

## **Educational Issues with Rural Poverty**

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### **Abstract**

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*This paper is significant because it looks at different aspects of minorities in rural poverty. The issue at hand is one that is not often studied or written about, therefore leaving those students at a great disadvantage. Article reviews and analysis show that minorities in rural poverty are a group unto themselves and must be treated accordingly. Teachers in these situations must (a) forget about generalized views on minorities and/or poverty and concentrate on becoming poverty-aware and (b) must connect and build relationships with their students.*

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### **Introduction**

Rural poverty is an extremely important topic in American education today. According to the article “Leveling the Playing Field” (2017), 53% of schools in the United States are in rural areas and roughly 20% of students attend rural schools. This is an issue when determining school funding and legislation (“Leveling the Playing Field,” 2017). When we delve deeper into this topic however, there is an undercurrent of racial indiscretion that comes to the surface. Minorities in rural areas are hit the hardest by poverty, placing them even farther back in the societal order. Minorities are at a disadvantage to begin with, as are those who live in poverty, but when you combine the two groups, it becomes almost impossible to climb out of despair. The following article reviews all revolve around rural poverty and the quandaries that come up in these schools. Making rural poverty more difficult to understand are the differences, such as race, religion, and sexual orientation. In an urban setting, this is not anything unusual, but in rural areas, which are mostly white, it can be very lonely.

The article, Child Poverty Higher and More Persistent in Rural America, by Andrew Schaefer, Marybeth Mattingly, and Kenneth Johnson (2016) provides insight into poverty among rural areas of the United States. The authors used the United States census information over a period of decades to come up with their data. One major finding was that there was more consistent poverty in rural areas than in urban areas, which may surprise some people (Schaefer, Mattingly, and Johnson, 2016). The purpose of this article is to provide a framework, with statistical data, that gives credence to rural poverty being a huge challenge. The census numbers show that even though white children make up much of those in rural poverty, their percentages are much lower than minorities in rural poverty (Schaefer, et al., 2016). Minorities not only struggle in urban areas, but also in rural areas as well. Schaefer, et al., (2016) states, “By 2010, nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of rural counties had high child poverty, compared to just 47 percent of urban counties (p. 1). These findings provide great insight into areas that are struggling and continue to struggle with extreme poverty. Generational poverty can be seen in the data collected from 1980-2010, which shows patterns of poor areas (Schaefer, et al., 2016). The findings show not only where

consistent areas of poverty exist in the United States, but which minority groups live there. The data helps the authors explain the challenges faced by minorities in poverty, where the need is the greatest (Schaefer, et al., 2016). This article shows that poverty is not simply an urban issue and that there are a few outliers in rural areas which are poor. Poverty, especially through generations, is very much focused in rural areas of the United States (Schaefer, et al., 2016).

This article relates incredibly well to my topic of minorities in rural poverty. This is a great baseline for data usage, as the census materials have already been broken down and put into charts (Schaefer, et al., 2016). The map contained within the article, shows where child poverty is consistently an issue and what race and ethnicities mostly live in these areas. According to the map, much of the western portion of the United States is home to child poverty in many Latino communities. In the southeast, the majority of poor children are Black, while the midwest and northeast are mainly white (Schaefer, et al., 2016). One of the more important things that this article provides is insight into where resources and funding needs to be provided. This can also help these communities by giving school districts more information and support for their students and families (Schaefer, et al., 2016).

This article relates quite well to the other articles that the researcher reviewed and analyzed. The Schaefer, et al., (2016) article discusses and provides a graphic that compares to the Allen & Thompson (1990) article, in that it provides a look at minorities living in poverty. It provides a map that shows not only areas of poverty, but what the ethnic majority make-up of said areas are (Schaefer, et al., 2016). This gives more credence to the first article, because there is statistical data provided by the United States Government to back-up claims.

Throughout the work, "Leveling the Playing Field for Rural Students," there are a number of topics that are discussed, including ability to receive quality healthcare, which careers to focus on, where to find food, and investing money in rural schools (2017). These topics all deal with the idea that rural schools offer our children an amazing educational experience and outlet, while dealing with many issues that other schools do not have to deal with. While there was some comparison between rural, urban, and suburban schools, much of what is discussed only relates to rural schools ("Leveling the Playing Field for Rural Students," 2017). Some of the statistics that this article emphasizes come from the United States Department of Education, which provide data on rural schools. A few data points come to mind immediately, such as 53% of the United States school districts are rural, nearly 1 in 5 students attends a rural school, but only 17% of state funding, on average, go to rural schools. These statistics show that rural schools, while containing a large number of students, receive less money than other schools, which may not need it as much ("Leveling the Playing Field," 2017).

One of the most significant findings of this article was that it found that of the 50 counties with the highest rate of children without health insurance, 45 were in rural areas. This data was astounding, not only when it came to most rural areas having uninsured children, but that there were that many uninsured children to begin with. The article goes on to explain that many of the jobs in rural areas revolve around agriculture, which does not always provide insurance. Another aspect of this was seasonal workers, which usually live and work in rural areas, and who do not have insurance either ("Leveling the Playing Field," 2017). Sometimes the schools in these towns must act not only as the educational center, but the health center as well. This is a problem, especially when dealing with mental illness, and rural area's inability to house such programs or centers ("Leveling the Playing Field," 2017).

Food insecurity is also a key contributor to rural poverty. The U.S. Department of Education found that in 2015, 25% of children in rural areas were in poverty. For many students, free or reduced breakfast and lunch is a critical component to their health and welfare. This food not only nourishes them and allows them to learn in school, but it also alleviates worrying about when their next meal will happen ("Leveling the Playing Field," 2017). One of the things that the Federal Government can do is to continue to increase food benefits to those in poverty. This will enable low-income families to buy quality foods. Another idea is to teach students and their families about healthy eating, because while many in poverty do not have adequate food, there is an obesity issue. This comes from eating unhealthy, cheap food, which can be addressed in schools and community centers ("Leveling the Playing Field," 2017).

This article relates not only to my topic of minorities in rural poverty, but also to the other articles the researcher chose to critique. These articles, while all discussing different aspects of poverty, are all connected through the lens of addressing poverty in a rural setting. This is important as it has been an understudied portion of educational research, but plays a large role in our national school system ("Leveling the Playing Field," 2017).

While the first two articles implicitly gave examples of minorities in rural poverty, this article does so through a different lens. One has to understand that many seasonal and migrant workers are minorities, which the article does not come right out and say (“Leveling the Playing Field,” 2017). I would have liked to have had more information regarding how to help those in poverty, besides things the Federal Government can do. In the case of rural poverty, it must be more of a community and/or grassroots effort, which was not discussed. The researcher believes that rural minorities should have also been explicitly discussed (“Leveling the Playing Field,” 2017).

The article, *Rural Poverty among Racial and Ethnic Minorities*, by Joyce E. Allen and Alton Thompson (1990) provides a look at some of the basic assumptions of poverty. The purpose of their study was to figure out why minorities in rural areas are worse off financially and educationally than whites from the same regions. They also attempted to understand the effects that race have on rural minorities (Allen & Thompson, 1990). The first thing that the researchers did was to explicitly state how poverty is measured and why that is significant. They hoped to figure out who was monetarily depressed and to track this over time (Allen & Thompson, 1990).

Based on the research conducted, it was determined by the authors that certain rural minority groups have been hit harder by poverty than others. These groups include those with single mother households, which in 1987 included 75% of rural, impoverished Blacks and 66% of rural, impoverished Latinos (Allen & Thompson, 1990). This led to the authors studying the education levels of these women and they found that only 31% of Black women in rural poverty had high school diplomas. Even though the data is thirty-two years old, the variation between 1987 and 2019 is very little (Allen & Thompson, 1990). It is understood among educators that the more education one has, the greater chance of having a higher paying job and not being in poverty.

The results did show that the most important factor in rural poverty is the type of family one comes from. Upon knowing this, the authors came up with possible solutions to help minorities in rural poverty. They realized that civil rights were being ignored, especially concerning employment. By having these laws enforced, rural minority parents will be able to find better jobs, which will help their families. Another idea revolved around most rural minority families living in very impoverished areas (Allen & Thompson, 1990). Another finding was that because many of the minority students in rural areas live in mother-only households, they are very dependent on welfare benefits. The researchers suggest ideas such as helping these women find work, affordable housing, quality childcare, and more money and/or food stamps. These are all concrete examples of ways that schools, towns, villages, and/or counties could help combat rural poverty, especially concerning minorities (Allen & Thompson, 1990).

This study is important for a number of reasons, one of which is giving minorities in rural poverty a voice. Most of the studies on rural poverty focus on whites, while studies of urban poverty focus on minority students. This group, rural minorities, is something that is rarely discussed and studied, but deserves to be. The *Logistic Regression Models of Poverty Status: Nonmetropolitan United States*, that was used by the researchers does an adequate job of structuring the data and findings. It would not be easy for someone not versed in research data studies to view and interpret; however, it works when one understands the data (Allen & Thompson, 1990). This study, while not outwardly persuasive, does present findings that must be looked at. Educators hoping to help minority students from rural areas need to know what they are dealing with and should have concrete methods to help (Allen & Thompson, 1990). By using this research as a basic foundation, it will add a great deal to my topic of minorities in rural poverty. One way this will help is by studying not only minorities in poverty, but also what their family situations look like (Allen & Thompson, 1990).

While it may seem unique for a teacher to read and analyze articles meant for school counselors, there is a great deal of carryover between the two roles. In the article “*College and Career Counseling in Rural Schools: A Review of the Literature*,” the authors do a nice job of relating the significance of counseling in rural schools (Arrastia-Chisholm, M.C., Bright, S.B., and Grimes, L.E., 2017). Much of what is reported in this article came from the USDA, including percentages of rural schools and students and salaries of parents, while other information came from subsequent articles on similar topics. The purpose of this article was to provide an understanding of how being a school counselor in a rural area differs from that of an urban or suburban area (Arrastia-Chisholm et al., 2017). There were many insights throughout the article that were for rural schools only, which are not discussed in most graduate programs. Being that this is the case; school districts in rural areas must provide their own professional development opportunities for teachers and counselors.

The article does a really nice job of detailing Every Student Succeeds Act and the aid that it now provides to rural schools. Much of what changed is the way money can be moved around and used, especially since Title I funding is very strict (Arrastia-Chisholm et al., 2017). The discussion revolves around students in Georgia, of which 33 percent live in rural areas. A third of that number is minorities living in these rural areas (Arrastia-Chisholm et al., 2017). Rural Georgia, which is similar to other rural areas, contains an unequal number of ethnic groups who do not achieve the same levels of employment success as whites (Arrastia-Chisholm et al., 2017).

The biggest finding in the article is something that the researcher has been interested in, which are the types of jobs rural students can get after high school. The idea that all students should attend college is not appropriate in rural areas, especially if these students choose to live in rural areas, where the jobs are mainly blue collar. Students in these situations and locations should be offered and shown vocational careers and avenues of study. One interesting aspect the article reported was that many counselors did not feel prepared to instruct students on career choices. If the counselors are not prepared to discuss careers or show students a path to success, students will be unable to find one on their own (Arrastia-Chisholm et al., 2017). This is a large problem that is seen across rural America. From my experiences, the students who go away to college find work after school, as well as those who go to vocational schools either during and/or after high school. The issue lies in the students in the middle; they are neither college bound nor are they attaining a skill to put to use in the workforce. This is the point to which counselors must do a better job; helping those who do not know what to do. Many affluent parents either attended college or know enough about it to help their children. However, some parents, especially from rural areas, may lack the experience and knowledge to help their children. This is the exact time when school leaders, guidance counselors, teachers, and other staff must step forward and help students. Vocational education was once thought to be for students who were not smart; however, many of these jobs will pay more than what college graduates make. The truth is that students can go to a vocational school during their high school career and come out with a certificate of completion and many times a job offer from a company that they interned with. This is one step that is easy to take and can make a huge difference in someone's life. If rural schools can enable their students to attend vocational schools, these students will have a much brighter future (Arrastia-Chisholm, 2017). Another reason that this makes sense is because many times vocational jobs are available in rural areas. People always need hair dressers, plumbers, electricians, machine operators, and carpenters. By having a skill in a vocational field, students will have more opportunities once they graduate high school. There is a much greater chance at attaining a higher paying job with a vocational skill, as opposed to someone without one or something who goes to college for one year and quits.

This article relates to my topic of minorities in rural poverty, as well as to the previous three articles the researcher critiqued. All four articles discuss different aspects of poverty in rural settings. This article looks more at the counseling and career side of rural education, while some of the others dug more deeply into different ethnicities. A few of the other articles discussed poverty being at the key of rural life, whereas this article dealt more with decision-making and future endeavors (Arrastia-Chisholm, 2017). There are types of career opportunities in urban areas, which are not available in rural communities; therefore, students from rural areas must be prepared for what is around them. This also is an issue for minorities in rural poverty, as these students sometimes feel as outcasts. Being in the minority of people in any situation creates a great deal of anxiety and stress for most people. When this happens to our students, there is a greater want to simply fit in and not stand out, even if it is in a positive way (Arrastia-Chisholm, 2017). This article explains how counselors were unprepared to help students with future endeavors. Counselors, just as other educators, must be explicitly taught how to help their students. Formulating a plan for a child from poverty, especially one from a minority group is a great thing for that student's future (Arrastia-Chisholm, 2017).

There were many articles which revolved around rural education, but not many that discussed minorities in rural poverty. The articles that were chosen for this assignment were selected because they not only connect with rural poverty, but also because the focus is different in each one. It is important, no matter the topic, to make sure that many sides are studied. It is not enough to simply read one article and believe that is the truth of the matter. Researchers must study and analyze many articles on the topic they are researching, as well as topics that are semi-related to their main topic. While one research article deals with home life, another deals with work after high school. Schaefer, Mattingly, and Johnson (2016) do a tremendous job of providing statistics which point to generational poverty. This type of poverty is specifically seen in certain areas of the country, where it lasts over long periods of time. Generational poverty is extremely difficult to move out of and advance from. There are

many things that hold students back and poverty is a huge determinant on student's futures. Areas like the Appalachians, the west and the south constantly struggle with extreme poverty. This can go back generations and when children grow up in this type of poverty-stricken environment, it is all they know. This can be all these students have ever seen and do not know any different. What is interesting is that most of the generational poverty in the United States is found in rural areas. What is also fascinating is that different minority groups live in different areas, which are continuously struggle with poverty. In the west, Latinos make up a large portion of the poor, whereas the south is made up of poor Blacks, and the north and midwest are poor whites (Schaefer, Mattingly, and Johnson, 2017). This article was created to give an outline, with data, which shows the difficulties of educating an impoverished, rural demographic. One of the most telling and understated statistics was that in 2010, 17% more rural counties had child poverty than urban counties. This is not surprising when one thinks about and understands the type of employment opportunities that are available in rural areas. Much of the work is lower blue collar and/or food service, which combines a small population of diners with lower spending habits (Schaefer, Mattingly, and Johnson, 2017).

Poverty is one of the leading factors in poor student attendance, lower grades, and lack of high paying jobs after high school. These articles did a nice job of succinctly explaining the difficulties that students and schools in rural areas deal with. Each research article employed different techniques to achieve their results. The methods that were used varied by the population studied and by the questions that the researcher posed. Overall, the articles all showed a need for further study of rural schools and students. There are many issues that arise in rural communities, including a lack of money and quality jobs. Because of this, many schools start out at a disadvantage, in terms of funding and keeping quality teachers. According to the article "Leveling the Playing Field" (2017), forty-five of the top fifty counties containing children with no health insurance, were in rural areas. By not having health insurance, these students will become sicker, more malnourished, and will not do as well in schools as students who receive health insurance. Another aspect of rural areas that goes along with lack of health insurance is lack of quality food. For many students, as many as 25% of all students in rural areas are in poverty, having nourishing food is a challenge. The reduced price or free lunch that is offered by schools might be all many of these students receive. There are programs that will give students food for after school, on the weekends, over breaks, or over the summer, but these are not always guaranteed (Leveling the Playing Field, 2017). While many educators may think there is nothing they can do to help students in these situations, there are things that can be done. Teachers, working with social workers, psychologists, and the school district administrators can make sure they provide food to their students, even when not in their direct care. Backpack programs can make a huge difference in a child's life, by giving them the food they need to succeed and thrive. Research has shown that when students are hungry, they cannot learn well. It is not only something the school should do, it's something that is morally right. There are many students who come from circumstances outside of their control. It is not their fault that they were born into a poor family or a family with a single mother who does not or cannot work. These are things educators must think about when working with students.

There are other issues in rural communities, especially when discussing minorities and the education that they receive. One of the major issues is figuring out why minorities are worse off than their white peers, who live in the same rural poverty. One of the reasons that Allen & Thompson (1990) discovered is what family dynamic a student comes from. Their research showed that 75% of Blacks in rural poverty lived in single mother households. They went on to state that only 31% of Black women, in rural poverty, even had high school diplomas (Allen & Thompson, 1990). Many teachers and school district employees believe that they cannot help students in these situations, but they are mistaken. By holding events for parents, such as courses teaching job skills and/or GED programs, school districts can create opportunities for their student's families. Allen & Thompson (1990) describe other ways to help single mothers, which include affordable and quality housing and childcare, which would allow them more time to work.

Finding quality employment for students from poor rural areas is a challenge. Many students from these areas will stay within a few miles of where they grew up, which leads to generations being in poverty. There are just not as many job opportunities in rural areas as there are in urban centers. This, along with a lack of higher education, leads many to take low-paying low-ceiling level jobs. When one goes to work in a mill or a stone quarry as a laborer, there is not much room for them to advance in their field. One of the main ways that schools can help students from poverty attain higher paying jobs after high school is through vocational education (Arrastia-Chisholm et al, 2017). The myth is that all students should attend college to enhance their future. This

is not true, as it is not feasible for all students to attend college. Many students from poverty do not have the means to go away or the knowledge to even apply for financial aid. Many times, parents act as guidance counselors in this manner, but if a parent is from generational poverty, they may have no understanding of higher education (Arrastia-Chisholm, 2017).

There is much to be learned about educating minorities in rural poverty, as it is an understudied area in the field of education. Knowing where students in these situations come from can go a long way to helping them achieve educational success. As educators, we must work closely with parents and other district employees to ensure our students' needs are being met. Each of these articles provides insight into not only the issues that surround rural poverty, but also ways to help. Schools, especially in rural areas, are the lifeblood of their communities. They provide not only education for the students, but also a place to eat, feel comfortable, challenged, and encouraged. By connecting the school better with parents and community associations, help could better be provided for those living in poverty. Vocational education, which was mentioned in an article, could be a game changer for impoverished communities. If students have a trade or a talent that they have received an education in, they are able to then put that to use in their future. These skills will help students not only attain jobs, but turn those jobs into careers. Jobs in vocational fields provide quality salaries, benefits, and stability. These types of jobs are more realistic for students from rural poverty and they are what are available in their communities.

Minorities from rural poverty is an understated and understudied topic in American education. It is one that must be studied by researchers and educators alike, to help these students during their time in school and afterward as adults. For many students from poverty, school is the most calm, healthy, positive environment they will be in on a given day. There are so many outside influences on students that it is difficult to expect them to sit still and pay attention all day. Teachers must be aware of these outside difficulties, as they have tremendous impact on our students. Schaefer, Mattingly, and Johnson (2016) gathered census data and explained its' importance in the realm of poverty. They showed where poverty was most prevalent, which took place over decades. These data points can help researchers to better understand where poverty hits hardest and how those areas can be helped. This data also shows where minorities fit into the rural poverty landscape. By knowing where different groups of people live, researchers will be better able to provide insight into the plight of minorities in impoverished neighborhoods and communities. Once administrators and educators know their populations, they are better able to help (Schaefer et al., 2016).

There are ways that states and school districts can make positive changes too. Obviously, educators are not decision makers at the state level and cannot get more money simply by asking. However, there are grants and other means by which teachers can get this for their classrooms and/or school. In New York State, schools can qualify, if they have enough students in poverty, for lunch to be free for all students. One thing that has been a game changer for students at current school began last year when every student, grades K-12 received free breakfast and free lunch. It does not matter what their parental income level is, each student is given the food for free. This has created a situation where children who would normally come to school without breakfast can now eat at school. There is no more knowing who gets free or reduced lunch or who pays full price. It has taken the stigma out of being poor, which reduces stress and anxiety in the students. This has also led to students being more awake and less likely to always be asking for snacks and food from teachers. This was something that constantly went on and teachers would be giving out a large number of snacks to students, because they were so hungry. By having school breakfast and lunch be free, students can receive both without anyone knowing their monetary situation. This is not something teachers, administrators, or even school districts can automatically do, but it is one way to provide for students.

The idea of students having quality, nutritious food available to them was also highlighted by the article "Leveling the Playing Field" (2017). Many students in rural areas do not have the means to attain quality food, especially when their parents are not doing their part. The researcher knows of an instance where a student and his siblings do not have clean clothes because their mother said they ran out of laundry detergent. While this may actually be the case, the mother has also been known to sell her food stamps to purchase cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana. In this situation, these students cannot do anything about their family situation and the school is providing them with some of the only hot food they will eat. Food insecurity is a big issue in rural areas and must be discussed with students. Schools may be the only place that students learn about healthy eating habits and ways to keep themselves safe. There are many issues that only schools in poor rural areas must deal with.

Another huge issue for schools in impoverished, rural areas is single parent households. According to Allen and Thompson (1990), the most significant reason people stay in poverty is because of the family they grow up in. When children grow up in single parent households, their income level is severely hampered. These children are also missing a key role model, whether that is a mother or a father. These children are expected to work at a younger age, when many of their peers are involved in clubs and athletics. It can be difficult to escape poverty when your parent needs you to help them pay bills and take care of younger siblings. Sometimes the single parent cannot work at all, which creates even more trauma for these students (Allen & Thompson, 1990). What is especially troubling is that many minority students come from single-mother households. They are missing not only their father's income, but everything else that comes along with having a father. Having only one parent has a different effect on everyone, but this is just another way that rural minorities lag behind white peers (Allen & Thompson, 1990).

The articles that are being studied and analyzed compare to each other on the basis of rural poverty, but not on the ways in which the data was gathered. Some used information from the Federal Government census, while others looked at specific household information. Many times, the independent variables were population and gender. Dependent variables were monetary worth, education, household size and function, health care, and availability quality food. The dependent variables were sometimes manipulated based on what schools could offer their students. For example, the amount of food students have is sometimes dependent on schools being able to provide free breakfast and/or lunch and backpacks with food for weekends. Much of the research done on rural poverty relates to census data from the Federal Government. The Government keeps track of how many people there are in different areas and some of the general details about these groups. The data shows what races and ethnicities live in different places and how many people live in each household (Schaefer, et al., 2016).

There are many understudied areas in education, one of which being minorities from impoverished rural areas. This is a topic which has not been studied in full, but is especially important in our changing American demographic. Rural poverty is real and is happening at a drastic rate, because of many reasons. Major reasons are the types of jobs available in rural areas and the way that manufacturing has changed. Rural areas used to be composed of mills, factories, and stone quarries, which provided stable jobs. Once these types of jobs left or closed, nothing large scale came in to replace them. People who expected to graduate high school and go straight to working in a factory began having a more difficult time finding quality, steady work. This put a strain on families that were already barely making ends meet. Throw in the idea of minorities coming in and extra problems occur. Many of these minorities are blamed for taking up the few jobs that there are, while others become upset over a changing way of life.

Minorities in rural poverty are a very significant area to study, as there is not a lot of research that has been done up to this point. It is not difficult to look up census information and/or school district information, but there is not much analysis being completed. Educators, as well as federal and state government officials must know what is occurring in rural education. There must be significant discussions ongoing, with regards to rural poverty, especially concerning minorities. There is too much of a lag in the education that minorities in impoverished areas are receiving or not receiving. By understanding who lives where and looking at household information, including number of occupants and parental structure, only then can educators get a true grasp of the severity of rural poverty. Finding articles on minorities in rural poverty is difficult to do, since there is not much research on the issue. One can search for and find articles on poverty, rural education, and even some dealing with rural poverty. There is not however, a large amount of studies on rural poverty with a focus on minority students. As the United States becomes more diverse, especially within the Latino/Latina community, there must be emphasis on enabling these students to succeed, no matter their living situations.

There were many interesting aspects of rural poverty that the researcher discovered through the article analyses. One realization that occurred was learning more about single-parent households and the impact this has on rural students. This is something that must be further studied, to determine if it is a cultural phenomenon or if it is a rural issue. The idea that this is the most important issue facing rural poverty is astounding, given the fact that there is a plethora of issues in rural America (Allen & Thompson, 1990). One of the issues that the researcher believed to be a large problem, but could not find much research on is the idea of racism playing a role in rural minority student's academic achievement. Many rural areas, are mainly made up of whites, which can sometimes cause issues for minority students, as there are not very many of them. What complicates matters even more is

the fact that a high number of these minority students are also from poverty. Educators can now begin to see that minorities from rural communities must deal with outside impacts such as poverty and possibly racism. The researcher thought, based on what he had seen in rural schools, racism would be a key finding in rural, country America, when discussing minorities, but these articles did not back up the researcher's beliefs. As American changes, more minority groups are moving to rural areas, which are changing the way of life for many of the families who have lived there for generations. One of the challenges the researcher finds rural schools have is respecting 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment rights with protecting their minority students. This issue has arisen with the confederate flag being allowed to be worn in schools. As a white male, the researcher finds it extremely hurtful and disruptive to allow students to wear these articles, even though it is based on the right to free speech. If the researcher were a student of color, he believes he would have a difficult time learning and concentrating. This type of discrimination creates a great deal of animosity in rural areas, of which many minority students already deal with poverty. If we then think about our minority students being from poverty, single-parent households, and dealing with discriminatory behavior, it's not difficult to see why they struggle in schools. Because educators cannot help with many of these outside factors, we must provide as much aid in schools as we can. Finding out ways to help rural students find success in and out of school must be a major point of emphasis for teachers and administrators. Schools are sometimes the only positive aspect of our student's lives. Home situations in rural areas are often quite sad, because of a lack of money. Teachers must be aware of what our students' lives are like outside of school, so that we can best help them when they are in school. By providing opportunities, such as vocational education, teachers and school districts are helping students from poverty to find a way out. Having a trade or a skill can help someone who would otherwise have a job paying minimum wage, now have a job that has a stable income and benefits. It is shown that rural areas struggle to find quality health care and this is especially true when people cannot afford it. Schools must help provide not only a better future for their students, but also to give them hope.

Minorities in rural poverty are an area of educational research that must be further explored. This is a topic that the researcher is passionate about and believe there are many ways in which students from this situation can be helped. Schools must train their teachers and counselors to better prepare these students for the future, which is not necessarily attending college. The reality is that many of these students are unprepared for this challenge and would not want to attempt it anyways. Career and technical education, the researcher believes, is the key to advancing rural communities and the abject poverty that exists in many of these communities.

While other topics are in the forefront of mainstream society, minority students from rural poverty must be further investigated. This is an area of education that has long been understudied, especially with reference to minority students. Students from these situations must be understood and given more opportunities to succeed in and out of school. One of the ways to do this is by providing professional development for administrators, teachers, and counselors, in ways to help rural students. Another possible method to helping rural students is by providing vocational education and training. Students must be shown these different aspects of school and be given the chance to try different things. Not all students are meant to attend college, especially when they have no interest in furthering their education. Career and technical education programs will provide students with real on the job training and experience for future employment.

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