summarized in another way, knowledge about the Promise is only half the battle. Inspiration represents aspiration in seed form. The Kalamazoo Promise has enriched the soil, the cultivating is still necessary for fruitful ambition. Student aspirations, therefore, involve both identifying short-term and long-term goals in the form of well-defined strategies to maintain momentum towards these goals (Tornquist, Gallegos, & Miron, 2010). Thus, inspiration refers to academic emotions, such as excitement, satisfaction, and enjoyment, while ambition is connected to more empirical goals (such as taking AP classes, maintaining a high GPA, and/or ACT preparation) (Plucker, 1996).

This project was designed to use an interactive form of the interviewing method. Although there was an interview protocol that structured the interviews and a research agenda, the spirit of dialogue was invoked throughout the data collection process. In this case, tenets of dialogue include a mutual give and take of information to better understand different perspectives, allowing a common ground of meaning to form without predetermination, trust in the participants’ intelligence, exploring thinking and learning collectively, investigating assumptions and beliefs behind positions, and most importantly – facilitating this all in a non-judgmental atmosphere.

Field notes and the recording of experiences in the field were essential to this framework. Of the participants in the interviews, all but one reported that they or their children planned to use the Promise, at least as a backup plan. However, during the recruiting process (for the parents in particular) it was revealed that many of their understandings of the Promise may have been sketchy at best, yet they would ultimately
decline to participate. For reasons to be discussed further, the interviews with the parents were more likely to reflect this position than those with the students. The reality check of some mindsets throughout the African American community was disheartening and raised the question that perhaps these attitudes could limit the participation in the vision of the Promise by some of those who stand to benefit from it the most.

Research Questions

“Participants” below refer specifically to Promise-eligible African American middle and high school students, and parents of Promise-eligible African American students.

1.) To what degree do the participants understand the Kalamazoo Promise?
   a. Do they value it?
   b. Do they trust/believe in it?

2.) What misinformation obscures understanding by the participants?

3.) Has the Kalamazoo Promise impacted the participants’ concrete aspirations concerning academic achievement?

4.) Has the Kalamazoo Promise impacted the participants?
   a. How, if at all, has it impacted their social capital?
   b. How, if at all, has it impacted their cultural capital?
   c. How, if at all, has it impacted their human capital?
   d. How, if at all, has it impacted their economic capital?

5.) Why do some African American (Promise-eligible) young people choose not to participate in the Kalamazoo Promise?

Concepts and Variables

It must be understood that when racial/ethnic terminology is used, we are dealing with social constructs. Scientifically speaking, there is no such thing as an “African American,” a “black” or “white” person, or a “Latina/o”. There exists too much biological variation among these categories, and culturally that variance would be
multiplied many times over. Socially and politically speaking, however, it is another story. All of these concepts have been socially constructed and thereby carry meanings that both historically and currently have real consequences. For this reason, the aforementioned terms are applied throughout this dissertation without the tedious usage of quotation marks.

As the interview protocol shows (see Appendix A and B), it was not part of the procedure to ask the participants to self-identify their ethnicity. Nevertheless, during the course of interviews it was sometimes revealed that a participant was of mixed ancestry. This was most common in the interviews with students, and in all of those instances they self identified themselves as African American. This did produce some complexity, however, for certain parents. For example, one Latina mother of a self identifying African American young man stated, “What happens in the African American community affects me too.”

It is also worth noting that the concept of “an African American community” is an over generalization and therefore not accurate. African Americans are not a single monolithic group, and do not all think or live alike. However, the term is used to represent the shared social and political realities that African Americans in Kalamazoo have and do experience.

Factors relating to the understanding of the Promise include: 1) the amount of time passed since the announcement of the Promise; 2) whether or not the participant knows any recipients of Promise dollars (i.e., their proximity to recipients); 3) parents’ educational attainment; 4) the amount of parental involvement in school/community

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23 Noted during recruitment efforts in the field.
environments; and 5) the proximity of students to their graduation date. Therefore, the conceptual framework for this project attributes each of these five factors as contributors to the concept of understanding the Promise.

Ethnicity and socio-economic status are certainly important considerations in the development of educational aspirations. In a society that has experienced historical racism and classism, students of color and students of lower socioeconomic status almost certainly will receive different messages about what their futures may hold. For example, students of color may be inclined to respond to institutional racism by viewing academic success as out of their reach or by associating academic success with “acting white” (Pizzolato, 2006; Ogbu, 1992). Aronowitz (2008) reminds us that all youth are subjected to anti-intellectual social pressures, yet this self-oppression is intensified in certain subcultures (Morgan & Mehta, 2004; Ogbu, 2003; Freire, 1970). Similarly, disadvantaged neighborhood contexts can negatively affect college aspirations among minority youth (Stewart, Stewart, & Simons, 2007). Miron, Jones, and Young, (2009) found that student aspirations had the strongest correlation with students’ perceptions of teacher expectations. This is why differences between student and parent perceptions of teacher expectations are explored.

Participation is simply understood as use of the Promise. This ranges from using it as a motivator, as many parents in this study indicated; or even using it as a safety net, if student aspirations for other scholarships or out of state school plans go awry. Actually utilizing Promise dollars towards attending post-secondary education is of course the strongest indicator.

The concept of capital is used interchangeably here with power – the means to
access resources that influence the social structure. To be able to change the social structure is to be able to change the very way that people think. Therefore, this project accesses the ability of the Kalamazoo Promise to change the way African American students and families think about academic achievement.

Capital is also assessed here in its various forms: social, cultural, human, and economic. Social capital is the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures (Portes, 1998). Cultural capital is the habitus of cultural practices, knowledge, and demeanors learned through exposure to role models in the family and other environments (Bourdieu, 1979). Human capital can be defined as “the stock of skills that people are endowed with or acquire through investment in training and education, and which renders them more productive in their work” (Johnes, 2006, p. 4). Finally, economic capital is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights (Bourdieu, 1986).

The Data

The data collected reflect the perceptions and aspirations of a small sample (N=68) of African American students and parents via face-to-face, one-on-one interviews. The bulk of the interviews analyzed and discussed in this project were collected under a grant from the United States Department of Education to Western Michigan’s College of Education (principally led by Dr. Gary Miron) in an ongoing evaluation of the Promise. Miron and a team of researchers have published a series of working papers evaluating the effectiveness of the Kalamazoo Promise. This data set was
one of the first evaluative researches related to the Promise, done explicitly on the African American community of Kalamazoo. Later, an additional round of data collection was performed. It was targeted at increasing the number of parents and students interviewed from the same household. Ultimately, the sample contains 35 interviews with students and 33 interviews with parents.

The interviews averaged 25 minutes long for students and nearly 38 minutes for the parents. The data collection process began in July of 2009 and was completed in May of 2011. Securing the interviews for the students was relatively easy. Visits to local community organizations produced the bulk of the student participants. The Boys and Girls Club of Kalamazoo (both locations), The New Genesis Learning Center, the local Youth Opportunities Unlimited, and the Douglass Center were the primary locations for these interviews.

Finding parents to interview was another story. The plan started off by word of mouth, and then snowball techniques were utilized by asking participants to recommend other possible participants. The Northside Neighborhood Association helped secure a handful of interviews. Ultimately, the door-to-door method was applied, in neighborhoods with historically high concentrations of black families. Several faculty and staff members at Western Michigan University also participated.

The Department of Education provided a budget for incentives and additional donations were secured for most of the data set. Initially, for the students, incentives included pizza and pop or free frosty coupons (donated from Wendy’s) and/or Western Michigan T-shirts. The parents initially were offered some of the free frosty coupons and a chance to enter a drawing for a 15 piece platter donated from Jimmy John’s. However,
upon resorting to the door-to-door method it was decided that our incentive should be a bit more tangible. Therefore, 5 dollar credit cards from Wendy’s were added. One 5 dollar card was offered to the students and two of them to the parents. The parents were also offered a chance for an additional 5 dollar card if they could point us in the direction of someone else eligible to interview. The final 6 interviews were performed without any such incentives.

About the Participants—Students

The student participants for this study include African American middle school students, high school students, or current recipients (in college) of the Promise. The charts below reflect some of the social and demographic characteristics of the students that participated.

Figure 6 presents the sex distribution for the student participants. Slightly more females participated than males. Figure 7 (representing the sex distribution in KPS in the 2009-2010 school year) shows how closely the sample reflects the actual sex distribution of the African American population in KPS’s middle and high schools.

Figure 8 shows that 74 percent of the students that participated in this study qualified for free or reduced lunch. According to Miron and Cullen (2008), during the 2007-2008 school year, the free and reduced lunch rate for the district was 64.9 percent. Data on the African American students who qualify for free and reduced lunch rate were not provided, but the sample does appear to be generally reflective of the population with respect to this economic status indicator.
Figure 6. Sex Distribution of the Student Participants.

Figure 7. Sex Distribution of African American Students in KPS Middle and High Schools.
Figure 8. Free or Reduced Lunch Distribution of the Student Participants.

Figure 9 displays the ages of the students at the time of their participation. With a range from 12-21, the data set holds a diversity of useful perspectives. It also includes a number from each of the three groups of students – middle school, high school, and current recipients.

Figure 9. Age Distribution of the Student Participants.
Figure 10 indicates that 69 percent of the students reported that at least one of their parents had some college experience. It is interesting that almost half of the students reported that both parents attended college. When only one parent attended, the students most often reported it was their mother.

Figure 11 reveals that 18 of the 35 student participants last attended Kalamazoo Central High School (K.C.), 2 were from Loy Norrix High School, and 1 was from Phoenix (the alternative high school). A total of 9 participants were last in middle school (Milwood, Hillside or Maple); and 4 are current recipients of the Promise (in college). There was also 1 middle school student participant who had last attended a school out of state.

![Pie chart showing parents' college attendance](data:image/png;base64,iVBORw0KGgoAAAANSUhEUgAAAkAAAAHqCAYAAAAJ0w1zAAAAAXNSR0IArs4c6QAAAARnQZGRcAAAAGSeRbWVgilc2mDAAAAA3RSTlMAAA Coalition 9a.png)  

*Figure 10. Student Reports of Parents that Attended College.*
Figure 11. What School Did You Attend Last Year?

About the Participants—Parents

The sample of parents includes 33 people who are a parent of at least one African American youth that qualifies for the Kalamazoo Promise. Figure 12 shows the sex distribution of the parents that participated in the interviews. It is noteworthy that there were somewhat more males (58%) than females (42%) that participated, and will be discussed later.

Figure 12. Sex Distribution of the Parent Participants.
Figure 13 shows that 67 percent of the participating parents report that their students receive free or reduced lunch. As noted above, the official percentage for Kalamazoo Public Schools was 64.9 percent during the 2007-08 school year (Miron & Cullen, 2008). Although most of the parents and students were not from the same families, here again, the sample of parents appears to be generally reflective of the district.

![Do your children qualify for free or reduced lunch?](image)

*Figure 13. Distribution of Parent Participants Whose Children Receive Free or Reduced Lunch at School.*

A total of 26 of the 33 parents indicated they had graduated from high school (See Figure 14). All except one also indicated they at least attended some college (3 are still going to college). Figure 15 shows that 10 of the parents in the sample (30%) indicated they have graduated from college. This also included a handful that had earned advanced degrees.

Both 14 and 15 reflect the already higher than usual educational attainment of the Kalamazoo area. The Census Bureau reports a 88.2 % high school graduation or higher
rate, and 32.6% bachelor’s degree or higher\textsuperscript{24}. In the future (thanks to the Promise), the proportion of students with parents attending college will undoubtedly go up, particularly since KPS’s website\textsuperscript{25} now boasts that 94 percent of its graduates further their education.

\textit{Figure 14.} High School Graduate Distribution of the Parent Participants.

\textit{Figure 15.} College Graduate Distribution of the Parent Participants.

\textsuperscript{24}http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk

\textsuperscript{25}http://www.kalamazoopublicschools.com/overview-and-demographics (Nov. 8, 2011)
The sizes of the families reported on in this study were surprising. Though the students were not explicitly asked, during the course of the interviews, students would frequently disclose the number of siblings in their family. The parents were specifically asked: *How many Promise eligible children do you have?* The average was 2.94. However, because of the way the question was framed, the data collected was limited to Promise eligible children, thus the real family sizes are actually higher. Parents would often mention older children that were pre-Promise, but this seemed to make them more appreciative since they had recent experience at raising youth without the Promise.

Quantitative Data

Though the bulk of the interview protocol was designed to collect qualitative data, several closed response items were included. First, both the students and the parents were asked a series of questions designed to elicit value judgments (See Appendix A and B; questions #9-12 for the students, questions #7-11 for the parents). In each instance, the participants were presented with a statement and asked to respond using the following categories: (1) Not at all, (2) A little bit, (3) Average, (4) Quite a lot, and (5) A great deal! Second, two other sets of questions (See the Appendix A and B; questions #18-25 for the students and #15-22 for the parents) were designed to determine if the participants recalled any changes since the announcement of the Kalamazoo Promise. This scale ranged from -2 (indicating degree of decline) to +2 (indicating degree of improvement), with a 0 point in the middle (indicating no change). Other quantitative information included age and grade, for the students; any siblings (for the students); and the number of children enrolled in KPS (for the parents).
Qualitative Data

The majority of the interview protocol contains questions designed to produce narrative responses. Only a limited number of questions were closed response in nature, and even in those situations participants were prompted into sharing more complete narratives regarding their perspectives. With the open-ended nature of most of the questions, it was therefore anticipated that there would be a wide range of responses. Nevertheless, it was also anticipated that patterns would emerge. Key words and phrases were tallied and outlier responses were highlighted where applicable. Also, during the course of some of the later interviews, there were instances when a participant was asked to respond to data collected from prior interviews in an effort to delve deeper into a subject.
CHAPTER 4

LIMITATIONS TO THE DATA

This project was carried out without the assistance of the Kalamazoo Public Schools. Consequently, the interviews with students and parents were clearly convenience samples, collected without the benefit of lists of names, of either current or past students. Moreover, there was no access to any outcome variables, or any way to verify any of the interview data collected. There also is not a direct connection between most of the students and the parents interviewed. The 35 student interviews and 33 parent interviews include only 6 cases where both a student and a parent/guardian from the same family participated. Also, since this data set is one of the first of interviews with members of the African American community, baseline data (i.e., before the Promise) did not exist until now. These conditions all create limitations to the data, and as a result, limitations to the conclusions that may be drawn from them.

There was no attempt to select African American students or parents who were not enrolled in KPS. However, the percentages of African American children from Kalamazoo enrolled in private and charter schools are relatively small. Expanding the samples to all local African Americans would perhaps extend the scope of this research, particularly the issue of why someone would choose not to participate in the Promise. Nevertheless, that must wait for future research.
The timing of the project is a limitation of this study. To access the impact of the Promise only four to six years into its operation is not giving the Promise it’s just due. In addition, because the data could not be verified by another source, the recollections of the participants regarding changes over time must be taken at face value. Nevertheless, the opportunity for the participants to express themselves and provide feedback for the stakeholders should still prove useful, both to them and to any of the stakeholders in projects modeled after the Kalamazoo Promise.

Another possible limitation is related to the nature of the data collection procedure. As noted above, the samples were non-random, convenience samples. Therefore, merely agreeing to participate in this study could be construed as an indicator that the students and parents already, to some degree, value the Promise. Finally, because both the student and parent data sets consist of very small samples, no generalization to the larger African American community in Kalamazoo is, of course, possible or intended.

Non-representative Data Set

Leary’s (2005) *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* gives a concise summary of the Tuskegee Experiments, the history of the field of gynecology, American legislation that justified oppression, and police brutality (to name but a few). Leary sites such traumatic historical events because it is clear and perhaps justifiably so, that conducting research in African American communities is extremely rigorous. The review of literature (Chapter 2) gave hints as to why it is so difficult to collect such data and identified a subculture that associates academic achievement with the pejorative sentiment of “acting white”.

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This group’s historically abused trust systems have left some suspect of the whiteness\textsuperscript{27} that permeates their lives. Establishing rapport, even for the best trained of field researchers, can be daunting. Even middle school student participants could ponder that the anonymous donors for the Promise must be white. Likewise, just because an African American was conducting the research in their neighborhoods, the researcher was perceived, to some, as an outsider and/or merely a proxy for “white” interests. Still, this project is in agreement with the American Sociological Association’s (2003) stance that, when taken in context, such research is indeed highly valuable and essential to challenging the status quo.

Warren (1988), Morgan (1981), and Mckeganey (1991) have all reported on the cross-cutting influences of the researcher. All of these reports bear witness, implicitly or explicitly, “to the hermeneutic proposition that all sociological understanding is accomplished from within a particular frame of reference, tradition or culture” (Mckeganey, 1991, p. 195). That is to say, all of the characteristics of the researcher (age, race, social class, gender, educational attainment, that the researcher already knew some of the participants while others were strangers) can either positively or negatively influence the researcher’s rapport, the interviews, and thus the data set. The researcher’s characteristics may have influence from the time the topic is chosen, to the data collection process, and all the way up through to the findings and conclusions.

As far is sex is concerned, the student sample (as Figures 6 and 7 illustrate) is indeed broadly representative of the African American sex distribution in KPS middle and high schools. However, the parent sample has an over-representation of males (14

\textsuperscript{27} See Roediger (1999) for a thorough definition of this concept.
females/19 males). As sex roles dictate (Benokraitis, 2012), data containing male parent perspectives are harder to come by while females are traditionally the ones that interact most often with school officials. Females are also more likely to be the heads in single parent households. This could potentially influence some of the results. For example, if the lady of the house interacts more with the teachers, then she perhaps would be in a better position to notice change concerning teacher expectations.

As the Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI) statistics reported earlier, KPS has struggled for the past decade to graduate half of its’ incoming freshman. Ready (2008) found that “the number of black graduates was only 40 percent of black ninth graders” (p. 4). Yet, all 35 students that participated in the interviews indicated that they planned to utilize the Promise. That, of course, meant that they had to graduate.

Out of the parent sample, only 1 of the 33 indicated that a child of theirs had dropped out, and only 7 indicated that they themselves did. 79 percent of the parents in this sample indicated that they had at least graduated from high school. Census 2000 numbers indicate that 72 percent of the African American population (25 years or older) were at least high school graduates (including equivalency). Given the disparity between the participants in the study (both students and parents) and the trends mentioned above, it is clear that the participants were better educated and therefore more likely to understand the Promise than a representative sample would have been.

Efforts were made to have participants from a wide range of socio-economic statuses. For example, 74 percent of the students in the sample reported that they qualified for free or reduced lunch and 67 percent of the parents reported that their children did. Recent reports (Ready, 2011) indicate that the proportion of students in KPS
that receive free or reduced lunch is up to 70 percent, and also that the poverty rates for
Black children in Kalamazoo (74 percent) is the highest in Michigan and places the city
at the 97th percentile for Black children nationwide (American Community Survey, 2010
for cities with populations of 65,000 or more).

Despite the above statistics, the students in the sample were mostly recruited from
after school and summer programs available in the community. This was likely to yield
youth with different mind sets than those that would rather hang out on the streets, or are
more isolated, instead of utilizing such recreational services. Therefore, regardless of
their socio-economic status, it would be reasonable to suggest that the students who were
inclined to participate in community resources and in this study are more inclined to be
aware of and potentially participate in the Promise.

The research here confirms Ogbru’s (2003) findings from his *Black American
Students in an Affluent Suburb: A Study of Academic Disengagement* albeit from the
other end of the spectrum. Both studies affirm that race trumps class. Ogbru’s study
demonstrated that some of the young black people in Shaker Heights, Ohio had a
completely different worldview than their parents. In spite of socio-economic status or
even their parents’ educational attainment, some African American youth appear to have
been deceived by what it means to be black. What he refers to as academic
disengagement is referred to here as anti-intellectualism.

The advocates for critical pedagogy (as discussed in Chapter 2) provide the
missing link, because the stance here is that people are participating in their own
oppression. Motivational theory (also summarized in Chapter 2) completes the story
because this knee-jerk reaction is merely an attempt to protect their self-identity. If
academic engagement is “acting white”, then it only stands to reason that academic disengagement is “acting black”. Rich or poor, there are some African Americans that would appear to have bought into such rhetoric (hook, line, and sinker); the majority of participants in this study have not.

The difficulty in securing the parent interviews for this project was a concern. There were parents that could go on and on about the Promise, and most (who chose to participate) would even be thankful for the dispersion of knowledge that transpired during the interviews. Could the parents that (for whatever reason) declined to participate in the study be the very ones that could benefit from the dialogue the most? Could the variance in the parents’ participation in this study be indicative of the aspirations of the youth under their responsibility? Half of the African American young people in Kalamazoo disqualify themselves from the Promise by not being there at graduation time. This project critically focuses on student and parent aspirations, so the perspectives of those who are not participating in the vision of the Promise are thus important. For these reasons further research along with alternative data collecting methods is highly suggested.
CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

Student Values

The assessment of student values is based in part on questions 9-12 of the Interview Protocol (see Appendix A). Students were first presented with the statement: “I think the Promise is an important opportunity for me.” Figure 16 shows the distribution of their responses. They averaged 4.8 (nearly “A great deal!”), and turned out to be the highest average score of the value scale statements. The lone score of 3 that was received on this statement was from a student who revealed plans to attend a college out of the state.

Figure 16. Responses from Students’ Value Assessments. Question 9.
The students were also asked an open ended question that pertains to this issue:

*Please tell me how you think the Promise pertains to you. In other words, what’s in it for you?*

All of the responses to this question were positive, and the students displayed an appreciation for how the Promise and higher education in general can improve their quality of life. Following are some of their responses:

I get a chance to actually be on my own. I thought I was going to have to live at home and go to KVCC, but now I can live on campus at State.

Getting a job, trying to be a lawyer.

Education, um beyond high school. Actually for me the Promise gives me motivation to go to college, if it wasn’t for it, I would be like I don’t have the money to go to college, and the money that I do have, I don’t want to pay for college.

Well I have been to KPS schools since 2nd grade, so 95% of my tuition is paid for so, that’s like great, that’s going to help me and I plan on getting scholarships on top of that Promise, so I think the Promise is helping.

Me being able to become a scientist or archeologist.

An education, a way… They give me 10 years basically, so I got a cushion. I can take a break if I need to… get my life together or whatever so I can focus on school.

A better job, a better life.

I wanna go to college for about 11 yrs, I want my doctorate, so I got 4yrs paid for… and I won a couple awards too…

I play a lot of sports, so along with the 65% that I get from the Promise, I should be set…

Even the student that scored the 3 on the previous question stated:

Um well, for me, if I don’t get a scholarship out of MI I know I can still go to college and my parents don’t have to worry about what I do.

For the second value statement (see Figure 17), students were presented with the statement "I appreciate what the Promise can do for my family". The average of 4.7,
along with their responses to an open-ended follow up question, indicate that the students in this sample also appreciate what the Promise can do for their current and future families.

![Pie chart showing responses to the question: I appreciate what the Promise can do for my family.](image)

*Figure 17. Responses from Students’ Value Assessments. Question 10.*

The follow-up open ended question asked “And, can you tell me how you think the Promise pertains to your family? What’s in it for your family?” One student’s response was particularly fascinating because she hinted toward how the Promise can improve parents’ emotional and psychological well being:

> It’s a load of stress off my moms mind. Instead of feeling bad, cuz of her situation right now, she knew she wouldn’t be able to put me through, and now she’s really proud of me for taking advantage of the Promise.

The statements that asked participants to gauge values involving the community scored the lowest averages for both the students and parents sampled. Figure 18, for example, displays the students’ perspectives regarding the community and the Promise. More than a fourth rated the Promise as “Average” or “A little bit” of benefit to the
community. They indicated that they were cognizant of individuals throughout the community that (for whatever reason) choose not to answer when opportunity knocks. Still, the average for the statement “I think my community is benefiting (or will benefit) from the Promise” was 4. This indicated that most perceived the Promise as a substantial benefit to the community. A more thorough explanation of why the value assessments concerning the community were consistently perceived as the lowest will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

Figure 18. Responses from Students’ Value Assessments. Question 11.

Figure 19 deals with the students’ perceptions of the degree of support their parent/guardian shows toward their participation in the Promise. While most were quite positive (average = 4.7), note the outlier. The one student here who selected 2 (a little bit) stated, “My mom is like holding (me) back, she wants to keep me in the house…she has issues”. The student in question indicated the cycle breaking possibilities, and (like many
others during this study) was eager to share their potential to be the first in their family to go to and/or through college.

![My parent/guardian supports my use of the Promise](image)

**Figure 19.** Responses from Student’s Value Assessments. Question 12.

The outlier response was from the sole interviewee with direct experience of the notion “…parents that don’t want their kids to be better than them.” This was witnessed particularly among parents who have experienced generations of low levels of education, income, and/or self esteem. This might be labeled as neglect, as these parents demonstrate psychological role reversal (Crosson-Tower, 2010), in which the kids are there to serve the parents (unmet) needs instead of vice-versa.

The oppressive situation this teenager faces is further underscored by a theme from the parent interviews (discussed below) for the fundamental, generational desire for their kids to be better off than they are. This basic need is not being met for the student in

\[^{28}\text{Quoted from the parent interviews}\]
question, yet with the Promise, this cycle too may be broken by this resilient young person.

Parent Values

The parents who participated in this study (N=33) were also asked a series of questions (#7-11 of Parent Interview Protocol – Appendix B) to assess their value judgments. Figure 20 below illustrates the distribution of their responses to the statement, “I think the Promise is an important opportunity for my child(ren)”.

![Figure 20. Responses from Parents’ Value Assessments. Question 7.](image)

The mean score for the statement above was 4.6, reflecting the blessing that many of the parents (and students [mean=4.8]) described the Promise to be. The two scores of “Average” came from parents with children that desire to go to school out of the state and/or already have alternative financial means.

The parents were also asked an open-ended follow up:

*Please tell me how you think the Promise pertains to you and your family. In other words, what’s in it for your children?*
The following were among their responses:

Hopefully, a education number one, but it will help me to try to push even, push my kids even harder to understand that you got this Promise at the end of the road, but I am also pushing them to work hard because if you don’t want to stay here and go to school you can get a scholarship to go wherever you want to go, not to just get the Promise for here but to work hard and get the education where you want to go.

I mean it gives them hope, the fact that they can go to school and not worrying about where money is coming from. I think that was my problem, worrying about what my mom and dad had to pay.

A chance to better there education, go college. Not many families have that chance.

Money, it helps me out a great deal, without the Promise I couldn’t afford to send them to school, so we would be in debt over our heads if it wasn’t for the Promise, and I don’t think my kids really realize that because they don’t know the value of a dollar yet, but I tell them all the time how important it is to appreciate their education and the Promise dollars because a lot of kids don’t get this opportunity, and a lot of students graduate owing thousands of dollars.

I think it’s kind of like insurance. It’s like a motivation and insurance. As long as they are stepping in the right direction as far as school they are insured. It’s insurance for the tools they need to build a bigger and better life as adults. As long as we mold them the right way now and they utilize it later… You can’t predict their future, but as far as financially, educational, that type of stuff. It’s an insurance.

They’re getting an education, whereas I can’t afford to send them all to colleges.

Incentives, I think a stronger administrative school district, high expectations from faculty, administrations, and the students because of the Promise.

As the above comments suggest, the parents value not only what the Promise can do for their children but for their entire families (See Figure 21). This was explored with the following question, “I value the Promise for my family as a whole”. With an average score of 4.3, these parents are in agreement with the students (mean=4.7), in the belief that the Promise can impact their families.
Figure 21. Responses from Parents’ Value Assessments. Question 8.

Figure 22 reveals that even when assessing the topic on which the participants were the most critical (the community), the mean of 4.0 (which is identical to the student average on the parallel item) indicated that the parents perceived that the Promise is benefiting (or will benefit) the community “quite a lot”.

Figure 22. Responses from Parents’ Value Assessments. Question 9.
The sole participant that indicated “not at all” stated:

I think it’s the individuals, not the whole community. I don’t know how it’s helping the whole community. I think it’s helping the ones that wanna go. Regardless of the Promise you still have kids that aren’t educated from the beginning to even understand how to study and do school. I work with juvenile delinquents, so it’s more about the upbringing.

As a follow up, the parents were also asked the open-ended question: *And, can you tell me how you think the Promise pertains to your community? In particular, what’s in it for the African American community?* Their responses are particularly illuminating.

I don’t want to stereotype a group. But a lot of African American people that I know, they don’t go to college or don’t go to school because they don’t have the resources and the money. So now, this is like an opportunity FOR EVERYBODY. Something they didn’t have before. An insurance to go to school. It doesn’t matter where you come from, what you have, what your assets are...you can go to school.

Initially I didn’t believe the Promise was for the African American community, I thought it was more of an economic ploy to lure more businesses to Kalamazoo. I didn’t think it was for us, but I might be wrong, cause I don’t know who the donors are... I am pleased to see now African Americans that are taking advantage of it.

It can be a great benefit if it’s utilized... The few African American males that do go through college end up in business or something, not into education and I wish the Promise could address that. That alone would have a huge impact on this whole area.

If they take advantage of it, they can better educate themselves without debt. You would be surprised by how many parents are against it, but that’s because they aren’t educated themselves. I work in the school system...their inability to be as smart as their kids hurts them. I see a lot of parents holding their kids back because it’s cool to be like this. So they feel it’s a scheme or a scam, they don’t look off into it.

Figure 23 displays the statement that yielded the highest average (4.9) of all the statements that the parents were asked. Fully 29 out of the 33 participants indicated they support their child(ren)’s use of the Promise “a great deal!”. The lone “average” score
was reported by a parent who stated they were not sure if their children wanted to use the Promise. That parent also voiced personal desires for their children to attend a Historically Black College or University.

Another statement presented to the parents that relates to the community was, “I feel the community supports my child(ren)’s use of the Promise” (See Figure 24). The parents’ average about community support of the Promise was 4.0. However, it is apparent there was a lot of variation on this subject. This appears to reflect the wide range awareness and usage of services being provided by the community. This is in a context, mind you, where it has been noted by an evaluation team that no other community has responded with services designed to maximize the Promise like the African American community in Kalamazoo (Miron & Evergreen, 2008).
Finally, Figure 25 below reflects the results of a value statement that was not added to the protocol until late in the data collection process, “I trust/believe in the Promise”. For this reason, data was collected from only fifteen of the parents and four of the students. The mean score for the parents was 4.4, despite the fact that there was an outlier who responded with “not at all”. That parent stated:

I hope they keep to their word, but you know from the looks of things, from the way they snatching from public schools, you know, I hate to say it but I don’t believe it, it’s just a amount of time before that is going to be snatched too”.

Even the few students asked to ponder this question voiced some apprehension based on their knowledge of similar trends and the current state of the economy.

This attitude not only reflects the historically-rooted distrust by some within the African American community that was discussed in the review of literature. It also reflects the current political/social climate in regards to such things as cuts to education and collective bargaining. Still, one of the consequences of endowments such as the
Promise is they make social interventions or social institutions resistant to the ever changing winds of the political/social climate.

Of the 68 participants interviewed, there were 6 pairs of student/parents interviewed that were from the same nuclear family. A pattern emerged that revealed similarities in value judgments between the students and their parents. In all six pairs, the student and the parent scores fluctuated in unison; although there were some differences in degree. For instance, some parents did not use 5’s or 1’s, but they were in concord with their child on which questions they would give their higher and lower scores. They also provided clear confirmation on the two pairs of value statements about each other (I think the Promise is an important opportunity for me; I think the Promise is an important opportunity for my child(ren). And My parent/guardian supports my use of the Promise; I support my child(ren)’s use of the Promise.).
Change Since the Announcement of the Promise

The second group of statements that participants were asked to rate was designed to gauge their perceptions of change since the announcement of the Promise (the 2005-06 school year). Figures 26 and 27 display the mean responses to each statement, for students and then parents. Comparisons of the students’ perceptions with the parents’ perceptions reveal few substantial differences of opinion. With respect to teacher expectations, the students’ mean score indicates that their perception of their teachers’ expectations had improved more than slightly, while the parents essentially notice no change. The fact that the parents are not in the building each day as the students are perhaps accounts for this difference in perception. It is also interesting that an open ended question about teacher expectations revealed a great deal of variation from teacher to teacher in student perceptions of teacher expectations.

Figure 26. Averages of the Student Responses to Change Since the Announcement of the Promise.
The statement designed to assess change in parental involvement was unfortunately problematic, because a response of “no change” could mean that the parents previously were, and continue to be, highly involved in school and homework. Nevertheless, the responses of the students and parents are similar. Although, the parents appear to believe that the quality of school work has not changed as much as the students report, the parents do believe that school attendance has somewhat improved compared to the students. Of the remaining statements, both parents and students have not noticed much change in student behavior. Both groups also agree that the change in student motivation was the highest.

Knowledge of the Kalamazoo Promise

In one of the open-ended items, both the students and the parents were asked:

“In your own words, can you please describe the Kalamazoo Promise?” (Question #8) In general, the range of understanding about the Promise varied from middle school students
who didn’t even know what the Promise was, to astute parents that had researched the Promise since day one. Among the students’ responses, the most often repeated terms were “blessing” and “opportunity.” For the parents “opportunity” was also a key term, but it was frequently accompanied by the qualifier “if they take advantage.”

For example, some student responses to the above question were the following:

[College student] A blessing, I get no financial aid because both my parents make too much money to get any financial aid, but I did get the Promise, I took it to (name of school), even though I got the Promise, it is still very expensive, like I got two scholarships to pay for dorms and book fees, but I still out of pocket pay like $4,000 each semester to go to (name of school), but the Promise helped out a lot because if not I would have paid $26,000 per year.

[Recent high school graduate] A blessing cus I knew I wanted to go to college but I had no idea how.

[Middle school student] It’s something beneficial to people who don’t have the potential to go to college because of financial difficulties this gives you your chance.

[College student] In my own words, the Kalamazoo Promise is a secure future, kind of, if it wasn’t for us getting the Kalamazoo Promise a lot of our brothers and sisters wouldn’t be able to go to school. As of me, I have 7 brothers and sisters, and I know that my dad wouldn’t be able to put all of us through college so thank God we have the Kalamazoo Promise so we can all go to college for free.

[Recent high school graduate] Kalamazoo Promise is something that gave people a chance to go to college who probably would not have because personally I did not think I was going to go to college, I was just going to work for my (family member) for this construction thing but now I can go to college and do something.

[College student] A way for me to get into school, outside of sports… Made it a lot easier, so I can go straight from high school.

[College student] It’s great, it pays tuition, after my first yr in college I'm only 3,000 dollars in debt, I took out a loan for room and board, But compared to some students that don’t have the Promise they already 20,000 dollars in debt.

[High school student] It’s an opportunity for me to go to college for free and pursue my career…dreams.
[Middle school student] It’s pushing me further knowing I can get to college and attend without having to devote study time to working.

[College student] It’s a blessing for people who are not able to come up for college it’s very useful for having for all four years and um, it has really, without this I don’t know if I would be able to go to college, it’s very expensive and it’s helped me out.

[High school student] It’s a blessing to have it, cus not all people can afford to go to college... so I’m just grateful to have it.

[High school student] To help KPS students to have more for themselves than just living off the streets.

[High school student] The Kalamazoo Promise is a scholarship program for kids who may have the smarts for college but not the money.

[Middle school student] It means a lot because you get to go to school for free and a lot of kids don’t have it and they’re going to be up to their neck in school loans and it’s good we get the Promise because a lot of kids don’t have and a lot of kids don’t even get to go to school and I believe it will help more kids graduate. Some kids they’re up to their necks in student loans and have two to three jobs and try to support themselves.

Upon analysis of the complete discussions, most of the misinformation concerning the students was about the source of the Promise and the idea of free schooling. For some reason, the concept of anonymous donors just did not seem to satisfy some of them. In addition, the topic of costs that the Promise does not cover (books, room and board) was also clarified during dialogue with the students.

Though most of the parents’ perceptions of the Promise were positive in nature, it was not all good. For example, in response to the same question posed above, one parent noted:

[The Promise is] A tremendous opportunity given to KPS. I think it also took some of the pressure off of a lot of kids as far as going to college. I also think it lowered the bar because a lot of kids figured they don’t have to work as hard, all they have to do is enough to graduate. Just maintain a C and I can go to college, rather than put up the effort that they are capable of doing.
Some other interpretations of the Promise that parents shared were as follows:

Monies put aside for KPS grads, to cover their tuition.

Helpful, if you take advantage of it. I wish I had it. Some kids don’t use it but most do. So I’m really for it.

A fall back. An opportunity for students who graduate from KPS high school, with a 2.0 or better, to be able to attend any college or university… in the state of Mich. With their tuition paid for.

I think the Kalamazoo Promise is an amazing gift that not enough people take advantage of, it’s a big help for the kids that don’t got money, doing it on their own, it’s a struggle. Some got parents in their life, some don’t. [The] Promise is a great opportunity for those who want to do something. Without it a lot of us would be lost.

An opportunity for the kids to go to college, which is something I never got to experience, so it’s a good thing.

Very beneficial for the kids, we got lots of kids who wouldn’t have another way to go to college without it.

I think it’s a blessing in a way, it helps kids who want to go to school. I think every little bit helps.

An opportunity for a lot of kids that wouldn’t be able to go to college can go, it’s a lot of kids that are intelligent but don’t have the means to go…

I don’t know that much about the Kalamazoo Promise, other than the fact that it was supposed to fund free college tuition to children… But in my mind it meant free college for them. It was a free scholarship prorated by how long the child was in the Kalamazoo Public School.

It gives an opportunity for kids to go to college when they graduate and without having to worry about tuition anything as long as they maintain a certain grade point average. It’s a blessing.

It was clear that the parents also offered a lot of misinformation about the Promise. Discrepancies were noted involving the GPA requirement necessary to graduate from KPS (2.0 at that time) and GPA requirements to maintain good academic standing at the post-secondary institution. Additionally, there were ideas that the program targeted
the poor. There were also misunderstandings about the additional costs that the Promise does not cover, such as books and room and board.

Finally, a few parents seemed to have confused the Kalamazoo Promise with some of the things they had heard on the news about the Michigan Promise\textsuperscript{29} – a state funded, merit based scholarship that apparently was not well named. Because of the nature of the interview process, these misunderstandings were cleared up during the course of the interview.

The fact that the Kalamazoo Promise pays for any post-secondary education at a public institution in the state appeared to be useful information to some of the participants. They frequently commented that they did not know that Promise dollars could be used for vocational aspirations outside of just colleges or universities. Some of the non-college/university programs would be shorter, but the certifications or skills offered could change the life chances for some KPS graduates drastically (Miller-Adams, 2009b). After all, as one parent commented, “college ain’t for everybody”.

\textbf{Anti-intellectualism}

In an effort to extract the impact of cultural forces in which the students are embedded, they were asked questions about their peers, family, teachers, and others. One such question was: \textit{“Out of any of these people we just talked about have you ever sensed...”}

\textsuperscript{29} Though initiated after the Kalamazoo Promise, the Michigan Promise was a merit based scholarship that provided between $500-$4,000 over the course of four years to approximately 96,000 students across the state that has already been reneged on during the 2010 fiscal year – right in the middle of a semester for many of its’ recipients. See \url{http://www.michigandaily.com/content/granholm%E2%80%99s-budget-proposal-aims-reinstate-michigan-promise-scholarship}. 

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that by trying to go to college "you're trying to be better than them" or "acting white"?

Following are some of the students’ responses:

Sometimes, when you come back from school, people you went to school with, people are like "she boogie, she thinks she's better now because she went to school", but I'm not that type of person. That's stuff you really have to blow off. It's mostly peers that didn't go to school or are still doing the same thing, not trying to find a job, still partying...

Like some family members that like dropped out, I think they might feel that way.

No, I don’t think they were feeling that I was trying to be better than them or anything, if anything I was going to college they would be there and support me, because that’s what family and friends are supposed to do.

No, because we’re all shooting for the same thing and trying to make it out, just like not have the same life as our parents did and not struggle and move on, and be financially ready, and don’t have to worry about losing our job.

I haven’t really sensed it; everybody around me is doing something...

Not really, it’s just for me I have goals and some of the people I hang with they really don’t, so they might not think I’m trying to do better but I am because they’re not trying to do anything with their life but I am.

Yeah, I heard from a couple of my friends they’re not going to college, and I said I was, and they thought I was better than them, but it’s to better my life, and I tried to talking to them, but they stuck on the streets, but I’m just going to be me.

Yeah, I got that from my family, not family that live with me now, but my family live in Muskegon, so by going to college I’m trying to prove that I’m better than them. I get that a lot from my other side of the family, I moved here when my mother passed away, and I got the opportunity to get the Promise and went to school so now it’s as if I’m showing them I’m better than them, that’s how they take it.

No, everybody I talk to wants to go to college or is.

No, I’m more of a model, so people figure if she can do it, I can too.

My friends and I compete for the best grades, I have heard that statement "acting white" all the time, but I'm not worried about it.

Yeah, because I get good grades and not talking to people and be gang buddies.

Of course, I’ve been “acting white” since 3rd grade.
Yeah, they haven’t been in school or something, and they can’t get back on their feet.

Kids, it’s just rumors, people just making things up because African American kids really aren’t graduating as much as any other race.

Not really, most of my friends are happy for the opportunity..., so it’s kind of the other way around.

Sometimes, like if they call me a nerd or whatever, I just try to still work hard, get my work done and then have fun. Then they can’t really say nothing about you, you know, I'm still cool with you yet in still I'm getting my work done.

Yes, I think its just stupid people who say that.

It is clear that the students were nearly divided on this question. Fifteen of the 29 students that responded, regarding social pressures and academic achievement, responded in the negative (“No”). However, some indicated quite a turn, emphasizing intellectual pressures. Students discussed collective pressures from their primary social groups to participate in the Promise. Though it is evident that anti-intellectual pressures are still present, it does appear that there is concrete evidence of a cultural turn in Kalamazoo.

The theoretical teachings of Paulo Freire (1970) were also evident during the data collection process. The difficulty of securing parent interviews indicates that there are some people in the community who disregard the Promise. They do not even want to talk about the Promise. It appears that Mickelson (1990) is correct that most young people throughout the African American community buy in to the American dream of going to college. But in reality, there exists a degree of fear, which comes with entering new territory.

KPS’s website boasts of 90+ percent of its graduates now go on to at least receive some form of post-secondary instruction and skills. With so many of them being the first members in their families to do so, thresholds are breached for future generations.
A history of dreams deferred has resulted in some members in the African American community who appear to have internalized the consciousness of the oppressor. They stand firm in the belief that education is not for those who act and/or look like them. Thus, it makes them uncomfortable for that worldview to be challenged with any information that there is an opportunity to take some responsibility in pursuit of the authentic existence expressed by Freire.

Issues and Suggestions

The issues raised by parents and students reveal that their desires are indeed aligned with the visions of the Promise. The comments listed below highlight the emphasis which both the students and parents put on the community in maximizing the returns on this endowment. The adage that “it takes a village to raise a child” was echoed most frequently by the parents along with the notion that education starts in the home.

Other ideas and suggestions from parents were:

- Our schools are not preparing our black boys in particular. They don’t have enough models. Getting to much prescriptions…I have a son who's an artist that graduated from (name of school), when in school he was diagnosed ADHD, they put him in a box and said he wasn’t going to succeed. But there was one teacher, took a notice in him and understood that he had something special in him and he’s become a successful artist, doing shows all around the world.

- The schools need to get rid of the people who don’t want to be there.

- The schools need to have a course just on the Promise.

- Teachers aren’t trying their hardest to reach the hard-to-reach students… I don’t think they have their best interests at heart… and more black teachers.

- I guess getting more together, as far as the village, you know the animosity they got against each other. Back when I came up, the neighborhood half way raised the kids, they kept them in line.
Yes, whenever you allow a child to be disruptive to the whole you need to look into that…When I was a child we had a promise, the teacher promise to beat your butt, and your parents promised to beat it some more…What happened to preparing the child for the next level opposed to the next grade… just to get em out the way.

I think that school district is doing a good job. What I’m starting to see is our superintendent is looking at curriculum and making sure to get students to improve in all areas, and it’s evident by our scores, we have seen an increase, our teachers and our principles has made a commitment. They’re working together to see that they are college bound ready, but I also think we need to continue, I think we need to have more hands on in the math and sciences, if you tell a child to take calculus and you don’t say why, it has no relevance, but if you can use it for something you can understand that.

People act like they scared of these kids…

… It’s how you were raised, and the way I look at things, when I was growing up I had bible study after school (at North Christian) and when they took that out of it… If they put that back in the school it will make you see how to be a better person.

I think that the school should be more career-oriented and that I don’t think they are, appears the students are just picking classes and they’re not geared toward anything. For example, when I was in high school, that’s the reason I went to (name of school), I wanted to own my own business or work in a business, so I wanted to start off a secretary, so in school we had short hand, we had typing, we had all these skills that would prepare me for this job, but they don’t have that.

I guess the only thing I’m really into is, I believe in multicultural education. The ultimate challenge in Kalamazoo as far as our students, is we have to articulate a new way of doing education. And that is teachers are not prepared because we have non-white student populate by predominantly white teachers. Most of these teachers have no understanding of Black American Culture, they’re not immersed in a people of color world. …the students are aware that there is this gap between the teachers and them and some of them are playing it… And so in order for us to get to where we want to be, a model for the country, …I think we have to have much greater cooperation between students and parents and administrations to address historical racism and how that effects our ability to communicate with one another and our ability to learn from each other…

I would like to see a reading curriculum for the summer. I don’t believe that our children should be off in the summer. My children need to read every day during the summer break and I think that reading coupled with summer academic type programs just really helps students get ready for the fall… And I don’t think
students should go to summer school not because they didn’t perform, but because they want to perform, make it an option. What you have is your students are not deficient when they return for the fall. They have an option, say they don’t mind going to school in the summer, even a couple days a week.

It would be nice if we had more centers, places where kids can go and you know do some homework get some guidance about study skills. Like my son he go to K college for after school math. It’s called “Open the Doors”.

I just hope that you reach some of the parents that really need the Promise, that have four to five kids, and that can benefit from the Promise, because there’s a lot of us out here that’s less fortunate than the next person, but just as naive and dumb, you know when they could take advantage of a good thing, the Promise is a very good thing to utilize. I’m going to try to do my best to take advantage of it.

The best thing we can do is educate the parents.

It’s a hard thing. In the economy now you got parents that are so wrapped up in how we gonna feed them to where I know some that let their kids be at home because they think that their kids will help them at home.

The students were asked: Are there things that you think the school could have done or do differently to help you get prepared for college? Some of the responses were:

That’s what I was going to tell you, I was not prepared at all going into college, I walked into a classroom with 300 some kids and for math I walked in and all she told us is like you should have learned (this) from high school, and I have not. [On math and science prep]... no (it was not there) I passed in math in high school with Bs and Cs which they should not have passed me on that because I didn't know what I was doing at all.

I feel like my school counselor could have been a little bit more helpful…

Yes, I think that the school, they are not teaching us current events, and when we go to college they teach us about current events, like in middle school and high school they teach us about way back in the day, and in college they teach us more current things, about our current life. So just current events.

Yes, I do I think that they should challenge us more with the work we are given.

Yes, cause they say in middle school, high school is even harder and in some classes you have to break things down, but some teachers just rush through it. I just wish they’d take their time and break it down a little bit more.
I think the work and the curriculum they had really weren’t that good as far as you get older, into 11th and 12th grade, it wasn’t work that prepared me for the stuff I am going for now. I am happy Western has tutor labs, and English didn’t really prepare me, we learned about Shakespeare but I need to know more (paragraphs, formats). One of my big issues I’m not a very big writer so I need to go get help. But in math it’s not as it should be but I think they’re in the process of tightening it up.

They should have after school college prep classes. High school is supposed to be about preparing us for college.

Maybe giving us harder work and talking about college.

They should have more discipline, and some people be getting away easy and they don’t do nothing about it.

I think they could have a little harder more, a little more harder work. Some of the work is too easy, it’s too easy.

Surprisingly, many of the students appear to be looking for more rigors in their preparation. However, among both the parents and the students, there were also times that they would not offer any suggestions because they thought that the schools were already doing a good job. In addition, some of them attributed the responsibility for academic preparedness to parents and some to the students themselves.
CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

*That’s the reason those donors created the Kalamazoo Promise in the first place – not for recognition or reward, but because of their connection to this community; because their belief in your potential; because their faith that you would use this gift not just to enrich your own lives, but the lives of others and the life of the nation.*

*President Barack Obama*

On June 7, 2010, President Barack Obama delivered the commencement speech to the graduating class of Kalamazoo Central High School. The first standing president to do so, he came here to hold KPS up as a standard in recognition of the first-ever winners of his Race to the Top High School initiative. It would not be going far out on a limb to suggest that he would not have selected a school in Kalamazoo, Michigan if it were not for the Promise.

Several parents interviewed here, expressed how the election of our nations first African American president has undeniably changed their aspirations and inspired their children. A catalyst is a powerful thing, and we can only imagine whether the donors

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30 Remarks of President Barack Obama from the first commencement speech by a current president at any high school ever, as Kalamazoo Central was selected the winner of the first Race to the Top initiative. Kalamazoo Central High School commencement; June 7, 2010.
themselves would have predicted that after just four years their gift would lead to bringing in our commander in chief, let alone that he would be African American. But he - just as many in Kalamazoo’s African American community – has the wisdom to know a good thing when he sees it, and responded by showcasing what is happening in Kalamazoo as a model for others.

Some parents in this study noted that their children are more ambitious than they were and they attributed the change to both the Promise and the election of President Obama. The publicity and opportunity the community reaped as a result of both these phenomena have elevated Kalamazoo as a standard for approaching public education with seriousness, and further impacts the African American community. Indeed, the historic visit of the president validated the initial success of the Promise and the corresponding adaptations in the African American community’s ways of thinking.

The works of Mickelson (1990) Ogbu (1990, 1992, 2003) and others discussed earlier make it clear that the long-standing gap in academic achievement between African Americans and whites has little to do with merit, effort, competence, intelligence, talent, nor inferiority. There is no doubt that many youth in the African American community desire to go to college, but the financial demands are unrealistic. The Kalamazoo Promise is concrete, and students can now see that academic efforts can benefit them too. The following quote, for example, came from a parent that did not graduate from high school, yet later managed to achieve advanced degree status.

Many kids will be the first ones in their families to go to college. And I think that once that whole mind set trickles down then this whole notion that black kids are inferior when it comes to education is gone change…
Another G.E.D. recipient had the far-sighted vision to claim, “…more parents will make their kids go to school and also make families stronger.” The following is a quote from a parent that went as far as the 7th grade: (commenting on the higher aspirations noticed in their kids)

…They have big dreams of what they want to be, they look at President Obama, it opens up a lot of gates, now you can achieve even the highest seat in the United States, but the best seat would be being a responsible adult, being productive in society when you’re older.

A parent who made it as far as the 11th grade, said:

…it’s in the conversation “what you gonna do after high school” because of the Promise. But, before then, it wasn’t no conversation of “what you gonna do after high school”. With the Promise you got a free shot, so (explicative) even young boys is even thinking about going to college. Before it was all right for young black women, and race and gender got a lot to do with education. Black men have been denied education a long time man and that Promise at least gets the foot in the door.

Of all of those that participated in the study here, only one parent reported on a child who decided to forgo his Promise. Yet, even this parent was aware of how the Promise is positively at work in his life –

Regardless of my son and those in his situation, the world will start to shrink around him and ultimately the Promise will benefit my family. You can’t be involved in nonsense if it’s less nonsense available to be involved in, so as the community becomes more educated...

As noted at the outset, there is a fork in the road that students face at some point - “the streets” versus “education”. There was consensus among the participants in this project that the Promise is a compelling incentive for more and more students to choose education as the route towards social mobility, perhaps to the point where it will be the path most travelled. However, as one parent noted (commenting on the new multi-million
dollar juvenile detention center\textsuperscript{31}), “…they expanding the county jail too. Trust me, they not playing with these knuckle-heads.”

Another interesting topic that came up with the parents was the kind of “double jeopardy” that had to influence student motivation before the Promise. Not only would the cost of college have to come out of their pockets or drive them into debt, they would also have to settle for attending a school that they did not want to attend but had to because of low resources. The students also echoed the value they placed on having the opportunity to go directly to the school of their choice. Some pointed out that they now have the opportunity to stay on their own instead of living at home and taking classes.

Parents and students alike also addressed the positive feeling of knowing that all of their children or siblings would have the opportunity for post-secondary pursuits as opposed to only a select few. Some parents even reminisced about when they were very young they knew that unless they earned an athletic scholarship their parents “couldn’t afford no college”, regardless of their desires or capabilities. Parents expressed the psychological relief the Promise provides for them knowing things will be different for their children.

Concluding Thoughts

You know, I didn’t hear it a lot when I was growing up…and I don’t hear it a lot in the neighborhood of my own house…But, I hear my kids talking about it all the time, “Yeah, we gone graduate from high school, then we go to college…”, my girls especially, “and then we gone have our careers, we might get married, have kids”, and then one will be like, “well I might not have kids, but I’m gone have a good career…” (Parent Interviewee)

\textsuperscript{31} On June 17, 2009 the city of Kalamazoo opened the doors on its’ new 28 million dollar juvenile detention facility. See \url{http://www.fox17online.com/news/fox17-kalamazoo-juvenile-home-story,0,2550575.story} for more details.
The Kalamazoo Promise has apparently changed some of both the abstract and concrete aspirations within these members of this community. When the students were asked *Do you think the Promise has changed the way that you think about your future? How?*, 17 of the 35 answered in the affirmative to a change in their abstract aspirations, 9 indicated “no”, and the remaining 9 registered no data. Of the students that responded “no”, it was because they also indicated that they always had high aspirations for going on to college. Based on such increases in the amounts of students taking AP courses, and so many KPS graduates that are now experiencing post-secondary environments, concrete aspirations also appear to be impacted. It does appear that there indeed has been a change in collective attitudes and behaviors concerning academic achievement.

This project has shown some of the attitudes and values held by a small number of African American students and parents with respect to the Promise and what it means to them, their families, and the African American community. They all agreed that they perceived the most positive change in motivational measures, which supported the position presented in the review of literature.

Students voiced that the Promise has allowed them to go directly to a school of their choice, without acquiring mountains of debt. Some students even stated that they likely would not even be considering college if it weren’t for the Promise. The debt-consciousness that the youth of today seem to have is impressive and may not have been present a generation ago. The Promise has also given the citizens a wake-up-call by inspiring them to re-evaluate their responsibilities and the promises they themselves have made, and now appear to approach their fundamental responsibilities with more seriousness.
For many African Americans, going to college or to other post-secondary training has not been the norm – it is now, in Kalamazoo. Even middle class families, that had already established a tradition of going to college, expressed how the Promise impacts their lives:

Well there is something in it for the whole family because once the Promise was announced I was able to take the money I was going to use for their tuition, and I added on an addition to my house, so it brought up the property of our house and that impacts the neighborhood...

Clearly, the Promise is beneficial for families and individuals that already have the mindset and resources to go to college. But, the most rewarding aspect of this evaluation has been hearing the stories indicative of renewed mindsets. One question in particular – *Have you chosen to take college prep courses? Why or why not?* – sparked interesting reactions from some of the students. It was as if you could see some of them start to ponder the contradictions between their abstract and concrete aspirations. For many African Americans, the Promise has offered more than just resources for college. It has offered hope. The additions of AP classes along with higher expectations for all students to participate in them are but two examples of concrete cultural change.

By giving the young people of Kalamazoo a concrete incentive, the Promise has chopped an axe at the root of anti-intellectualism. As a young person growing up, in KPS, the only times that my peers and I felt at liberty to talk about college would be in an athletic frame of reference. The student participants shared that it is normal for them to talk about college and the Promise with their peers. Some students even shared how their peers would alienate them if they choose NOT to go to college. This trend in itself, could add social pressures to the younger students such that perhaps more will try to stick it out
until graduation. There would appear to be a bi-modal effect, whereby the young people that previously were “on the fence”, now are being pressured to choose early on whose side they are on (the streets or school).

The historical experience of African Americans gives hints as to why the perception still exists within the community, that submitting to the vision of the Promise is comparable to dancing with the devil, or as one parent put it, “It’s gotta be a catch to it somewhere”. The opinion of some, but by no means all, of the parents in this study is that the Promise has the potential to systematically mend these historically abused trust systems over time.

Q: (to parents) Do you have any thoughts on how the Promise might affect changes in generations of families? In other words, as a young person yourself, the Promise was not available. How do you think the Promise will change the current and future generations?

It will start a legacy for some families, people never thought of college, and those who have received the Promise will be more encouraging for up and coming relatives, to push them so they can finish.

I think we will see a difference I don’t know what way it’s gonna go. I went to my son’s ceremony and they had the top students there, they had a lot of grants that was given to them, they had a lot of smart kids there, I don’t want to say it will go down but at the same time I don’t know which way it’s gonna go. I don’t think it’s here to hurt them I think it will boost up their morals....Obama! (Not sure how it could actually get better)

Well I think we’ll have a lot more of our younger generation educated because there is no excuse now, so I think they will take advantage of it so you’ll have more people becoming educated, those young people will be our future, you’ll have more doctors, lawyers, teachers, the Promise has given them the opportunity now, the Promise has given the dream back.

Hopefully it will cause us to think about sending our youth to college, where in the past we didn't think about it. So change our mind set.

I think it will benefit future generations if they take advantage of it and use it, they could start a trend of higher education. It’s definitely necessary, it’s not like
back in the day with a high school diploma you could work at the plant and make 80 grand.

If it’s taken advantage of, the changes will be a serious alternative to the streets…

Expectations - for us the expectations was not that high, but now they surrounded by higher expectations.

It will encourage more people to try and put money into it to keep it going. Like I said, if its helping kids at least get started, at least go to a school, show that you’re a thinker…if you have parents that are getting education they will push their kids to get further than that.

We can only hope it will because our future generations will be more educated and they will understand the importance of parental involvement. I think right now, we just don’t understand how valuable we are to our children and how we are the ones they look to, we are their leaders, but they want their father to lead, their looking to their parents for leadership. A lot of parents don’t have the great job, they don’t have the education, their self esteem tells them I can’t be my child’s hero because I don’t have these external things, but they have to come to realize that they are their child’s hero.

Does knowledge about the Promise necessarily lead to understanding it? Perhaps the parable of the sower provides the best clues (Mark 4: 3-8 KJV):

3 Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow:
4 and it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.
5 And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:
6 but when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.
7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.
8 And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased, and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some a hundred.

The answer of course is – it all depends. During the course of the data collection for this project, I was shocked at how the dissemination of knowledge about the Promise was not always fruitful. Yet, as the parable suggests, the good ground will more than make up for what is lost on the bad. The hours spent in vain sowing seeds can be more than made up
for just by getting through to a resilient few. Further individual and collective efforts to turn the tide for academic norms in this city are encouraged.

Although the findings from this project indicate that there has been some change within the African American community, obstacles still remain and addressing them is important. Miron et al. (Dec. 2010/Jan. 2011) agree that “in particular, it will be critical to communicate and share more information to address misconceptions, build trust, and better coordinate services” (p. 54).

The works of the Freire (1970), Giroux (1983), Mickelson (1990), Gramsci (1971), and other advocates of critical pedagogy have provided a perspective on the domination of human beings. Thanks to their works we are provided with the language to address the ideological hegemony that has been established primarily through the rule of consent, and mediated via cultural institutions such as schools. They also provided insights into how people can become accomplices to their own subjugation.

Show me an African American doing right, I’ll show you one that’ll kill his (expletive deleted) tonight…

- Kendrick Lamar
(My People Don’t Love Me)

Critical pedagogy also helps us to understand that schooling has a culture of its own. It requires much more than just money to be successful in post-secondary pursuits. By eliminating the cost obstacle, the Promise has illuminated the paradigm shift required for academic preparation.

Chattel slavery and Jim Crow laws reflect much of American history. For generations, two drastically different sets of rules have been the norm for all Americans. Thus, it will take more than a single scholarship fund to undo systemic injustices and the
necessary brain-washing that comes accompanies them. Yet, because all of the young
people in Kalamazoo now have an incentive to choose to become better educated, the
creators of the Promise have caused a systemic turn of momentum.

On this block, where everybody and they pops
tryin to slang rocks,
I’d rather go to college, but this is where the game stops...

_Tupac Shakur (Still I Rise, 1996)_

The slain rapper Tupac Shakur perhaps summarizes the revelations of Mickelson
(1990) the best. Above, he reflects street culture by acknowledging abstract collegiate
aspirations, yet his concrete reality consists of street-hustling social forces. He left us
with a snapshot into a different worldview or social structure, which indeed does have
reverence for education. Yet, he also reveals a social climate in which such aspirations
simply do not align with his concrete, everyday realities. Tupac is also an example of
someone who perhaps was smart enough to succeed in college, particularly since now
even Ivy League schools offer classes honoring his talents, but the path he choose led
him to incarceration and ultimately to die far too young to meet most definitions of
intelligence.

The literature reviewed here has suggested that ghetto culture is merely a response
(albeit maladaptive to academic preparation) to systemically introduced oppression over
time. The systemic change stimulated by the Kalamazoo Promise has been documented
thoroughly, and also includes: expanded pre-school curriculum, expanded full-day
kindergarten, raised test scores, two new schools (in a context in which all neighboring
districts are closing buildings), and the dramatic changes in AP courses. The stance here

is that the Promise is indeed counter-hegemonic, that there is evidence that cultural change is happening in Kalamazoo’s African American community. One need look no further than to its surrounding cities (i.e. Flint, Muskegon, Detroit…) to see the trajectory that Kalamazoo was on without the Promise. Perhaps a second theme here is that Kalamazoo demonstrates a real life example of how intensely high poverty levels can coexist with high educational attainment.
Appendix A

Student Interview Protocol
Student Interview Protocol

PROCESS:

1. Review consent form & obtain signature. Offer to provide a copy to participant.

2. Code signed copy of consent form for our records, using first initial of interviewer, number of interview, and an indicator for student or parent (blank for student).
   - J.’s interviews – J-1, J-2, etc.

3. Verbally answer the following on the digital recorder before beginning questions:
   - Participant’s code

4. Verbally answer the following at the conclusion of the interview:
   - Participant’s sex

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

Demographics

1. What is your age?
2. What grade did you last complete?
3. What school did you last attend?
4. Did one or both of your parents attend any college?
1. Did one or both of your parents graduate from college?
2. With whom do you currently live (one parent, both parents, grandparent, siblings, etc?)
3. When you last attended school, did you qualify for free or reduced lunch?

Participant Perceptions

4. In your own words, can you please describe the Kalamazoo Promise?

Please use this rating scale (taped to one side of folder) to answer the following questions. Your answers can range from 1-5, from “Not at all” to “A great deal”. If you don’t have an opinion on the question, or think of yourself as right down the middle, please feel free to choose “3”.

5. I think the Promise is an important opportunity for me.
6. I appreciate what the Promise can do for my family.
7. I think my community is benefiting (or will benefit) from the Promise.
8. My parent/guardian supports my use of the Promise.
12a. I trust/believe in the Promise.

That concludes the ratings questions for now.

9. Please tell me how you think the Promise pertains to you. In other words, what’s in it for you?

10. And, can you tell me how you think the Promise pertains to your family? What’s in it for your family?
14a. How many siblings do you have?
14b. How many are Promise eligible?

11. I’m going to ask you now to think about your community – the people you know from school, church, and your neighborhood. Think about your parents and the people they know and spend time with, as well. Thinking about these groups of people with whom you and your family associate, how does the Promise play into their lives?
15a. Do you ever get the sense from the aforementioned that they feel you are trying to be “better than them”? Or that you are “acting White”.

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12. Do you plan to use the Promise?
   • (If student answers “yes”) – Can you tell me about the level of encouragement and support you receive from your parent(s) to attend college? Do you wish this was different somehow? How?
   • (If student answers “no”) – Can you tell me how your parents feel about your decision not to use the Promise?

16a. Do you know what school you want to go to?

17. In response to the Promise, have you experienced less stress, more stress, or no change in stress? Please explain.

**Impact on Participants**

(Show student the “Change Since Announcement” scale on other side of folder.)

I am going to ask you to rate the changes that you have noticed in yourself and your friends since learning about the Kalamazoo Promise. This time, the scale ranges from -2 to +2 (Worse to Improved). Here is the scale. Please note that “0” reflects “No Change.”

**These refer to you and your friends.**

18. Behavior at school
19. School attendance
20. Attitudes toward school work
21. Quality of school work (doing more than bare minimum to “get by”)
22. Motivation to succeed
23. Parental involvement in school and homework
24. Teacher expectations of student success
25. Academic support after or outside of school

That is all of the rating questions that I have.
26. Have you given much thought to what you would like to do as a career? If so, what are your plans? If not, why?

27. Tell me what you would like your life to be like when you are older, say 30-35 years old. What would you like to be doing with your days when you are this age? Please be as descriptive as you can.

28. Thinking about the lifestyle you just described, can you tell me what needs to happen before then so that you can live out your plan?

29. Who are the key players to you reaching this lifestyle? What role does each play in getting you to where you want to be as an adult?

30. What sort of grades do you earn at school?

31. In which classes do you typically earn the highest grades? The lowest grades?

32. Have you chosen to take college prep courses? How about Advanced Placement courses? Why or why not?

33. If you plan to attend college, can you tell me how you are preparing? (Interviewer – probe to have student list at least three specific things they are doing.)

34. Do you think the Promise has changed the way that you think about your future? Has it changed how you live your life? How?

Improved Utilization

35. Are there things that you wish the adults in your life would do differently in order to help you reach your goals? Please explain.
36. If you are planning on using the Promise, are there things that you think the school could do differently to help you get prepared for college? Please describe.

37. If you are not planning on using the Promise, what would have made the difference for you? In other words, what would have to be different in your life to make you want to go to college with the scholarship?

38. Do you feel like you and your parents have enough information about the Promise and how to use it? Please explain.

39. As you know, I am studying how the Promise affects African American students and their families in Kalamazoo. Is there anything else that you can share with me so that I can better understand this?

40. How do plan to deal with the additional costs (books, room & board) that the Promise does not cover?

Thank you for helping me with this important study. If you would like to contact me with any additional questions or concerns, my contact information is on the consent form.
Appendix B

Parent Interview Protocol
Parent Interview Protocol

DOES UNDERSTANDING THE KALAMAZOO PROMISE IMPACT AFRICAN AMERICAN PARTICIPATION?

PROCESS:

13. Review consent form & obtain signature. Offer to provide copy to participant.

14. Code signed copy of consent form for our records, using first initial of interviewer, number of interview, and P to indicate parent.
   - J.’s interviews – J-1P, J-2P, etc.

15. Verbally answer the following on the digital recorder before beginning questions:
   - Participant’s code

16. Verbally state the participants’ sex at the end of the interview.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. How many Promise eligible children do you have?
2. For each, please indicate which school they last attended and the last grade completed.
3. Did you graduate from high school? If not, what was the last grade completed?
4. Did you attend college? If so, did you graduate?
5. Does your child(ren) qualify for free or reduced lunch at school?
Participant Perceptions

6. In your own works, please briefly describe the Kalamazoo Promise.

Please use this rating scale (taped to one side of folder) to answer the following questions. Your answers can range from 1-5, from “Not at all” to “A great deal”. If you don’t have an opinion on the question, or think of yourself as right down the middle, please feel free to choose “3”.

7. I think the Promise is an important opportunity for my child(ren).
8. I value the Promise for my family as a whole.
9. I think my community is benefitting (or will benefit) from the Promise.
10. I support my child(ren)’s use of the Promise.
11. I feel that the community supports my child(ren)’s use of the Promise.
11a. I trust/believe in the Promise.

That concludes the ratings questions for now.

12. Please tell me how you think the Promise pertains to you and your family. In other words, what’s in it for your children?

13. And, can you tell me how you think the Promise pertains to your community? In particular, what’s in it for the African American community?

14. Does your child(ren) plan to use the Promise?
   - (If yes) – Can you tell me how you have encouraged and supported your child(ren) to attend college. Is there anything you wish you could do differently?
   - (If no) – Can you tell me how you feel about this? Do you wish circumstances were different? If so, in what ways?

Impact on Participants

(Show the parent the “Change Since Announcement” scale on other side of folder.)
I am going to ask you to rate the changes that you have noticed in your children and their friends since learning about the Kalamazoo Promise. This time, the scale ranges from -2 to +2 (Worse to Improved). Here is the scale. Please note that “0” reflects “No Change.”

These refer to your children and their friends.

15. Behavior at school
16. School attendance
17. Attitudes toward school work
18. Quality of school work (doing more than bare minimum to “get by”)
19. Motivation to succeed
20. The level of parental involvement in school and homework (yours & other parents that you know)
21. Teacher expectations of student success
22. Academic support after or outside of school

That is all the ratings questions that I have.

23. Can you tell me how the Promise has impacted your family?

24. Has your child(ren) given much thought to what s/he would like to do as a career? If so, what are their plans? If s/he has not, why do you think this is the case?

25. What is your hope for your child(ren)’s future?

26. Have your hopes for your child(ren) changed since introduction of the Promise? Please describe.

27. Can you please describe ways in which you are able to support your children’s dreams for the future? (Probe in hopes of having the participant list at least three ways.)

28. Do you have any thoughts on how the Promise might affect changes in generations of families? In other words, as a young person yourself, the Promise was not available. How do you think the Promise will change the current and future generations?
29. Are you aware of any tensions that exist between generations in regards to the Promise? If so, please describe.

Improved Utilization

30. Do you feel that the school should be doing anything differently in order to better prepare students to use the Promise? Please describe.

31. Do you feel that the community at large should be doing anything differently in order to better prepare students to use the Promise. Please describe.

32. Do you feel that you have enough information about the Promise and how your children can use it? Please explain.

33. As you know, I am studying how the Promise affects African American students and their families in Kalamazoo. Is there anything else that you can share with me so that I can better understand this?

This completes the interview. Do you have any follow-up questions or comments?

Follow-Up Questions

34. Did the Promise have any impact on your decision to live here?

35. Do or have any of your children taken AP or college prep classes? Why or Why not?

36. What are your plans for dealing with the additional costs (books, room & board) that the Promise does not cover?
Thank you for helping me with this important study. If you would like to contact me with any additional questions or concerns, my contact information is on the consent form.

* After interview is completed, make note of the participant’s race & sex on the recorder.
Appendix C

HSIRB Approval Letter
Date: March 30, 2011

To: Thomas Van Valcy, Principal Investigator
    J. Douglas Penn, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 11-02-19

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “Does Understanding The Kalamazoo Promise Impact African American Participation?” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: March 30, 2012
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