

**IMPROVING COMMUNITY CONNECTION
TO ITS YOUTH: THE CASE OF WABAUNSEE
COUNTY**

by

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ABSTRACT

Population out-migration from rural communities has caused significant distress in the Midwest of the United States. This distress comes from loss of the communities' human capital which supports its economic wellbeing. For example, the declining human capital implies lack of employees and consumers to support local business and lower populations that lead to consolidation of schools and services as well as increased per capita costs for these services.

Population loss is caused by a variety of reasons, the most discussed being lack of economic opportunities for young people in these small and rural communities. This thesis sought to increase appreciation of the problem by focusing on a single county in Kansas, Wabaunsee County, and assessing the factors that influenced out-migration decisions of its youth. The hypothesis was that understanding these factors and their strength would provide local policy makers with the tools to intervene in the dimensions of the problem of out-migration long before it happens. The data was drawn from a survey of the population of high school students and covered their perspectives about their community and their future location plans.

The total number of respondents to the survey was 172, and of these, only 12 percent totally agreed that at least one adult (not parent) has talked to them about opportunities that would encourage them to return home after their post high school or college education. Only about 10 percent totally agreed that there are opportunities in their community for young people to work with adults. These results provide an opportunity for policy makers

to engage adults in the community to provide mentorship opportunities for the community's young people. While the majority of the respondents indicated going to college, only 11 percent indicated that they would return to live and work in Wabaunsee County after graduation. An even lower percentage of respondents indicated retiring in Wabaunsee County when asked to "think way into the future" and indicate whether they would like to retire in the country. The results indicate that the most critical variables influencing respondents' intent to return after their education included community connection, their age and the existence of a business connection in the county. For example, the relative risk ratio (RRR) for those with community connections was 35 times as high as those without any community connection in their intent to return after college. Similarly, those with business interest in Wabaunsee County with interest in coming back after college exhibited a RRR of 345.15. Similar indicators were found for intentions to retire in Wabaunsee County.

It is obvious that the community cannot keep all of its young people. Indeed, it does not want to keep all of them if these young people are going to achieve their personal excellence. However, the community's leadership can work with local businesses to provide the youth with clear and compelling connections to local and family businesses to increase their community connections. The results of this research indicate that these stronger ties would increase the likelihood that these young people would return. Their return, given the historical trends, would signify a break from the past and contribute to an arrest of the declining population and, hopefully, contribute to an alleviation of the challenges associated with declining population in these small communities.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Population decline in the Midwest has been going on for decades. Wabaunsee County hit its peak population around 1910 and had a rapid decline until 1970 when they began to level off (KU). In recent years, Wabaunsee County has experienced positive population growth by 10 – 20 persons per year (KU). This can be attributed to the more densely populated neighboring counties, drawing in people and business, with a few of them choosing to locate in Wabaunsee County.

The job of economic developers is to enhance the relative competitiveness of their respective communities by maintaining economic activity (i.e., economic viability and quality of life) for their community or region. Population is a critical factor in addressing these issues. County, city and business interests all need to work together on this issue. However, youth retention and new resident recruitment have not been a focus, jobs has been the historically dominate focus. The outcome of this project will be a strategy around the education of youth for Wabaunsee County.

The business economy in Wabaunsee County is primarily an export economy with small manufacturers and agriculture producers. These businesses are require few employees and do not sell much of their product locally. Historically, Wabaunsee County has been one of the lowest ranked counties in the State of Kansas on the County Trade Pull Factor Report published by the Kansas Department of Revenue.

The County Trade Pull Factor report provides different measures of retail market data for the 105 Kansas counties. Retail market data is presented three ways.

- The first measure is a location quotient of retail trade called the County Trade

Pull Factor (CTPF). It is a measure of the relative strength of the retail business community. The County Trade Pull Factor is computed by dividing the per capita sales tax of a county by the statewide per capita sales tax. A CTPF of 1.00 is a perfect balance of trade. The purchases of county residents who shop elsewhere are offset by the purchases of out-of-county customers. CTPF values greater than 1.00 indicates that local businesses are pulling in trade from beyond their home county border. Thus, the balance of trade is favorable. A CTPF value less than 1.00 indicates more trade is being lost than pulled in, that residents are shopping outside the county. This is an unfavorable balance of trade.

- The Trade Area Capture (TAC) of a county is a measure of the customer base served by a community. It is calculated by multiplying the county’s population by the CTPF.

- The Percent Market Share (MS) is the percent the county’s Trade Area Capture is of the state as a whole. TAC is calculated by dividing the county’s TAC by the sum of all 105 county TAC numbers.

Table 1.1: Wabaunsee County Trade Pull Factors, Trade Area Capture, Market Share, Fiscal Year 2010

Adjusted Population	State Sales Tax Collections	Per Capita Sales Tax	County Trade Pull Factor	Trade Area Capture	Percent of Market Share
6,734	\$1,329,283	\$197.40	0.29	1,984	0.10%

In the report the Wabaunsee County Pull Factor was ranked 105th out of 105 counties. The percent of market share is exceptionally low, and the trade area capture does not even reach a third of the population of the county.

The table below indicates the percent change in pull factor in the last five years. It is not surprising to find that all three indicators have reduced in the last five years. It is surprising however to find the population of Wabaunsee County has not decreased in the same amount of time.

Table 1.2: Wabaunsee County Trade Pull Factors, Trade Area Capture, Market Share, Percent Change over 5-year Period (Fiscal Year 2006 – 2010)

County	County Trade Pull Factor	Trade Area Capture	Market Share
Wabaunsee	-7.20%	-8%	-11%

The population in Wabaunsee County has reportedly risen in the last ten years. Between 1990 and 2000, the Kansas population increased 8.5% from 2.5 million to nearly 2.7 million. This continues the fairly steady upward trend in population the state has experienced since 1900. The U.S. population grew 13.2% between 1990 and 2000 to 281.4 million. Over the same period, Wabaunsee County’s population increased 4.3%, from 6,603 to 6,885. The average Kansas County experienced growth of 0.6% from 1990 to 2000. Of 105 counties, 48 experienced population growth over the decade and 57 experienced decline. Population growth was strongest in counties surrounding the large metropolitan areas of Wichita, Topeka, and Kansas City and in southwest Kansas. This suggests that population growth is closely related to changes in the level of local economic activity. The 7 metropolitan counties and their neighbors have traditionally experienced more rapid economic growth than other areas of the state, which may help to explain their more rapid population growth.

Table 1.3 presents population trends for Wabaunsee County. In 2010, an estimated 6,954 people live in the county. Between 1990 and 2010, the population increased 5.7 percent

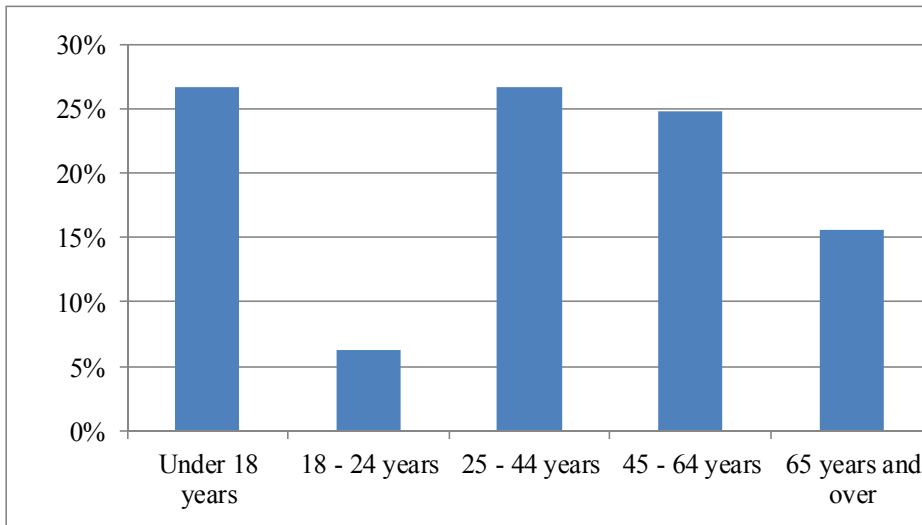
and also increased 1.2 percent between 2000 and 2010. Population projections indicate that 7,045 people will live in the county by 2015. The state of Kansas population increased 8.5 percent between 1990 and 2000 and an additional 5.5 percent through 2010.

Table 1.3: Current Population, Population Change and Projections

Current Population		Percent Change in Population			Population Projections	
Year	Count	Years	County	State	Year	Count
1990	6,581	1990-2000	4.40%	8.50%	2015	7,045
2000	6,873	2000-2010	1.20%	5.50%	2020	7,147
2010	6,954	1990-2010	5.70%	14.50%	2025	7,257

U.S. Census Bureau; population projections from Woods and Poole Economics, Inc.

Figure 1.1: Wabaunsee County Population Percents by Age



U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 1.1 shows a breakdown of the population in Wabaunsee County by age. Here, people aged 25 to 44 make up the largest portion of the population, with 26.7 percent. People aged 65 and older represented 15.6 percent of the population. Age range can indicate the future business and economics needs of a county's population. A growing population of older adults performs differently than a population with more young people. As we work to

improve the quality of life, business opportunities, pull factor and other economic indicators in Wabaunsee County, we see potential in recruiting the younger population.

1.2 Research Problem

The problem that this research seeks to determine is to what degree each specific factor influences a young person's decision when determining whether or not to live and plan a future in Wabaunsee County.

The Research question is: What are the most influential factors affecting young people when they decide where to live? Through the use of survey's the research will assist in determining which factors weigh heavier on the decision and eventually will provide a framework for developing a strategy centered around education for Wabaunsee County Economic Development. In addition, this framework will assist in forming a 'check-list' for Wabaunsee County communities and the Economic Development Council to use in making long term plans for retention and attraction of young people.

1.3 Objectives

Given the research problem, the overall objective is to identify and understand the different factors motivating young people as they decide where to live. The specific objectives are as follows:

- Determine the effect of young people's demographics on their intent to stay or leave their community.
- Understand the relationship that young people have with the community and how that influences their intent to return to Wabaunsee County and future plans.

- Develop strategies for community leaders to consider to influence young people to stay or return to Wabaunsee County.

1.4 Hypotheses

The objectives stated above allow for multiple testable hypotheses. The three that this thesis will focus on are related to young peoples' age, their plans for further education and the presence of a family business.

With respect to age, it is hypothesized that there is a difference between ninth graders and twelfth graders in their knowledge about their community. Between the period when they enter high school and when they leave, their perceptions about their community changes significantly as a result of the changes in their knowledge about the activities in the community that support them as young people looking for a place in the community.

Young people looking to go to college are hypothesized to differ in their intent to return to their hometown compared to those who are not intending to go to college. This hypothesis is premised on the fact that those going to college would invariably develop skills and competencies that they know their rural communities do not have a need for.

When considering a young person's interest in business, it is hypothesized that those young people most interested in entrepreneurship and business in Wabaunsee County will have a connection to a family business. This hypothesis is due to the example that the family sets for their young people, and the inherent availability of opportunities within the family business.

These hypotheses will be tested using primary data collected from high school students in Wabaunsee County Kansas. While the county may not represent many small counties in the country, its characteristics will be shown to represent those of the Midwest where population trends and economic conditions are effecting economic development and rural growth.

1.5 Methods

Two distinct methods are applied in this research: 1) a literature review and 2) a population survey. The literature review focuses on out-migration and why youth leave rural areas, theories about retaining and attracting youth to rural areas, and the methods that communities have tried in the past to retain young people. When looking at high school students in particular, the literature review covers the factors influencing career aspirations and the rate at which high school student's transition to college and other avenues of education.

The survey is a population survey, distributed to the 9th – 12th grade students in two Wabaunsee County School Districts. The students were subjected to a questionnaire looking into their future career aspirations, with emphasis on: knowledge about their community, their aspirations, and their family demographics. These results can then be used to prepare Wabaunsee County to be proactive when working with young people and creating opportunities for them to make a future, locally.

The majority of the survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire allowing the respondents to make their selection from a given set of answers, the only question that is

short answer asks for their top career choice. A copy of the questionnaire is attached in Appendix I.

1.6 Outline

The remainder of the thesis is presented as follows: The literature review is presented in Chapter 2, and the description of the data and analysis are presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents a summary of the results, implications for further research and strategy recommendations for Wabaunsee County communities.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

In reading about the different studies and theories that have been published about rural out-migration, it is obvious that communities are concerned, and rightfully so. Over time, many assumptions have been made about rural youth out-migration. As identified throughout the literature, there are three main theories about retaining and attracting youth in rural communities: Communities require more job opportunities to keep youth at home; Education is a main factor for out-migration, whether they are seeking education or seeking to use the education that they have received; and Once a young person leaves a community, they are 'lost' to the community. In this literature review you will find further insights about these factors as well as the factors that influence youth when they are making decisions about their future and the methods that have been used for retaining and attracting youth to rural communities in the past. This thesis takes special consideration for the career choices of the youth in Wabaunsee County and the factors influencing their decisions.

2.1 Out-migration

The migration from a place (especially migration from your native place in order to settle in another) is the definition of out-migration according to The American Heritage Dictionary. For this project, the emphasis is on high school youth and young adults ages 20 to 40 and their migration trends to and from Wabaunsee County, Kansas.

In reading about youth out-migration, there are many references to explanations and solutions for this trend. The most common explanation is related to jobs and economics. For example, Dupuy et al. (2000) writes, "One reason which is often cited to explain why young individuals leave rural areas is the fact that labor market conditions are less

favorable in rural areas than in urban areas.” Kennedy (1998) writes, “[a] major issue in rural America, for leaders, and the community, as a whole is that of teen or youth employment and the associated out migration”, directly linking out-migration to employment opportunities. Besser (1995) writes that “[t]he movement of young people from farms and small towns to cities is happening all over the United States” noting that “[m]any young people leave to attend postsecondary educational institutions, enter the military, take jobs, start families, or see if life really is better someplace else.”

As an aging population, rural communities struggle to incorporate young people in the planning and execution of their own futures. Communities continue to function with the absence of definitive strategies that focus and engage the young population. This is causing rural communities to continuously fail to create constructs that offer young resident’s quality employment after high school or college, and substantive involvement in community improvement efforts (Karen Dabson 2010).

The results of a study of young people done by the Center for Great Plains Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln are illustrated in Table 2.1. In the survey, seventy-two percent (72%) of the 6,059 survey respondents indicated that no adult had ever asked their views on how to make their community a more attractive place for young people (Karen Dabson 2010). In the same study, 43% of the young people rated their communities as an above average to excellent place to live and many (27%) said that they would like to stay in their communities after high school, and another 34% indicated that they would return upon the right conditions (Karen Dabson 2010). The big “if” for youth in both these categories is whether or not quality career opportunities will be available to them in their hometown communities. The current perception shared by 43% of the students is that

greater chances for economic and professional success exist beyond the bounds of the rural regions they call home (Karen Dabson 2010).

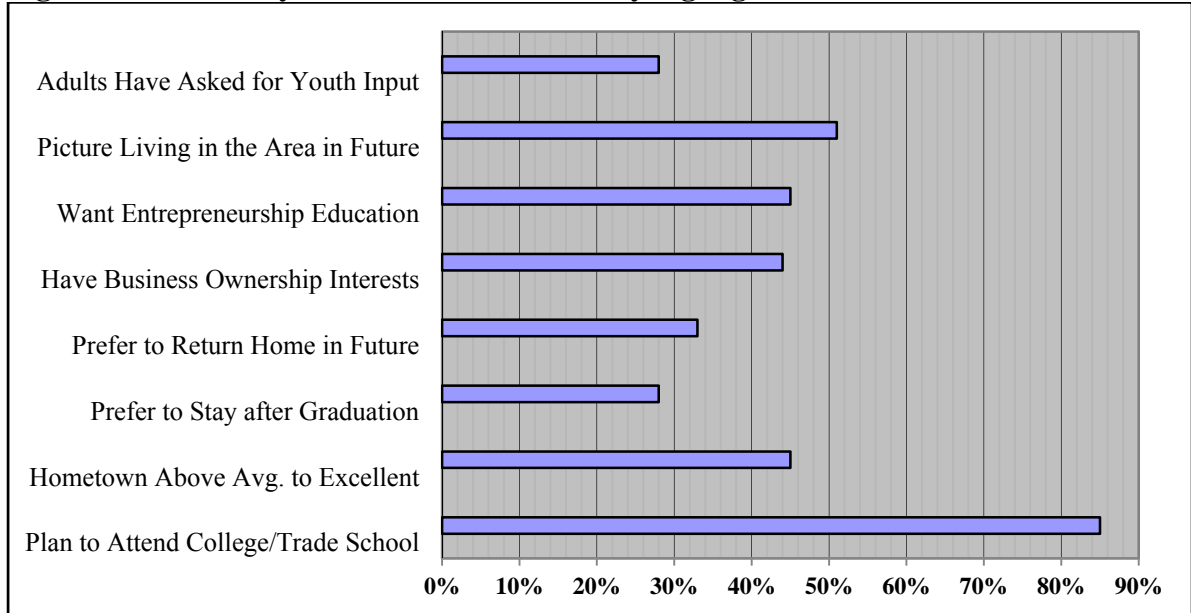
Why would youth like to stay? The study found that family ties and a good place to raise a family were two important motivators for 45% of the survey participants to remain in or return to their communities (Karen Dabson 2010). These factors are strong emotional ties that a community can use as social capital when developing a campaign for youth attraction and retention.

In addition to understating the emotional tie to place, too often, rural communities encourage youth to leave their roots and seek their futures elsewhere instead of providing the basis for them at home. This holds true for higher education as well as job searches. In the survey done by the University of Nebraska, an unusually high number of Midwestern students (86%) planned to go on to college. This is an opportunity for communities to emphasize their access to good community colleges, branch campuses of major universities, distance education and apprenticeships. Rural communities have the resources available to match their educational assets with the needs of young people and provide avenues to keep them closer to home.

The final point made in the University of Nebraska study, is that young people may well represent a rural region's economic ability to grow. The survey indicated that the series of responses regarding entrepreneurship show a significant amount of interest in small business ownership. Forty-four percent (44%) of those surveyed stated an interest in business ownership, and in fact, 14% of the population answering the survey already

owned businesses. Added to this, 45% of all respondents said that they would like to take an entrepreneurship class linked with hands-on learning experiences (Karen Dabson 2010).

Figure 2.1 Youth as your best resource – survey highlights



The findings of this survey promote the theory that young people want to stay in rural communities. It is up to the communities to promote the opportunities available and to help the students realize their potential in rural Kansas and the Midwest.

The role of family networks in determining a location has been found to play an important role in reducing the uncertainty associated with returns of migration and to increase the returns from migration with higher wages and employment (Nene et al., 2009). The cost of moving has been found to be mainly psychological and the act of moving is likely to be associated with the displeasure of being away from family and friends. Family members in a potential destination may reduce the costs of moving by providing direct assistance with needs such as food, housing and transportation.

On the other hand, family ties have been found to reduce the probability of migration (Nene et al., 2009). Local kinship ties and children's social networks deter the migration of families with children. Family networks provide information on job market conditions of the potential destination. Many people in the U.S. find jobs through recommendations from family members and friends and many employers recruit through recommendations from current employees. Job seekers benefit from the use of networks through reduced search costs. Information ideas and resources embedded in networks that link family, friends and neighbors across origins and destination communities also influence the direction of migration (Nene et al., 2009).

2.2 Retention Methods that have been tried in the past

The literature continues to circle around to the same conclusions, and the three main theories about retaining and attracting youth in rural communities: Communities require more job opportunities to keep youth at home; Education is a main factor for out-migration, whether they are seeking education or seeking to use the education that they have received; and Once a young person leaves a community, they are 'lost' to the community. Despite the failure of past community policies to address the problem, researchers continue to support these theories because they are not able to escape the mentality that the problem is driven by economic issues.

For example, Shaffer et al. (1999) writes:

[M]any community planning groups have historically embraced the notion that any types of new jobs are helpful to community stability....Community planners are told by potential new employers that relocation of their businesses and industries will help retain workers, and especially young workers, but there is little evidence that the beneficial retention hypothesis is correct. Part of the reason for this stems from the fact that much of the resulting growth is in non-sustainable industries, so retention effects are short-term fixes rather than long-term solutions. Out-migration is encouraged by non-sustainable development when students

recognize the limits of the local job market and come to expect that they will be forced to take jobs in occupations different than their parents.

It is easy to argue that job opportunities do not lead to reduced youth out-migration because the wrong type of jobs are being brought into rural areas. However, we argue that even if jobs created in rural areas met the ideal, i.e., they were a mix of primary and secondary labor market jobs and they were sustainable and led to other jobs being created, young people would still leave rural areas (Amanor-Boadu et al., 2000). There is evidence in Canada that 40% of rural youth will still be willing to move to an urban center even if they had the appropriate job in their community (Dupuy et al., 2000). Similarly, Besser (1995) points out that “all areas, rural and urban alike, experience out-migration of offspring between the ages of 20 and 34.”

If job availability is not the ‘silver bullet’, what factors do rural communities need to pay attention to when recruiting young people? As it relates to rural development, rural and urban life differences in quality of life issues are generally perceived to be a competitive advantage (Randy Cantrell 2008). Studies suggest that in-migrants to nonmetropolitan areas attach a great deal of significance to qualitative social, cultural and environmental characteristics (Cantrell et al., 2008).

In the study done by Cantrell and others more than one-third (38%) of responding new residents indicated that they were returning to a place where they had lived before. When presented with several recruitment factors to choose from, eight recruitment factors emerged as the most important on a 1-5 rating scale (see Table 2.2) (Nene et al., 2009).

Table 2.1 Top eight recruitment factors identified by community practitioners

Rank Factor	Scale 1-5
1 Housing availability	4.45
2 Employment opportunities (within commuting range)	4.42
3 Quality of educational services	4.18
4 Housing affordability	4.18
5 General economic viability of the region or area	4.12
6 Quality of medical services	4.06
7 Progressive community leadership	4.00
8 Availability of high-speed broadband communications	4.00

Source: Panhandle recruitment and retention Delphi survey (Nene et al., 2009).

Data shows that communities are doing very little to recruit and retain new residents in their area. Gibson’s survey went on to ask why they perceived their communities were often doing relatively little regarding either recruitment or retention of new residents. The respondents were presented with several factors that were likely to be contributors to this low new-resident recruitment effort. The four factors which community practitioners considered most important are listed in Table 2.3 (Nene et al.,2009).

Table 2.2 Community cultural factors creating hesitancy regarding new resident recruitment implementation and success

Factor	Respondents who said the factor is important in their community
Fear of change to community culture	74%
Expected increase in crime and disruption	65%
Fear of greater ethnic diversity	55%
Lower income households moving income	50%

Source: Panhandle recruitment and retention Delphi survey (Nene et al., 2009).

Regarding recruitment, results revealed that the top two recruitment factors according to the community developers are employment opportunities and housing availability. The findings also indicated that communities typically have had limited specific involvement in the recruitment of new residents. Respondents cited fear of change to community culture

and the fear of an expected increase in crime and disruption when new residents come to town as the two leading factors for their community's reluctance to engage in new resident recruitment. However, respondents indicated this reluctance was declining and, conversely, there was greater willingness to come up with sound new resident recruitment plans for their communities (Nene et al., 2009).

In this study, targeted recruitment appeared to be the most popular with the respondents, with about 80% of the respondents reporting in favor of it. Community practitioners converged on the recruitment of (1) younger families and (2) business entrepreneurs to their communities as their two prime target groups. However, the recruitment of younger people emerged as the top priority/target for communities. Young family households were thought to bring new life to the communities through bringing a younger workforce, new entrepreneurship ideas and leadership skills, continuity in the school system, cultural diversity, and increased retailing activity supporting local businesses. Of the techniques likely to shape the mode of future new resident recruitment, community practitioners came to strong consensus on: (1) strong Internet recruitment efforts, and (2) coordinated multiple-follow-up interactions with any potential new residents.

As for retention, a majority of the community developers initially noted their communities presently were not engaging in any new resident retention strategies at all. And when asked what they saw as possible efforts, the respondents viewed community celebration events as the most effective strategy in retaining new residents. On the retention of new residents, the study progressed from community developers acknowledging that their communities were presently doing very little to an overwhelming interest in developing a

process for active retention in the future. Again, this was an indication that the survey process itself was possibly educational for the participants (Nene et al., 2009).

Input from new residents, regarding what they think, is also helpful in convincing them to remain in the community. When asked for advice on retention, the newcomers' indicated communities should:

- Make use of new resident welcome programs, but be consistent
- Create opportunities for newcomers to participate actively in community affairs
- Develop and encourage new resident networking opportunities
- Hold periodic community social functions which include a special reaching out to newcomers
- Create more opportunities for leadership development and legitimate participation in community affairs for new residents
- Develop a clear and positive "community vision" for the future
- Develop individual job and career enhancement opportunities for new residents
- Encourage the development of an open-minded community attitude toward new residents and new ideas.

In summary, community practitioners need to make effective use of the traditional media and the Internet to market their communities. In addition, they have to know what they want to market (their strong points), figure out what the overall recruitment message will

be, and how they want to position the community. In a nutshell, a community should develop or build a unique community identity and vision to which prospective new residents can identify (Nene et al., 2009).

Conclusions made from the results of this study indicate that in order to retain new residents, communities need to devote ample resources to: reduce the shortage of housing; make services that appeal to different age groups available; create a positive attitude toward new residents; hold periodic community social functions with the purpose of reaching out to the newcomers, create new resident networking opportunities and welcome programs; and give new residents opportunities to genuinely participate in community affairs.

According to Gibson, communities that are being challenged by population declines and associated consequences are in a competitive environment with other communities and regions. They must be active, not passive. Failure to do otherwise may well be their socio/economic demise in these turbulent times (Nene et al., 2009).

2.3 Career aspirations of youth

In order to better understand the careers currently being fulfilled by those living in Wabaunsee County, we can pull data provided by the United States Census Bureau. Below is Table 2.4 indicating those careers being done by employees over 16 years of age who indicated Wabaunsee County as their residence in the 2010 Census.

Table 2.3: Employment Data from the US Census

Wabaunsee County, Kansas	Number	Percent
Employed civilian population 16 years and over	3,492	100.0
OCCUPATION		
Management, professional, and related occupations	1,163	33.3
Service occupations	460	13.2
Sales and office occupations	795	22.8
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	58	1.7
Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	461	13.2
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	555	15.9
INDUSTRY		
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	294	8.4
Construction	347	9.9
Manufacturing	408	11.7
Wholesale trade	123	3.5
Retail trade	324	9.3
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	274	7.8
Information	69	2.0
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	194	5.6
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	125	3.6
Educational, health and social services	845	24.2
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	149	4.3
Other services (except public administration)	119	3.4
Public administration	221	6.3
CLASS OF WORKER		
Private wage and salary workers	2,296	65.8
Government workers	758	21.7
Self-employed workers in own not incorporated business	425	12.2
Unpaid family workers	13	0.4
Labor Force Data		
In labor force (population 16 years and over)	3,598	68.2
Mean travel time to work in minuets (workers 16 and over)	29.4	

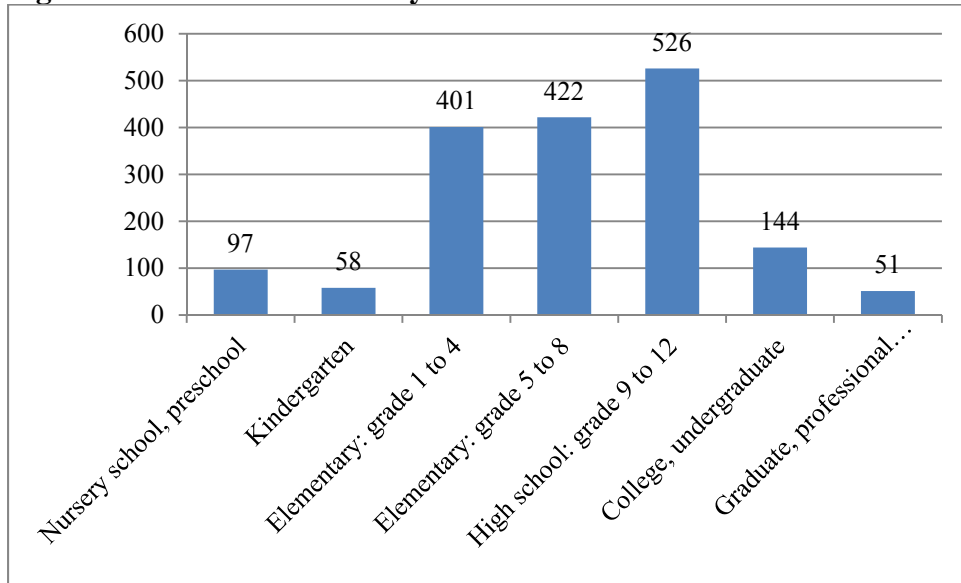
Source: U.S. Census Bureau (www.census.gov).

As reported in the last data set in Table 2.4 above, the average drive time to work for residents of Wabaunsee County is about 30 minutes. This data indicates that the majority

of employees commute out of county to work. The drive from the Wabaunsee County seat, Alma, to Topeka is approximately 30 minutes. The drive from Alma to Manhattan is also approximately 30 minutes. These two metropolitan areas consistently draw employees and retail dollars out of Wabaunsee County. This is one premise for the research included in this thesis.

Wabaunsee County students attend one of five school districts. The two school districts located in Wabaunsee County are USD #330 and USD #329. Table 2.5 shares the enrollment data by grade level for Wabaunsee County as reported by the 2005-2009 Census.

Figure 2.2: Wabaunsee County Enrollment Data from the 2000 Census

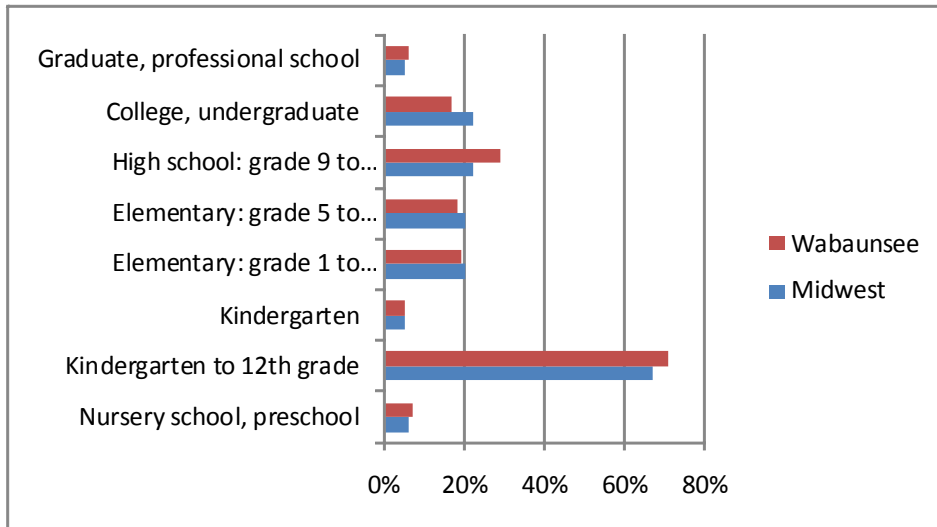


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 4, Matrices PCT61, PCT62, PCT63, PCT65, and PCT66.

The enrollment data in Table 2.5 indicates that fewer students are enrolled in the grades leading up to high school, than are currently attending high school. This trend holds true throughout the Midwest, as indicated in Table 2.6, comparing the percentage of students

enrolled in Wabaunsee County classes to those same populations across the Midwest. Given that these figures are so similar, and trend together, we expect the results of this thesis to be applicable to communities and youth across the Midwest.

Figure 2.3: Percent of population enrolled in school



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Data Set: 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

CHAPTER III: SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

3.1 Profile of All Respondents

There are two high schools located in Wabaunsee County. Of the 121 students enrolled at USD #329, 72 surveys were completed, a 60% completion rate. Wabaunsee High School is located 30 miles east of Manhattan, Kansas and 30 miles west of Topeka, Kansas.

Wabaunsee High School serves the communities of Alma, McFarland, Paxico, and Maple Hill.

Of the 156 students enrolled at USD #330, 100 surveys were completed, a 64% completion rate. USD #330 is a 2-A school district located approximately 30 miles southwest of Topeka. It includes small portions of Shawnee, Lyon, and Osage counties as well as the eastern one-half of Wabaunsee County. The school district encompasses 370 square miles with approximately 525 students attending Pre-K through Grade 12. The towns of Dover, Eskridge, and Harveyville are included in the District Boundaries.

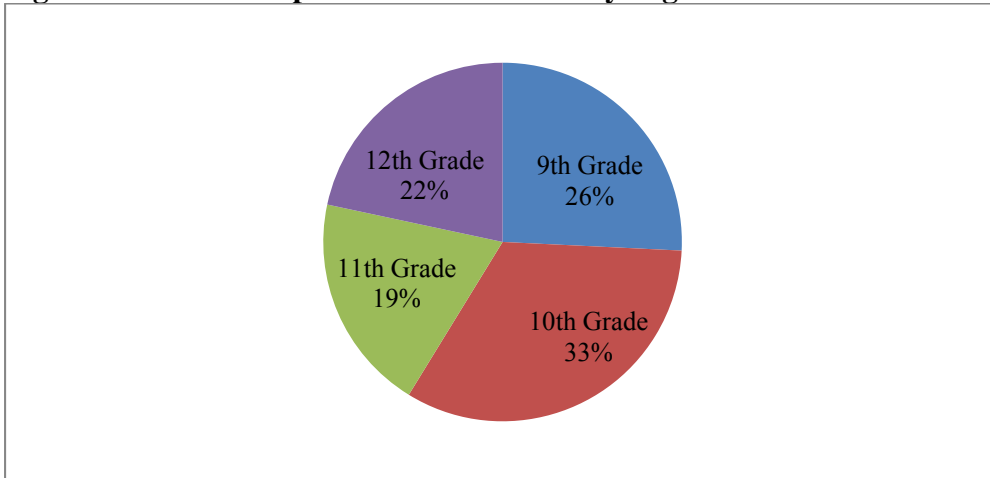
3.1.1 Descriptive Analysis

Of the 172 total responses, only 97 indicated their grade level. This is in part, due to the fact that Wabaunsee High School students, inadvertently, did not receive this portion of the survey. Table 3.1 quantifies enrollment numbers for each high school in the 2010 – 2011 school year. Of the respondents at Mission Valley, 25 were in the 9th grade, 32 were in the 10th grade, 19 were in the 11th grade and 21 were in the 12th grade. Figure 3.1 indicates these numbers as a percent. Wabaunsee High School enrollment for 2010-2011 was a total of 121, with 40 students in 9th Grade, 22 in 10th Grade, 35 in 11th Grade and 24 in 12th Grade.

Table 3.1: Enrollment numbers for 2010-2011 School Year

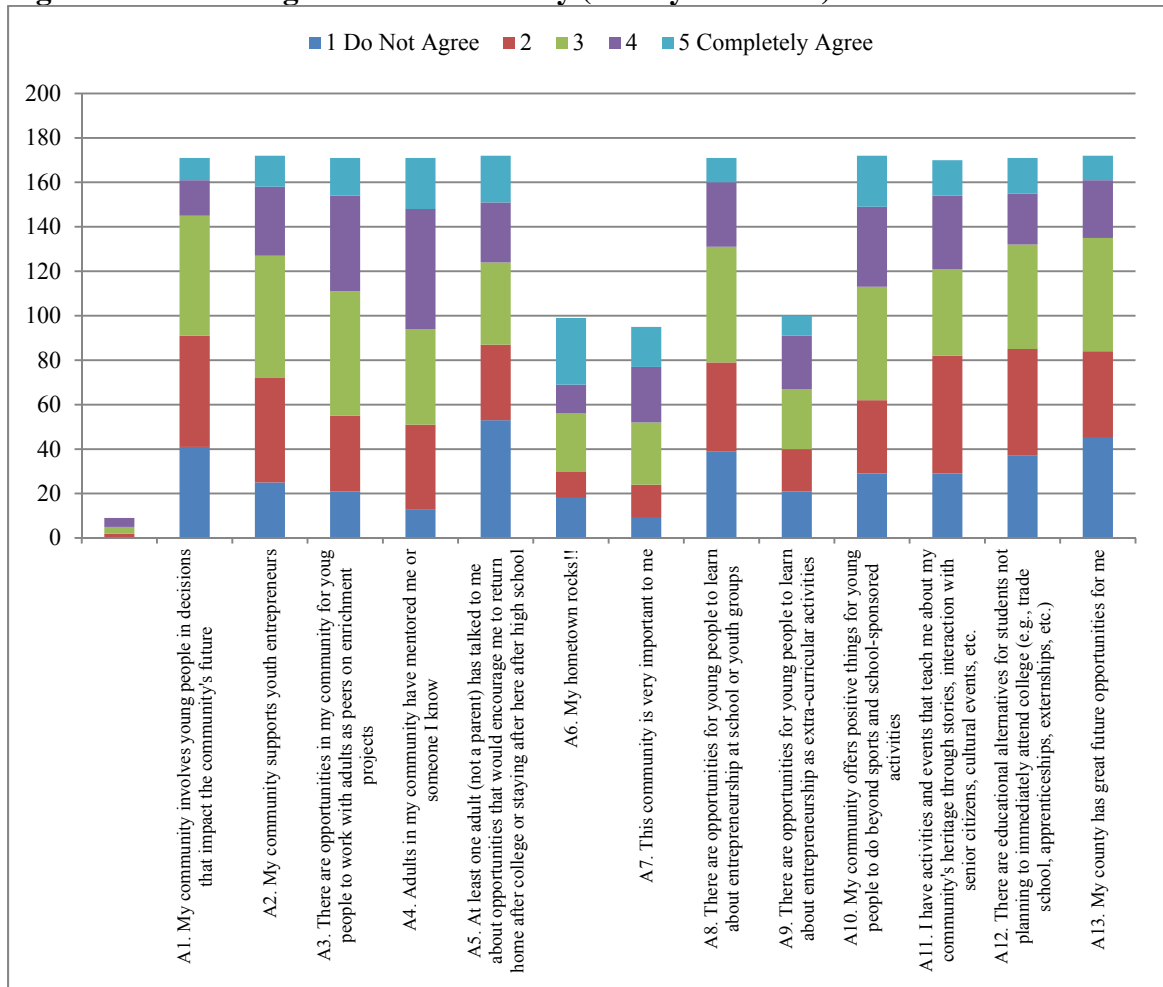
Grade	Mission Valley	Wabaunsee	Total Students
9 th	38	40	78
10 th	48	22	70
11 th	28	35	63
12 th	35	24	59
<i>Total</i>	<i>149</i>	<i>121</i>	<i>270</i>

Figure 3.1: Grade responses at Mission Valley High School



The survey was divided into four sections. The first section was “Knowledge About Community”. These questions are identified by the letter ‘A’. Figure 3.2 below shows the full range of responses to each question in the community section.

Figure 3.2: Knowledge About Community (Survey Section A)

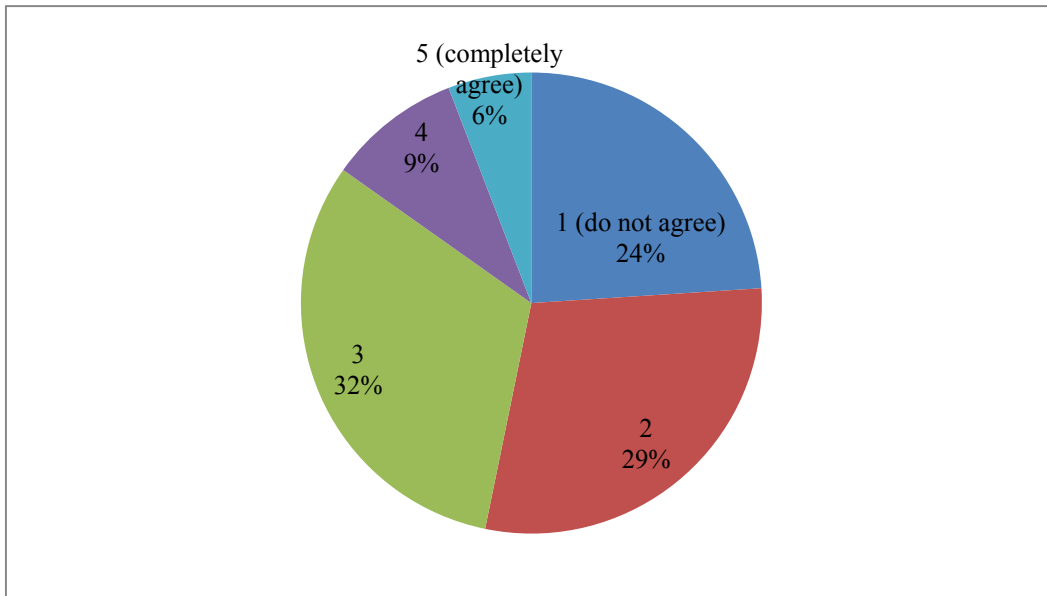


When reviewing the data per individual question, there are many inferences that can be made. The first question on the survey was in regard to the level of involvement that young people have in community decision making. As indicated in Figure 3.3 and Table 3.2 below, 30 more students indicated a level 1 (do not agree at all) than those that indicated 5 (completely agree).

Table 3.2: My community involves young people in decisions that impact the community’s future

Scale	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 (do not agree)	41	23.8	24.0
2	50	29.1	53.2
3	54	31.4	84.8
4	16	9.3	94.2
5 (completely agree)	10	5.8	100.0
Total	171	99.4	
Missing	1	.6	
Total	172	100.0	

Figure 3.3: My community involves young people in decisions that impact the community’s future

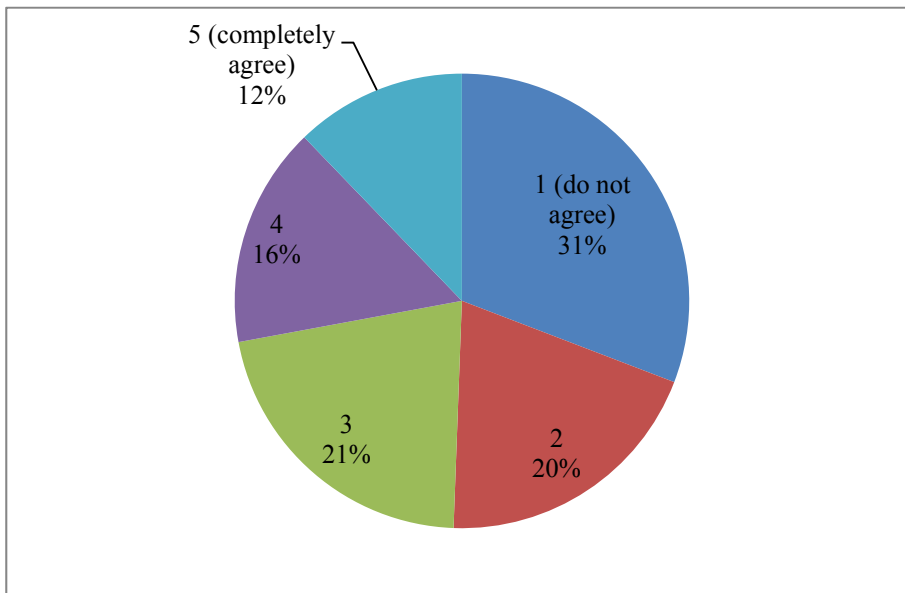


A survey question pertaining to adults communicating local opportunities to youth indicated that 31% of students had not experienced that encouragement while 12% completely agreed that they had experienced that encouragement. These figures are show in Table 3.3 and Figure 3.4.

Table 3.3: At least one adult (not a parent) has talked to me about opportunities that would encourage me to return home after college or stay here after high school.

Scale	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	53	30.8	30.8	30.8
2	34	19.8	19.8	50.6
3	37	21.5	21.5	72.1
4	27	15.7	15.7	87.8
5	21	12.2	12.2	100.0
Total	172	100.0	100.0	

Figure 3.4: At least one adult (not a parent) has talked to me about opportunities that would encourage me to return home after college or stay here after high school.

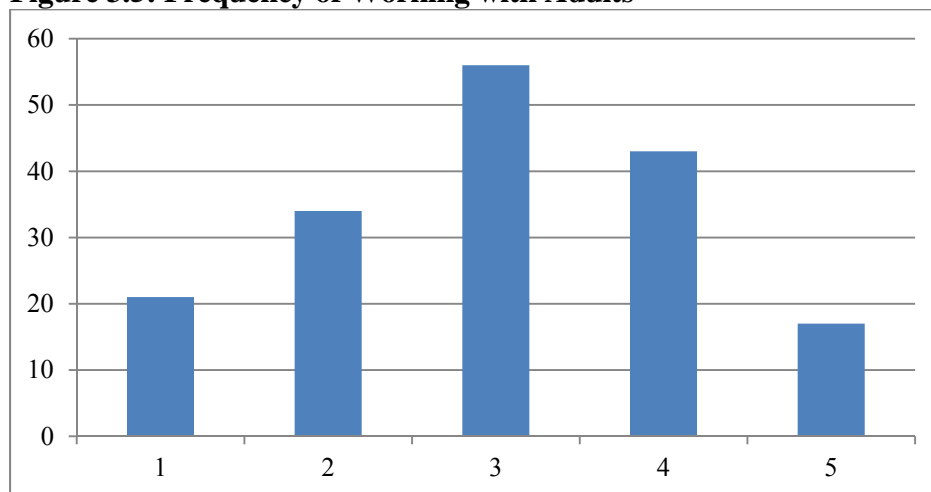


When asking students about opportunities to work with adults, the majority of respondents were in the middle, but more answered ‘do not agree’ than those that answered ‘completely agree’ as shown in Table 3.4 and Figure 3.5 below.

Table 3.4: There are opportunities in my community for young people to work with adults

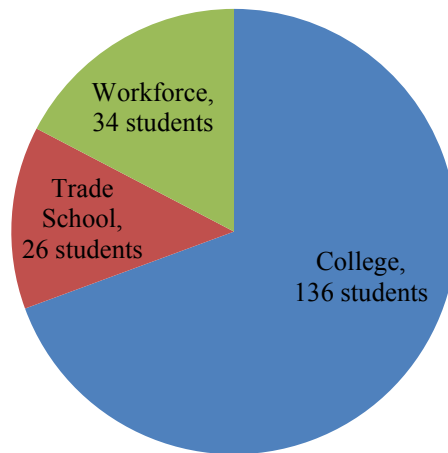
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1(do not agree)	22	12.8	12.8	13.6
2	34	19.8	19.8	32.6
3	56	32.6	32.6	65.1
4	43	25.0	25.0	90.1
5 (completely agree)	17	9.9	9.9	100.0
Total	172	100.0	100.0	100.0

Figure 3.5: Frequency of Working with Adults



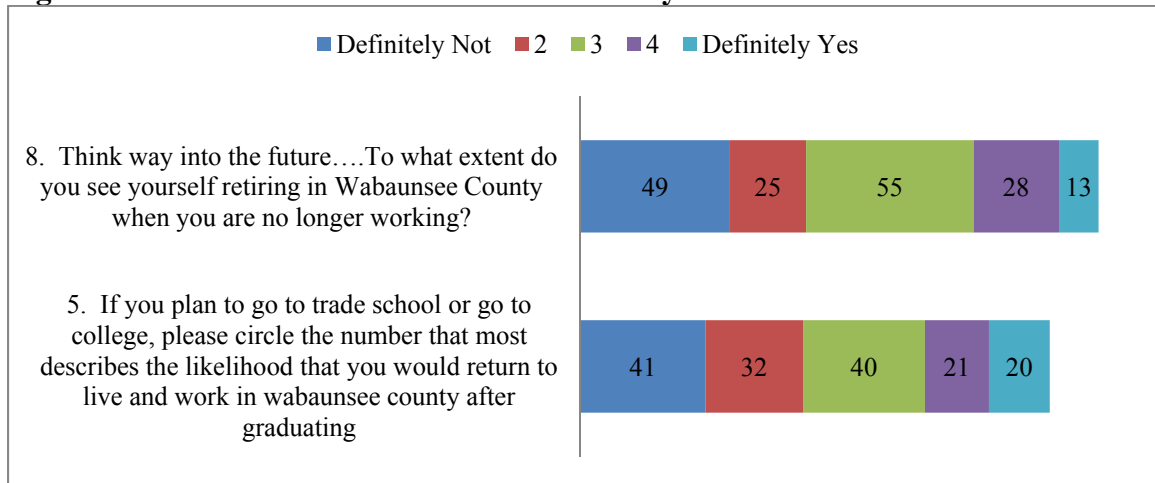
The second section of the survey asked questions regarding the students future plans, secondary education, career and retirement (survey section B). Figure 3.6 indicates the distribution of those students who intend to attend college, attend a trade school or join the workforce. The majority of students (136) indicated that they do intend to attend college after high school.

Figure 3.6: Please select one of the following to indicate your plans after high school: A) Attend College; B) Attend a trade school; C) Join the workforce



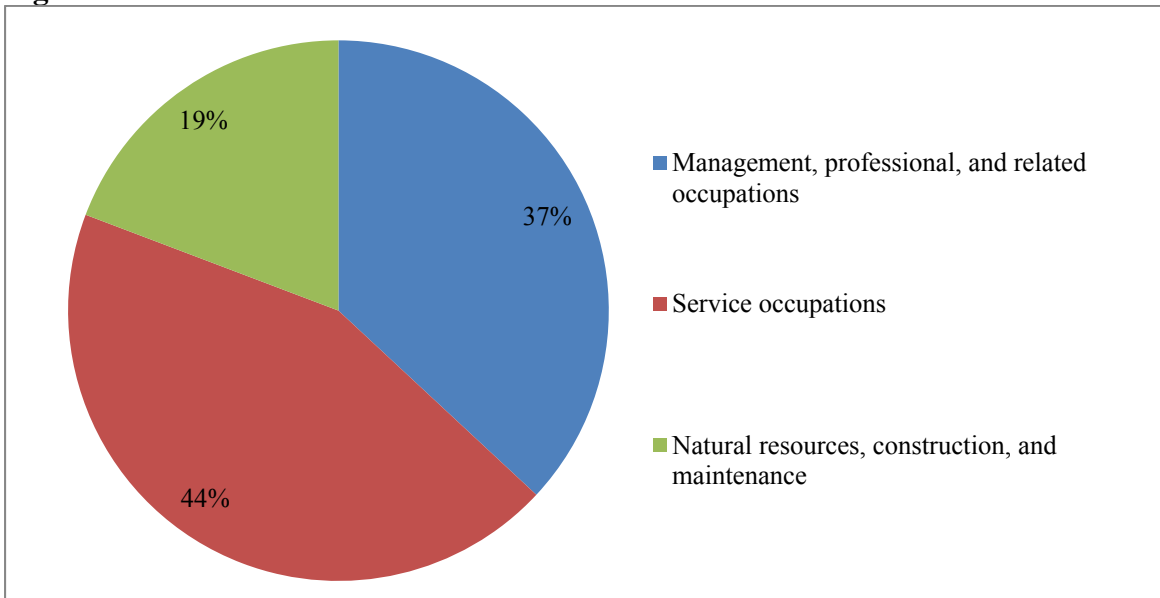
Students were then asked if they intended to return to or stay in Wabaunsee County after High School. Question five asked those students who intended to go to college or trade school to indicate the likeliness that they would return to Wabaunsee County after receiving their education. As shown in Figure 3.7, 41 students indicated ‘1: definitely not’, another 41 students indicated 4 and ‘5 definitely yes’. Question eight in the future section of the survey asked about the students intent to retire in Wabaunsee County. Also in Figure 3.7, more students indicated no interest in returning to Wabaunsee County than those who did have an interest.

Figure 3.7: Intent to return to Wabaunsee County



When asked if they had thought about what they would like to do for a living, 143 of the 172 students answered yes. The students were then asked to fill in the blank with their top career choice. Using the United States Department of Commerce career categories, we were able to group the identified careers into five categories. Figure 3.8 illustrates that none of the students indicated careers in the ‘production, transportation, and moving materials’ category, nor did they indicate careers in the ‘sales and office occupations’ category. When looking at career choices indicated by the students the majority, forty-four percent, fell into the ‘service occupations’ category, these included everything from the medical field to culinary careers, and law enforcement. The second most identified category fit thirty-seven percent of students’ career choices. This was the ‘management, professional and related occupations’ category. This category includes careers such as teachers, attorneys, accountants and biologists. The third category identified was ‘natural resources, construction and maintenance’. Nineteen percent of the students selected this category. It includes careers in agriculture, welding, and engine mechanics.

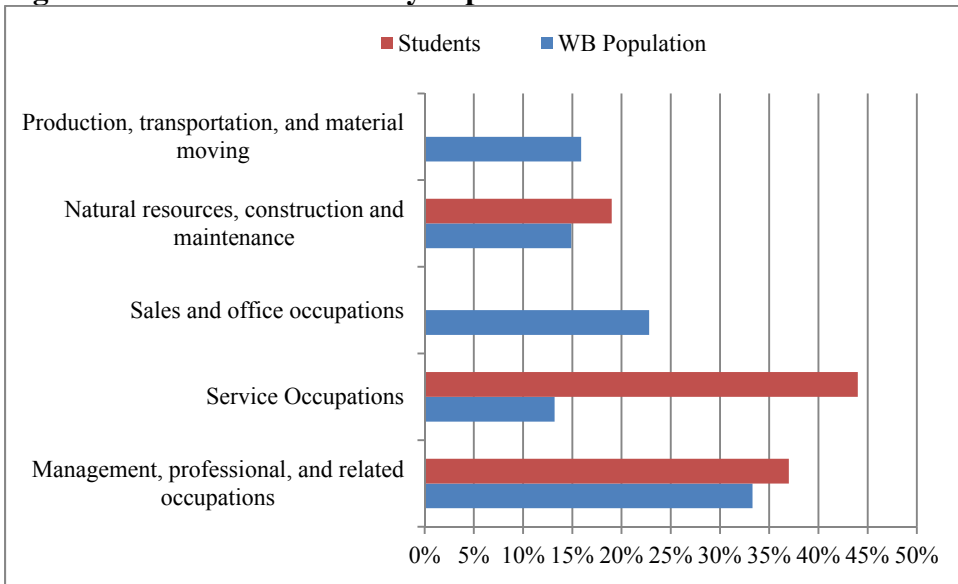
Figure 3.8: Students Career Choices



When comparing the students' career selections to those careers actually being fulfilled by Wabaunsee County residents, there are quite a few discrepancies. Figure 3.9 compares the existing Wabaunsee County population's current careers as indicated by the US Census to those careers indicated by the students in the survey.

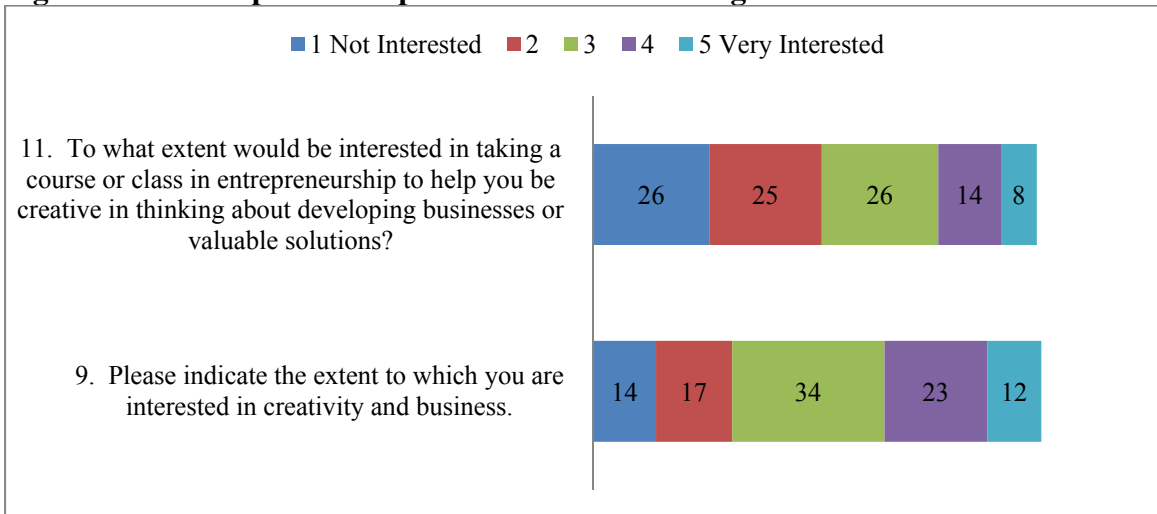
None of the students indicated careers in Production, Transportation and Material Moving, or Sales and Office Occupations. As indicated in Figure 3.9, 37% of the students indicated careers in management, while 33% of the population are actually working in those occupations, this includes Education, Legal, and Art related careers. Careers in Service Occupations captured 44% of the student respondents while only 13% of the population is currently in those careers. These include Healthcare, Protective Services, and Food Preparation. Careers in Natural Resources, Construction and Maintenance were indicated by 19% of student respondents, while 14% of the current population is in those positions. These include farming and ranching, construction, and heating & air.

Figure 3.9: Wabaunsee County Population Career Choices



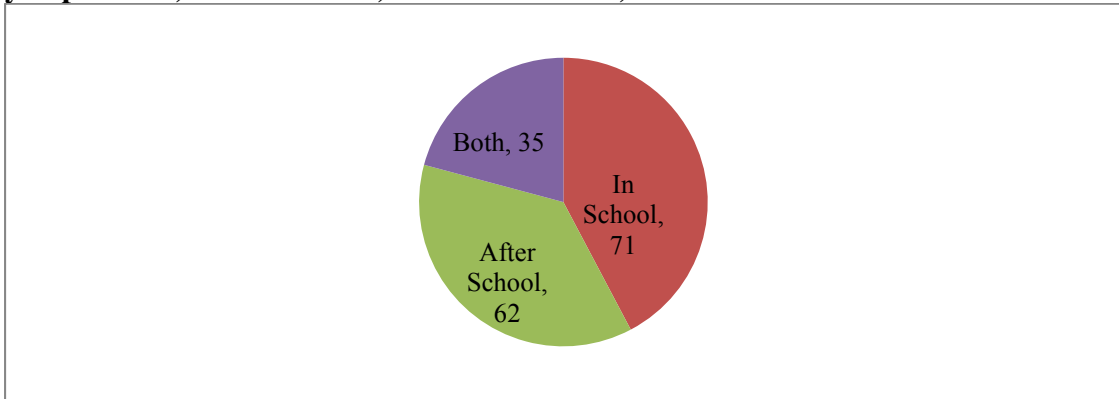
The third section of the survey concentrated on the entrepreneurship interest of the students and what education and training they would take advantage of (survey section C). Figure 3.10 demonstrates the responses to questions nine and eleven of this section of the survey.

Figure 3.10: Entrepreneurship Education and Training



Students were then asked to indicate when and where entrepreneurship training would best accommodate their needs. Figure 3.11 below indicates the responses to question twelve in this section of the survey.

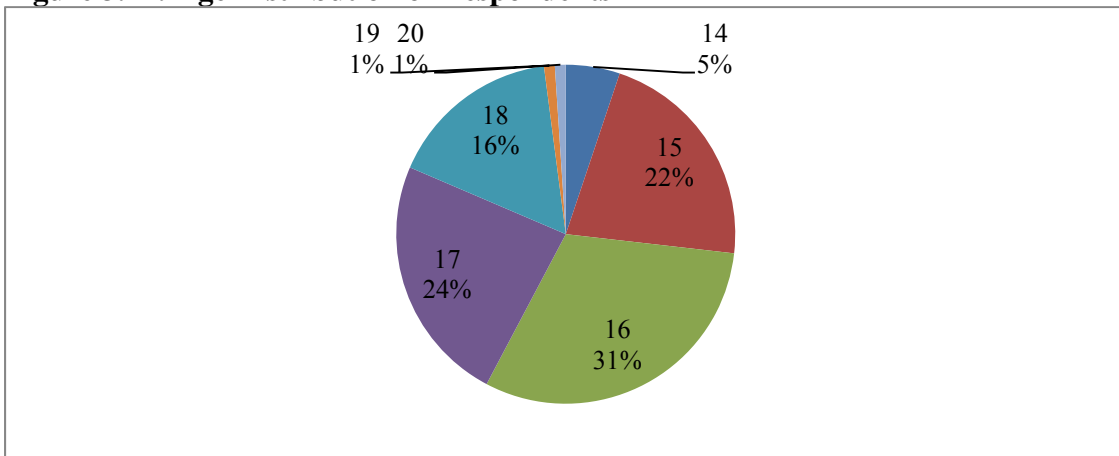
Figure 3.11: If you would be interested in entrepreneurship training or class, would you prefer A) in school or B) after school or C) both



When asked in question ten, “Do you have business ownership interests in your community, e.g., family farm/business?” 64 students responded yes.

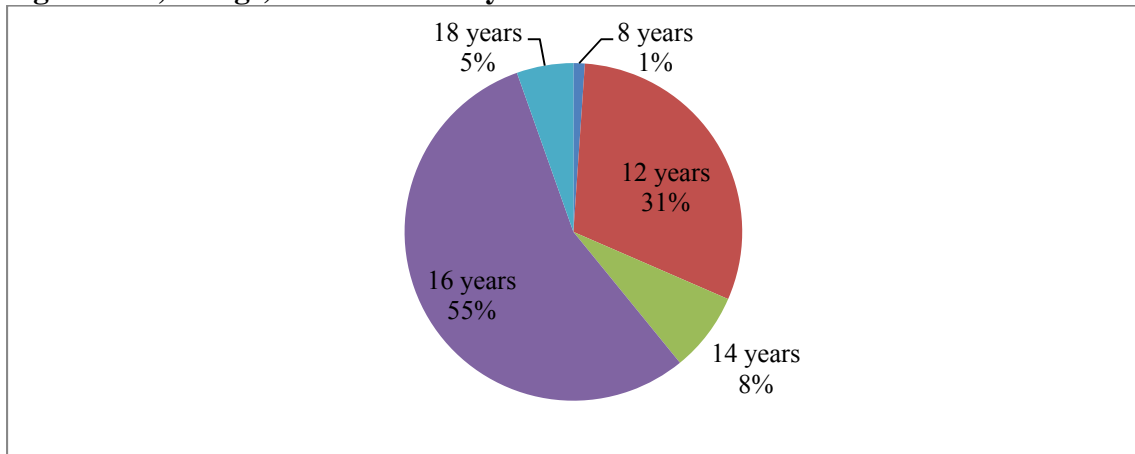
The final section of the survey covered the students’ family demographics (survey section D). Figure 3.12 indicates the ages as reported on the surveys by the students.

Figure 3.12: Age Distribution of Respondents



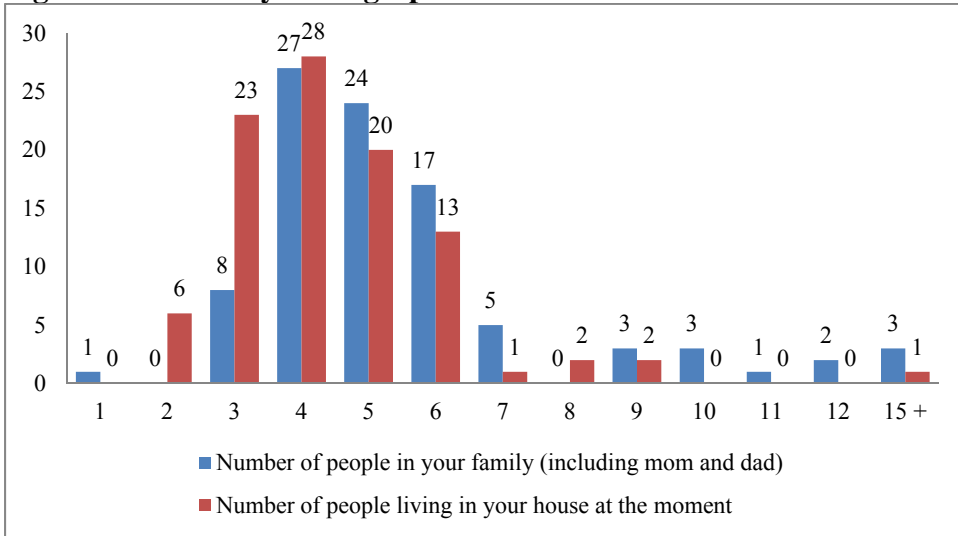
The students were also asked to report the highest level of education attainment in their immediate family. From the responses on the survey, eighth grade was translated into eight years of education, high school was translated into twelve years, associate's degree was translated into fourteen years, bachelor's degree was translated into sixteen years and a master's degree was translated into eighteen years. Figure 3.12 indicates the distribution among the respondents.

Figure 3.13: The highest level of education attainment in your immediate family (e.g., high school, college) translated into years



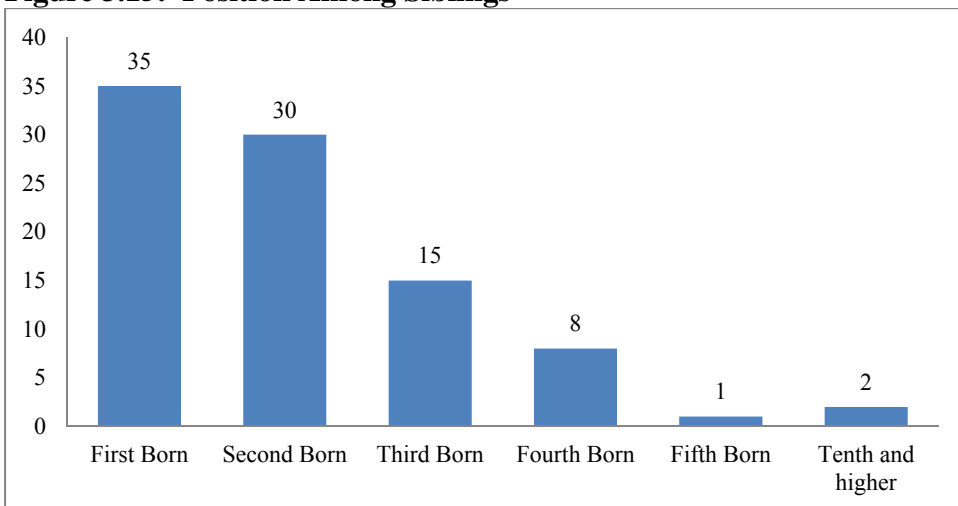
The final questions of the survey were in regard to the family of the students'. The survey asked about the number of people in the family and the number of people in the student's home. These responses are indicated in Figure 3.13 below. The majority of students indicated four people in the family and four people in the home.

Figure 3.14: Family Demographics



The final question of the survey asked the students what position they were born among their siblings. Figure 3.14 indicates the number of students who responded that they were first born, second born, third born, fourth born, fifth born and those who responded a number about tenth born. There were no responses between fifth born and tenth born.

Figure 3.15: Position Among Siblings



3.2 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is a statistical method that attempts to “explain movements in one variable, the dependent variable, as a function of movement in a set of other variables, called the independent variables, through the quantification of a single equation”

(Studenmund 2006). Regression analysis is helpful in providing explanations of causal relationship; hence it was used in this study to address some of the objectives. For this data set, we will use a Multinomial Logistic Regression. Multinomial logistic regression is used to analyze relationships between a non-metric dependent variable and metric or dichotomous independent variables. Multinomial logistic regression compares multiple groups through a combination of binary logistic regressions. The group comparisons are equivalent to the comparisons for a dummy-coded dependent variable, with the group with the highest numeric score used as the reference group. In order to make better use of all 13 variables related to community, we combined variables into components using a rotated component matrix. The results are shown in Table 3.5 below.

Table 3.5: Rotated Component Matrix for Community Variables

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
A1. My community involves young people in decisions that impact the community'	.726	.252	.167	-.062
A2. My community supports youth entrepreneurs	.839	.093	-.164	-.094
A3. There are opportunities in my community for young people to work with adults	.680	.162	.187	.330
A4. Adults in my community have mentored me or someone I know	.360	.390	-.398	.511
A5. At least one adult (not a parent) has talked to me about opportunities that	.115	.056	.124	.847
A6. My hometown rocks!!	.122	.894	.094	.138
A7. This community is very important to me	.208	.879	.079	.111
A8. There are opportunities for young people to learn about entrepreneurship in School	.660	.203	.244	.165
A9. There are opportunities for young people to learn about entrepreneurship in extra-curricular activities	.865	.022	.137	.183
A10. My community offers positive things for young people to do beyond sports	.651	.008	.366	.338
A11. I have activities and events that teach me about my community's heritage	.176	.348	.683	-.004
A12. There are educational alternatives for students not going to college	.274	-.091	.783	.295
A13. My county has great future opportunities for me	.028	.290	.340	.474

Using the data from the matrix, we identified four components: 1. Entrepreneurial Support; 2. Community Connection; 3. Alternative Education; and 4. Adult Support. These components combine the related variables into a single comparison point for use in the regression analysis. The highlighted data in the component columns indicate which variables have the highest value and will be grouped into each component. Only variables with a value above 0.5 were used to generate each component. In the first column, those variables ranging from 0.651 to 0.865 have been grouped and identified as being closely related to entrepreneurial support. Those variables in the second column ranging from 0.879 – 0.894 are related to community connections. The variables in the third column ranging from 0.683 – 0.783 are relate to alternative forms of education and information

sharing. Those variables in the fourth column ranging from 0.511 – 0.847 are relate to adult support. These four components are then used as variables in the regressions below.

The analysis used in this model is a multinomial logistic regression (mlogit). The mlogit method fits maximum-likelihood multinomial logit models. Because there are multiple categories, we will choose a base category as the comparison group. These models are necessary when we have a categorical dependent variable beyond binary. In this case, the dependent variable gave respondents five possible answers.

The generalized logit model focuses on the individual as the unit of analysis and uses individual characteristics as explanatory variables. The explanatory variables, being characteristics of an individual, are constant over the alternatives. Equation 3.1 below demonstrates the theory behind the multinomial logit model.

The probability that individual j chooses alternative l is β The multinomial logit model specifies:

$$P(Y_i = j) = P_{ij} = \frac{\exp(x_i' \beta_j)}{\sum_{l=1}^m \exp(x_i' \beta_l)} \quad (3.1)$$

where Y_i represents the j th individual's choice from the given alternative reasons; $j = 0, 1, \dots, m$ and $l = 0, 1, \dots, m$ indicates possible reasons considered in the study (Greene 2008).

The estimated equations provide a set of probabilities for the $m+1$ choices for the decision maker with the characteristics x_i . β_j is set to one for the base category. The coefficients β_l represent the l^{th} alternative over the last alternative.

For this thesis, we are interpreting the regression results in terms of relative risk. Relative risk, or odds, are the ratio of the probability of choosing one outcome category over the probability of choosing the reference category. We can use the relative risk ratio option for a multinomial logistic regression in the Stata software to display the regression results in terms of risk, as shown in Table 3.6. The exponentiated coefficients in the multinomial logistic regression are the relative risk ratios—the ratio of the relative risk for a one-unit increase in x to the relative risk when x is unchanged.

3.3 Factors influencing the students intent to return to Wabaunsee County

We first looked at the data concerning those students who indicated that they would like to return to Wabaunsee County after college, as a function of the entrepreneurship component, community component, alternative education component, adult support component, age, birth position, business interest and family business opportunities.

There were 75 valid observations in this model. In the case of this model, respondents were asked to define the extent to which they would return to work in Wabaunsee County after college. The survey questions defined the answers at each end of the scale as (1) definitely will not return and (5) definitely will return, leaving the values in-between unassigned by terminology. The analysis will predominately compare the data reported by each of the two outer response categories. The base outcome is made up of those respondents who answered that the definitely won't return by indicating a "1" on the survey. Thus, our outcomes provide the likelihood that a respondent definitely will return as compared to those who definitely won't return. When looking at the data from those who indicated "5" (definitely would return), the three significant variables indicated by the model are Community Connections, Family Business Opportunities, and Age.

According to this data set and the given results, entrepreneurial support, alternative education interest and adult support do not play a role in young people's decision to return to Wabaunsee County, however, their connection to their community does show a significance level of 0.011. The z-score indicates that the community connection component is up to 2.56 standard deviations away from the mean and the standard error is 48.86 which is the exponentiated 1.39. The positive RRR indicates that young people are more likely to return to Wabaunsee County after college if they feel connected to their community. In fact, the ratio of the probability that the respondent definitely will return compared to the ratio of the probability that the respondent definitely will not return when they have a strong community connection is 35. We can say that for one unit change in the respondents' community connection, we expect the odds of choosing to return after college (5) over definitely not returning (1) to increase by 35.096. So we can say that the relative risk of leaving Wabaunsee County, not to return, is higher for students who do not have a strong connection to the community.

Of the variables associated with family demographics, neither birth position nor business interest proved to be significant in this data set. Age however has a significance level of 0.08 with a standard deviation of -1.75 and a standard error of 0.177. The age coefficient was reported as -1.71 indicating that the older the students get, the less likely they will indicate that they want to return to Wabaunsee County after college. The RRR for age is 0.181. This figure indicates that for each additional year in the respondents' age, we expect the odds of choosing to return after college (5) over definitely not returning (1) to increase by 0.181. So we can say that the relative risk of leaving Wabaunsee County, not to return,

is higher as students get older. For each additional year increase in age, the respondents were 71% more likely to answer definitely will not return.

The family business variable also proved to be significant at the 0.04 level. The standard deviation is 2.07 and the standard error is 975.179. The RRR of 345.152 indicates that those families with business opportunities are more likely to have youth who are interested in returning to Wabaunsee County after college. Compared to those who definitely won't return (1), those with business interest are nearly six-times more likely to respond that they definitely will return (5). It makes sense that this figure and the community connection RRR would be related, as the family business might play a role in the community connection. This evidence supports the hypothesis that those young people most interested in entrepreneurship and business in Wabaunsee County have a connection to a family business.

**Table 3.6: Multinomial Logistic Regression, Relative Risk Ratio–Return after College
(Highlighted variables are statistically significant at the 10% or lower level)**

Number of obs =	75	Log likelihood		-78.0751		
LR chi2(32) =	72.27	Pseudo R2		0.3164		
Prob > chi2 =	0.0001					
Variable	RRR	Std. Err.	z	P>z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Response: 1 (definitely not)	(base outcome)					
Response: 2						
Entrepreneurship	1.309	0.603	0.580	0.560	0.530	3.231
Community Connection	3.600	1.876	2.460	0.014	1.297	9.995
Alternative Education	3.559	1.914	2.360	0.018	1.241	10.209
Adult Support	1.403	0.720	0.660	0.509	0.513	3.836
Age	1.584	0.665	1.100	0.273	0.695	3.609
Birth Position	0.509	0.239	-1.440	0.150	0.202	1.278
Interest in Business and Business interest in WB	0.778	0.314	-0.620	0.535	0.353	1.718
	0.451	0.507	-0.710	0.478	0.050	4.073
Response: 3						
Entrepreneurship	1.173	0.437	0.430	0.669	0.565	2.433
Community Connection	2.791	1.172	2.450	0.014	1.226	6.355
Alternative Education	2.032	0.797	1.810	0.071	0.942	4.382
Adult Support	1.075	0.427	0.180	0.856	0.493	2.342
Age	1.455	0.512	1.070	0.287	0.730	2.901
Birth Position	0.606	0.193	-1.570	0.116	0.324	1.132
Interest in Business and Business interest in WB	0.848	0.273	-0.510	0.608	0.451	1.594
	1.244	1.061	0.260	0.798	0.234	6.614
Response: 4						
Entrepreneurship	1.496	0.846	0.710	0.476	0.494	4.534
Community Connection	4.217	2.675	2.270	0.023	1.216	14.621
Alternative Education	1.262	0.691	0.430	0.670	0.432	3.688
Adult Support	2.601	1.583	1.570	0.116	0.789	8.575
Age	1.000	0.465	0.000	1.000	0.402	2.487
Birth Position	0.312	0.183	-1.980	0.048	0.099	0.988
Interest in Business and Business interest in WB	0.813	0.363	-0.460	0.643	0.339	1.951
	1.696	1.883	0.480	0.634	0.192	14.942
Response: 5 (definitely will return)						
Entrepreneurship	0.540	0.446	-0.750	0.456	0.107	2.723
Community Connection	35.096	48.863	2.560	0.011	2.292	537.471
Alternative Education	0.615	0.579	-0.520	0.605	0.097	3.886
Adult Support	0.287	0.281	-1.270	0.203	0.042	1.960
Age	0.181	0.177	-1.750	0.080	0.027	1.226
Birth Position	0.806	0.291	-0.600	0.550	0.397	1.637
Interest in Business and Business interest in WB	2.865	2.119	1.420	0.155	0.672	12.213
	345.152	975.179	2.070	0.039	1.359	87692.180

3.4 Factors influencing the students intent to retire to Wabaunsee County

For another perspective on the respondents' intentions to return to Wabaunsee County, we have selected the same set of variables as a function of the students' intent to retire to Wabaunsee County.

The model uses those students who indicated that they intend to retire to Wabaunsee County, as a function of the entrepreneurship component, community component, alternative education component, adult support component, age, birth position, business interest and family business opportunities. The data shown in Table 3.8 is the result of a multinomial logistic regression expressing the Relative Risk Ratios.

According to this data set and the given results, none of the four community connection components play a role in determining whether a student intends to retire in Wabaunsee County. All components indicate figures that are not significant.

Of the variables associated with family demographics, none were found to be statistically significant. However, the family business variable proved to be significant at the 0.08 level. The standard deviation is 1.76 and the standard error is 19.262. We can say that for one unit change in the respondents with a business interest in Wabaunsee County, we expect the relative risk of choosing to retire in Wabaunsee County (5) over definitely not retiring there (1) to increase by 13.469. So we can say that the relative risk is higher for students who have a family business. We can make the inference that the only students looking to retire in Wabaunsee County are those who have something to return to, such as a family business. According to this data, no other variable significantly impacts that decision. Compared to those who definitely won't retire to Wabaunsee County (1), those

with business interest are nearly two-times more likely to respond that they definitely will retire in Wabaunsee County (5).

When we look at response Category 4, students who were one unit away from definitely returning to Wabaunsee County for retirement, we see data reflecting that the community connection variable as very significant. The RRR is 9.382, indicating that for one unit change in the respondents' community connection, we expect the odds of considering returning to Wabaunsee County for retirement (4) over definitely not returning (1) to increase by 9.382. This further verifies the earlier statements regarding community connection as an important factor that youth consider when determining their intent to return to a community. So we can say that the relative risk of leaving Wabaunsee County, not to return, is higher for students who do not have a strong connection to the community.

**Table 3.8: Multinomial Logistic Regression, Relative Risk – Retire in WB Co.
(Highlighted variables are statistically significant at the 10% or lower level)**

Number of obs =	85	Log likelihood		-98.438		
LR chi2(32) =	50.26	Pseudo R2		0.2034		
Prob > chi2 =	0.021					
Variable	RRR	Std.	z	P>z	[95% Conf.]	
Response: 1 Definitely will not retire		(base outcome)				
Response: 2						
Entrepreneurship	1.292	0.485	0.680	0.495	0.619	2.696
Community Connection	2.057	0.890	1.670	0.095	0.881	4.803
Alternative Education	1.399	0.581	0.810	0.419	0.620	3.157
Adult Support	1.282	0.485	0.660	0.510	0.611	2.689
Age	0.797	0.280	-0.640	0.520	0.400	1.589
Birth Position	0.499	0.189	-1.840	0.066	0.238	1.048
Interest in Business and Business interest in WB	0.740 1.594	0.230 1.305	-0.970 0.570	0.333 0.569	0.402 0.320	1.361 7.933
Response: 3						
Entrepreneurship	0.953	0.317	-0.140	0.886	0.497	1.828
Community Connection	3.329	1.300	3.080	0.002	1.548	7.157
Alternative Education	1.902	0.728	1.680	0.093	0.898	4.027
Adult Support	1.162	0.387	0.450	0.651	0.605	2.232
Age	0.682	0.214	-1.220	0.222	0.369	1.260
Birth Position	0.484	0.142	-2.470	0.014	0.272	0.862
Interest in Business and Business interest in WB	1.035 1.264	0.287 0.941	0.120 0.320	0.902 0.753	0.601 0.294	1.781 5.441
Response: 4						
Entrepreneurship	0.795	0.393	-0.460	0.642	0.302	2.094
Community Connection	9.382	5.965	3.520	0.000	2.699	32.617
Alternative Education	2.070	1.152	1.310	0.191	0.695	6.161
Adult Support	1.372	0.705	0.620	0.538	0.501	3.755
Age	0.662	0.265	-1.030	0.303	0.302	1.451
Birth Position	0.362	0.156	-2.360	0.018	0.156	0.842
Interest in Business and Business interest in WB	2.098 0.801	1.017 0.870	1.530 -0.200	0.126 0.838	0.811 0.095	5.423 6.739
Response: 5 Definitely will Retire in WB Co						
Entrepreneurship	0.782	0.443	-0.430	0.664	0.258	2.371
Community Connection	6.152	4.589	2.440	0.015	1.426	26.540
Alternative Education	0.842	0.575	-0.250	0.801	0.221	3.209
Adult Support	1.205	0.718	0.310	0.754	0.375	3.872
Age	0.509	0.257	-1.340	0.181	0.189	1.368
Birth Position	0.340	0.195	-1.880	0.060	0.111	1.045
Interest in Business and Business interest in WB	1.373 13.469	0.708 19.262	0.610 1.820	0.539 0.069	0.500 0.817	3.773 222.138

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

This thesis only validates the concern that rural communities have for youth retention today. In determining the factors that influence a young person's decision when determining whether or not to live and plan a future in Wabaunsee County, we have found that a small percentage of high school students in Wabaunsee County Kansas definitely intend to return to their community. However, there are factors that significantly influence a young person's decision

We surveyed the students' connection to their community, their future plans, their interest in entrepreneurship and training, and their family demographics. Our analysis shows that in general the three most significant factors include community connection, age and business opportunities available to the respondents.

The results of this study can be summarized as follows:

- The younger the students are, the more likely that they will answer that they intend to return to Wabaunsee County.
- Students who feel a connection to their community are more likely to indicate that they intend to return to their community.
- Young people who are exposed to a family business are more likely to have strong inclinations to return to their community.

4.2 Recommendations

The research presented in this thesis generates a dialogue for communities to take into their school systems, economic development organizations and policy arenas to develop

strategies to enhance the opportunities for young people to thrive, grow and contribute, on a long term basis.

The fact that young people are influenced by their everyday experiences and can be encouraged to either leave or return to a rural community gives leadership an opportunity to act. We can use this study to focus on those students who are most likely to return to Wabaunsee County.

The first recommendation derived from this research is to develop a plan focused on family owned businesses, the training of youth in those businesses and succession planning for the future of those family businesses to be passed down. This effort could be incorporated into the school system through internships, job-shadowing, and applied business courses. In addition to those students who have access to family owned businesses, the same results may come from placing interested students into businesses who do not have an obvious 'heir'. Wabaunsee County can encourage the development of small and medium-sized businesses that can offer small business ownership or quality level jobs to young people. Through the economic development council the county can create and ensure access to technical assistance and business coaching in the development of businesses owned by young people. In addition, employers can use youth currently in the school system as the next pool of entrepreneurs, business owners, and employees.

A second recommendation would be to enhance the opportunities for youth to connect with their community. This encompasses engaging youth in local decisions, seeking out the opinions of young people and actively pursuing youth as partners in community planning efforts. Wabaunsee County currently provides one High School yearbook class with the

opportunity to contribute to the local newspaper by designing a page layout each week focusing on activities at the school. If both high schools had that opportunity, it would provide one more level of connection for those youth and their families. Connections through local media can be expanded on immensely through articles about ‘good kids’ or local youth serving as guest writers to name a few. Each city council could incorporate a position for a young person on the council, in committees or as a liaison.

The final recommendation derived from this thesis is to create a community plan focused on youth. Mapping the community’s assets, especially with an eye to matching educational and training assets with young persons’ educational and career plans would assist the youth in preparing for a future that includes Wabaunsee County.

This thesis provides valuable information from the youth in Wabaunsee County, and generates more questions for future projects. In analyzing the data, I realized that including a question regarding gender would have provided more points of comparison and added another level of focus for the recommendations and conclusions. In addition, the data would provide a clearer picture of the students’ intentions if each response were labeled with a level of severity, example: Definitely Not, Probably Not, Undecided, Probably Yes, Definitely Yes.

The method of distribution and collection for the surveys caused a handful of students to be left out of the data pool. The data would be more complete if the students were surveyed in various periods, ensuring that all students received an opportunity to complete the survey, not just one period of the day.

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APPENDIX I: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

IMPROVING COMMUNITY CONNECTION TO ITS YOUTH: THE CASE OF WABAUNSEE COUNTY

This survey is intended to provide information about high school students' perceptions about opportunities in their communities. You are under no obligation to complete it. However, your answers will help the Wabaunsee County Economic Development Corporation develop programs that could help increase its attractiveness to its young people now and in the future. Could you please take a moment of your time to complete the survey to the best of your ability? The information you provide is anonymous unless you choose to provide identifying information at the end of the survey. However, we shall keep all the information you provide confidential and shall not be used in any way that reveals your identity. Additionally, your refusal to complete this survey shall in no way cause you any loss of privileges. If you have any questions, please ask your teacher or contact Mrs. Abby Amick at 785-765-4655 or abby@wabaunsee.com. Thank you.

A. Knowledge About Community

1. On a scale of 1 (Don't agree at all) to 5 (Completely agree), please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
My community involves young people in decisions that impact the community's future					
My community supports youth entrepreneurs					
There are opportunities in my community for young people to work with adults as peers on enrichment projects					
Adults in my community have mentored me or someone I know					
At least one adult (not a parent) has talked to me about opportunities that would encourage me to return home after college or staying after here after high school					
My hometown rocks!!					
This community is very important to me					
There are opportunities for young people to learn about entrepreneurship at school or youth groups					
There are opportunities for young people to learn about entrepreneurship as extra-curricular activities					
My community offers positive things for young people to do beyond sports and school-sponsored events and activities					
I have activities and events that teach me about my community's heritage through stories, interaction with senior citizens, cultural events, etc.					

There are educational alternatives for students not planning to immediately attend college (e.g., trade school, apprenticeships, externships, etc.					
My county has great future opportunities for me					

B. Future Plans

2. Please select one of the following to indicate your plans after high school:

Activity	Check(X)
Attend College	
Attend a trade school	
Join the workforce	

3. If you plan to join the workforce after high school, please indicate if you would prefer to work in Wabaunsee County. ___Yes ___No
4. If you plan to join the workforce after high school, please indicate if you would prefer to live in Wabaunsee County. ___Yes ___No
5. If you plan to go to trade school or go to college, please circle the number that most describes the likelihood that you would return to live and work in Wabaunsee County after graduating on a scale of 1 (No likelihood of returning) and 5 (Definitely returning to live here)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

6. Have you thought about what you would like to do for a living? ___Yes ___No
7. If your answer above is Yes, please indicate your top choice of what you would like to do for a living in the box below. If you said “No”, then proceed to the next question.

--

8. Think way into the future To what extent do you see yourself retiring in Wabaunsee County when you are no longer working? 1 = Definitely not, 5 = Definitely yes.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

C. Entrepreneurship Education And Training

9. Please indicate the extent to which you are interested in creativity and business.
(1 = Not interested; 5 = Very interested)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

10. Do you have business ownership interests in your community, e.g., family farm/business?

Yes No

11. To what extent would be interested in taking a course or class in entrepreneurship to help you be creative in thinking about developing businesses or valuable solutions?

(1 = Not interested; 5 = Very interested)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

12. If you would be interested in entrepreneurship training or class, would you prefer in school or after school or both? (Circle one)

In school	After school	Both in school and after school
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D. Demographics

13. Please complete the following table as it applies to you:

Your Grade	
Your Age	
The Highest level of education attainment in your immediate family (e.g., High school, college)	
Number of people in your family (including mom and dad)	
Number of people living in your house at the moment	
Your position among your siblings (e.g., first born, 3 rd child, last born)	

Thank you for completing our survey. The information you have provided will help us develop programs for future students and plan youth involvement in our economic development initiatives in the county. Good luck and thank you again.

So far, none of the information you have provided can be traced to you. However, if you are interested in receiving more information about entrepreneurship or business internship opportunities, please contact Abby Amick at the Wabaunsee County Economic

Development Office 785-765-4655 or abby@wabauunsee.com. Please do not provide any contact information on this document. Thank you.