Theses and Dissertations (All)

6-8-2012

Personal and Social Identity Development: Experiences of Social Mobility

Brenda K. Bretz
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Follow this and additional works at: http://knowledge.library.iup.edu/etd

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT:

EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL MOBILITY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Brenda K. Bretz

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

May 2012

Indiana University of Pennsylvania
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of Sociology

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Brenda K. Bretz

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

_____   _____
Robert Heasley, Ph.D.
Professor of Sociology, Advisor

_____   _____
Valerie Gunter, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Sociology

_____   _____
Melanie Hildebrandt, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Sociology

ACCEPTED

_____   _____
Timothy P. Mack, Ph.D.
Dean
School of Graduate Studies and Research

Title: Personal and Social Identity Development: Experiences of Social Mobility

Author: Brenda K. Bretz

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Robert Heasley

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. Valerie Gunter
                                    Dr. Melanie Hildebrandt

    Social mobility, moving into a higher socio-economic standing than that of one's birth, is an important ideal in American society.   In the process of moving up from one socio-economic class to another, individuals encounter the cultural traits, such as behaviors, attitudes and the values that are unique to each social class. While the American ideal presupposes that anyone can make this move, little is known about what happens to these individuals during the transition nor is there understanding of how they experience this change in their life situation. The objective of this study was to understand the phenomenon of personal and social identity development and socio-economic class allegiance that occurs for those who have been upwardly socially mobile.

    This study was completed within the interpretivist research paradigm using a philosophical hermeneutics approach since the focus is to understand. Thirty-nine individuals who were the first in their family to graduate from college, and who have attained a professional position, participated in this study. In-depth interviews were conducted with the participants in which they recalled their experiences and reflected on their own understanding of their transition and identity.

    The transcripts of the participants' understanding, their reflection of that experience and my analysis of them add to the body of knowledge that exists regarding what the upward social mobility process is like, particularly in regard to personal and socio-economic standing identity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

goal. Without you, this would never have been possible. In October 2011, we welcomed

Madeline, our granddaughter; I wish for you love and peace. I offer this gift to remind you

that women can set and accomplish their goals and that everyone deserves to have their

voice heard and their story told. This dissertation is dedicated to you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

But there has been also the American dream, that
dream of a land in which life should be better and
richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for
each according to his ability or achievement. (Adams,
1932)

Even though the phrase "American Dream" did not enter the lexicon until 1932 when

it was made popular by James Truslow Adams in his book, *The Epic of America,* the belief

that anyone in the United States can improve his/her life circumstance always has been a

central theme of American ideology. This core belief that everyone has the opportunity to

achieve a high economic and social position, even when born into a family of low socio-

economic standing, was laid out in the *Declaration of Independence* (1776).

Those individuals who achieve the American Dream, making the transition from a

low to high socio-economic class, are celebrated for their upward social mobility. While we

believe that anyone can make this move and may even know someone who has, what we do

not know is what happens to these individuals during the transition. Nor do we always

understand how they experience this change in their life situation. The objective of this

study was to understand the phenomenon of personal and social identity development and

socio-economic class allegiance that occurs for those who have been upwardly socially

mobile.

Individuals signal their affinity with their socio-economic class by their behaviors,

attitudes and values – i.e., the cultural traits – that tend to be associated with it. Bourdieu

(1986) explains that different groups and the cultural traits that they observe are granted

differing levels of status in society. This means that one's socio-economic class, and the

culture associated with it, also serves as a measure of social status in society. It is

commonly accepted that those who observe the culture associated with low socio-economic

class are granted lesser status in society than those whose culture is associated with high socio-economic class (Gilbert, 2003). This study is concerned with the cultural traits that individuals observe as they move from the one socio-economic class to another, therefore the focus will be on the status group associated with one's socio-economic class. And, since status is associated with the traits that signal one's socio-economic class, those in the low socio-economic class will be considered part of the low status group and those in the high socio-economic class will be considered part of the high status group.

Data indicate that earning a college degree is the best way for someone who grows up in the low status group to be eligible for the types of professional positions that will allow them to be upwardly social mobile (Beller & Hout, 2006). Individuals with a post-secondary degree have a greater chance than those with just a high school diploma to achieve personal economic success as well as to contribute economically, culturally and civically to society (Choy, 2001).   A college degree also increases an individual's chances of employment stability, even during times of economic recession. As of January 2012, the unemployment rate for those with only a high school diploma was 9.5%, while only 4.2% for those with at least a bachelor's degree (Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Status, 2012). Bishaw & Semega (2008), using data from the 2007 American Community Survey report that the amount of education an individual completes directly correlates to annual income. According to the January 24, 2012 *News Release* from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in the fourth quarter of 2011, weekly earnings of individuals aged 25 or older who were working full-time and had a high school diploma were $444 while those with a bachelor's degree earned $1,158 per week. Turner (1987) explains that these differences in income by level of education as well as the differences in wealth, privilege and prestige that different educational credentials provide fail to cause public outcry because of the core belief as

articulated by Adams (1932) that the United States is a meritocracy -- open system where success is available to everyone based on their own aspirations and hard work.

Believing in meritocracy does not mean that the path to upward mobility is an easy one. Many from the low status group who seek a college education encounter challenges. Some individuals lack encouragement and financial support from their families (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Strayhorn, 2006). It is also true that some students are not eligible for a college education because they are unprepared academically by their primary and secondary education (Alon & Tienda, 2005; Grodsky, Warren & Felts, 2008; Ishitani, 2006). In many cases, high school teachers and counselors do not guide students from the low socio-economic class toward college or help those who aspire to college with the practical aspects of the application process (Freie, 2007). When students from low status group are able to get to college, many have a difficult time remaining in college for financial (Goldrick-Rab, 2006), personal (Lehmann, 2007) or academic (Grodsky, Warren, et al.) reasons. And, those low status group students who complete college and hold the professional positions for which they are eligible state that they are uncomfortable assimilating into the social and cultural milieu of their new economic standing (Dews & Law, 1995; Jones, 2004; Lubrano, Ryan & Sackrey, 1996). These studies all suggest that earning the college degree and acquiring the professional position does not guarantee smooth assimilation in to the high status group culture.

Statement of the Problem

Earning a four-year college degree provides individuals with the credential for higher paying, professional occupations and the high status culture such a position can provide. But, individuals from low status group families need more than an academic credential to transition into the culture associated with such professional positions. Graduates who come from low status group families and therefore have little or no experience with cultural norms

3

most often associated with the high status group are expected to acquire those cultural traits. The behaviors, attitudes and values associated with the high status group culture may differ and even conflict with what they were exposed to and learned while growing up. Those who come from the low status group must decide if and to what extent they will adopt this new culture. This decision has both personal and social identity implications.

Most of what has been written about those from the low status group who are first in their family to graduate takes the form of personal narrative (Lubrano, 2003; Ryan & Sackrey, 1996) and almost all focus on those with academic careers (Dews & Law, 1995; Jones, 1998 & 2004) and include individuals from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds. To date, there is no published empirical research on how low status group Whites, who are first in their family to graduate from a highly selective private college experience these cultural decisions and the way in which they identify in terms of the culture associated with that status group. Do they find similarities between these cultures? Are there differences such that they feel the need to reject one and adopt the other? Or do they create an identity that combines aspects of both cultures?

<div align="center">Purpose of Research</div>

The purpose of this research is to understand how Whites, who are in the first-generation of their family to graduate from college and obtain professional positions, experience upward social mobility. In particular the research addresses how individuals experience transitions from the culture associated with their status group of origin to that of their professional role. In addition, this research seeks to understand the status group identity of those who made this transition, and how that identification informs their sense of integration in these two status groups.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were: What is the self and social identity process like for those White individuals who were first generation college graduates and who have attained a professional position in society? In what way(s) do they identify with their status group of origin? In what way(s) do those who were first generation college graduates identify with the status group associated with their professional role? To what extent and in what way(s) do they maintain an identity in both status groups?

Research Design Overview

This study was conducted using an interpretivist approach recognizing that reality is a social construction (Willis, 2007). The objective was to understand the phenomenon of personal and social identity development and status group allegiance that occurs for those who have been upwardly socially mobile. Taking a purposive approach, I limited the study to Whites who are in the first generation of their family to graduate from college, specifically Dickinson College. This site was chosen because it is a highly selective, private liberal arts college, the type of institution chosen by very few first-generation college students (Bishaw & Semega, 2008) but the type of institution that prepares students for professional, high status group occupations. More than 500 White first-generation graduates of Dickinson College expressed interest in the study. In-depth interviews with thirty-nine of them were conducted in order to gain an understanding of their experience as they recalled, constructed and shared their own understanding of their transition and identity during the process of upward social mobility. The participants' recollections and reflections add to an understanding of what the upward social mobility process is like for these individuals, particularly regarding personal and social group identity as it relates to the lifestyle of the low and high status groups.

Researcher Assumptions

The development of the research questions and the methodology used in this study reflects a critical realist perspective, acknowledging that there are structures in society that influence, but do not determine, individual behaviors and choices (King & Horrocks, 2010). Throughout life, individuals encounter and are exposed to various cultures as they interact with groups, observing the cultural traits associated with the groups to which they feel a sense of belonging. The implication, then, is that as individuals interact with various social institutions and groups, they are influenced by and may even change behaviors, attitudes and values to better align themselves with a particular group. As Simmel (1955) notes in discussing the dynamics between those who feel affinity with a particular group and those who do not belong to that group, relationships with others in that group are strengthened when one changes behaviors to fit in with a group while tension may be felt with those who do not share that same culture. These assumptions are the basis for the conceptual framework within which this research was conducted:

(1) Society is stratified with cultural traits and an assigned status that differ by level (Bourdieu, 1986; Gilbert, 2003; Weber, 1914)

(2) Individuals are exposed to and interact with different social institutions and status groups that affect identity through primary and secondary socialization (Berger & Luckman, 1966);

(3) The way individuals respond to institutions and status groups during secondary socialization will affect their identity and the extent to which they interact and integrate with those groups (Hurst, 2007; Kaufman, 2003; Phinney, 1989; Reay, Crozier & Clayton, 2009; Simmel, 1955).

Rationale & Significance

Existing literature on the topic of social mobility for first-generation college graduates exists in the form of personal essay and memoir such as those compiled by Dews & Law (1995), Lubrano (2003) and Ryan & Sackrey (1996) as well as the studies by Jones (1998; 2004). Most of these focus on only one professional group in society: college and university professors. This study includes first-generation college graduates who are professionals in a variety of fields. And, by adhering to rigorous research expectations, is designed so that the participants can share a broad range of cultural and educational experiences growing up and as a professional. This research contributes to an understanding of and builds on theories addressing identity, in particular class identity.

While not the purpose of the study, making the analysis of the recollections and reflections of the participants available to others who have experienced social mobility may allow them to reflect on their own social mobility experiences and class identification and place their own individual experience within that of a larger social group.

Researcher Perspective

I have a personal interest in the subject in part as a result of my own roots. I am the only one of my siblings and the first person in my extended White, working-class family to go to college. I earned my bachelor's degree at Dickinson College and have drawn my sample from my alma mater. Because it took me eleven years to earn my bachelor's degree, taking one course at a time while also working full-time and meeting my responsibilities as a wife and mother, my social life experience was different from that of the typical, residential student at Dickinson College who attends, full-time, and completes the degree in four years. Even so, the personal and social identity issues I faced as I achieved the American dream of social mobility may be very similar to the experience of other first-generation students.

In addition to changing the way I viewed myself intellectually, my college experience also influenced my personal life. I was aware, while going to school, that I was transforming my personal identity as well as my status group affiliation. Reconciling the values, attitudes and lifestyle of my working-class upbringing to that of the professional-managerial world of my current professional and social life was and continues to be a topic of interest to me. Social mobility affected my relationships with my family of origin, and continues to affect the way in which I interact with others from the working class as well as the professional/managerial class. Because of my own experience, I am curious to know how others have made this transition and to make those stories available to others who may also benefit from learning about these experiences.

<div align="center">Terminology</div>

Table 1 contains the definitions and, when relevant, abbreviations of the key terms used throughout this dissertation.

Table 1:
Definitions of Key Terminology Used in this Study

Term	Definition
Continuing Generation Students (CGS)	College students with one or more parents who has earned at least a four-year degree.
Culture	The attitudes, behaviors and values associated with a socio-economic class or status group.
Cultural Capital	The behaviors, activities, values and attitudes associated with a particular status group in society (Bourdieu, 1986).
First Generation College Student (FGS)	College students whose parents did not graduate from college. This includes individuals who may have siblings who also have a college degree as well as those whose parents may have begun but dropped out of post-secondary education before completing the credential. Research indicates that there is little difference in the socio-economic standing of families when the adults have no education beyond high school and those who started but did not complete college (Bishaw & Semega, 2008).
Low Status Group	Individuals from working class and/or low socio-economic class who have jobs that are low paying, typically blue collar and manual labor. Individuals in this group tend to value "doing" in leisure, giving

	primacy to any activity that requires physical action over those that depend upon mental acumen (Dunk, 2003). Their parenting style tends to be authoritarian and rule-oriented with little importance placed on engaging children in decision-making or conversation (Lareau, 2003).
High Status Group	Individuals from the upper class, who typically hold professional positions, earning a high wage. They may also have income from other sources including stocks, bonds and trusts. They tend to value the mental aspect of work and leisure, engaging in activities that are associated with high culture (Lamont, 1992). Their parenting style tends to be more child-focused in that they are highly engaged with their children, supporting their activities and including them in challenging dialogue (Lareau, 2003).
Professional	A position of status and influence in society that requires at least a bachelor's degree.
Socio-Economic Standing (SES)	A sorting mechanism used by the government to categorize individuals and families based on income and wealth.
Social Capital	The network of individuals with whom one is associated and which can provide access to

	opportunities for advancement (Bourdieu, 1986).
Social Mobility	Achieving social, education and/or economic status that exceeds that of family of origin.
Status Group	A sorting mechanism to create groups of individuals based on shared cultural artifacts, habits and activities (DiMaggio, 1987; Peterson, 1979; Swidler, 1986).

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this research is to understand how White first-generation college graduates of a highly selective private college experience upward social mobility. The focus is on how those studied experience transitions from the behaviors, values and attitudes, i.e., the cultural traits associated with their socio-economic class of origin and that of their professional role. This study was completed with the interpretivist research paradigm since the motivation is to understand how those who made this transition currently identify with regard to their socio-economic class and how that identification informs their sense of integration in these two groups. In this chapter, I provide a literature review that supports the conceptual framework of the study.

This chapter begins with a brief explanation of economic stratification in society and the way in which status is assigned based on socio-economic standing. Next, several studies that specifically focus on group cohesion and the identity that individuals have as part of their affiliation with a specific strata of society are discussed. An explanation of the role that education plays in both stratification and identity development follows. Because post-secondary education is an important component of social mobility, the literature regarding college-going behaviors of recent high school graduates, including the type of post-secondary institutions they attend and the factors that affect their ability to persist to graduation is reviewed. An examination of the studies of adults who have achieved upward social mobility is included. The chapter ends with a several conceptual models that focus on social mobility and identity development.

Social Stratification and Status Groups

Class matters in American society and has played a significant role in determining people's lives. Stratification, making distinctions between socio-economic classes in society and assigning differing values to those classes, is accepted as part of U.S. culture. Structural

functionalists, such as Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore (1945) argue that stratification is necessary in order to ensure social stability because the most difficult tasks in society will likely require special talents or training and deserve to have higher rewards to ensure that the most qualified individuals assume the roles that accomplish those tasks. These rewards may take a monetary form, such as income, or a non-monetary one, like power and prestige. The specific roles in society and their assigned value create the hierarchy in society that differentiates both the roles and those who fill them from one another (Davis & Moore).

Of course, upward social mobility is only possible when society is organized around shared traits with some groups held in higher esteem than others, creating a hierarchy, and where there is openness in society allowing for such movement. A shared trait used to categorize individuals by socio-economic standing [SES] is annual income. Social researchers found that income is not the only shared trait of those within SES categories, but that other characteristics, such as the level of education completed, job classification, and amount of wealth individuals have also align with the SES groupings. Sociologists William Thompson and Joseph Hickey (2005) provide a classification of the socio-economic class system in the United States that is relevant to this study.

Table 2:

Characteristics by Class/Socio-Economic Standing

Class/SES	Typical Characteristics
Upper Class (1% of society)	Heirs to multi-generational fortunes, prominent government officials, CEOs, celebrities and successful entrepreneurs. Incomes in 6 figures, but $500,000+ common. Ivy league education. Have power over nation's economic and political institutions. Own a disproportionate share of nation's resources.
Upper middle class (15%) (NOTE: Can also be described as Professional/Managerial class)	White collar professionals such as physicians, lawyers, professors, corporate executives and other management. Incomes in high 5 figures to low 6 figures. Highly-educated (often with graduate degrees).
Lower middle class (32%)	Semi-professionals and craftsman with some work autonomy; household incomes commonly range from $35,000-75,000. Typically, some college education.
Working class (32%)	Clerical, pink- and blue-collar workers often with low job security; common household incomes range from $16,000 to $30,000. High school education.

| Lower class (14-20%) | Poorly-paid positions or rely on government support. Many families below poverty line. Some high school education. |

Sources: Thompson, W. & Hickey, J. (2005). *Society in Focus*. Boston, MA: Pearson, Allyn & Bacon.

Upward social mobility occurs when an individual born in to a lower social class moves up the hierarchy by filling a role assigned a higher social class standing. But, while there is an American ideal of social mobility (Adams, 1932), the reality is that even in an open system, the U.S. has a history of a social class system where for many opportunities are limited. In fact, mobility -- particularly mobility from the lower and working classes to the upper middle and upper classes -- is not a common occurrence (Beller & Hout, 2006).

Beller & Hout (2006) studied intergenerational mobility, the extent to which members of one generation moves up in SES classification from that of their parents, and found that an individual's income, occupation and wealth were determined by that of their parents. Using the information from the General Social Survey of 1988-2004 to compare the standing of sons to that of their fathers, they found that even during times of overall economic growth, sons from low and working class families tended to remain in the same socio-economic class and thus did not experience upward social mobility (Beller & Hout).

Critical theorists, such as Karl Marx, argue that the limits on social mobility are a result of the structures in place within a stratified society to ensure that that those who have prestige and power in society hold on to it while simultaneously prohibiting others from attaining it (Gilbert, 2003). For Marx, it was the amount of power that individuals share within their respective SES that unites them to one another (Gilbert). Max Weber (1914) expanded on Marx's view that individuals within an SES align with one another, but argues that it is not around power, but rather around shared cultural traits.

Cultural traits that are shared by groups include such qualities as the artifacts that they acquire, the attitudes they hold and the activities in which they participate (DiMaggio, 1987; Peterson, 1979; Swidler, 1986). While there is not a single typology of cultural traits associated with each SES, Marsden & Swingle (1993), confirming Weber's (1914) theory, found that individuals acquired the artifacts, observed the attitudes and values, and engaged in activities similar to others in their SES. And it is through sharing these cultural traits, that individuals develop affinity with others in their SES.

But, one must know who else is in their SES in order to develop affinity. This is done by what Bourdieu (1986) describes as "position taking" – those symbolic practices that individuals engage in to signal to one another their position vis-à-vis socio-economic class. While such positioning can serve as a means by which a person can identify and gain support from their social group, it also can limit a person's ability to identify with or become part of other classes or groups. The issue of position taking and identification with a particular social class has relevance for those in this study. By achieving upward social mobility they will have had to negotiate affinity with, transition from, and the transition to the low/working class and professional/managerial classes with which they have interacted.

Affinity occurs as individuals create community through interaction with one another around their shared cultural traits. As they practice position taking (Bourdieu, 1986), observing the norms of their community, their desire to maintain their affinity is reinforced and their identity with that community is strengthened (Grusky, 2008).   Through this interaction, individuals acquire what Bourdieu refers to as "cultural capital", the knowledge about those symbolic practices that are distinctive to their group. In addition, Bourdieu argues that individuals build social connections with others in that group, acquiring what he describes as "social capital".

Bourdieu (1986) argues that because the desire to belong to the group is so strong, individuals will engage in the position taking to signal their identification with the culture without even realizing it because of an intangible motivator he refers to as habitus. The result is that individuals develop a sense of belonging to a group in society, a group that has its own distinctive identity because of its unique culture (Gilbert, 2003; Grusky, 2008). And so position taking takes the form of such things as deciding where to go to school and what type of job or profession to pursue based on what others in their group have done. It may be difficult for those who aspire to upward social mobility, because it may require switching allegiances from the social group of birth to that associated with one's professional role in society.

Not only must those who are upwardly socially mobile align with a different social group, but also they must begin to practice the position taking of that group by observing its cultural traits rather than those of their previous social group. Bourdieu's (1986) observation is that the cultural traits that tend to be associated with each of these social classes are not equally valued. Those traits that include cultural artifacts that are more expensive, activities and options that are more exclusive are also more difficult to acquire are thus available only to an exclusive group in society. As Davis & Moore (1945) suggest, that exclusive group will be those who fill the more valued roles in society and receive greater rewards, i.e, members of the professional/managerial and upper classes. Objective categorization by social class then serves as a proxy measure of social status in society. Therefore, those who achieve upward social mobility not only experience a change to their economic classification, but also a change in the amount of prestige they hold because of the cultural traits that signal their affiliation to that class. The prestige associated with the professional/managerial class holds higher value and status than that of their family of origin.

Since the focus of this study is on the individual's personal and social identity as it relates to these cultural traits and it associated prestige, throughout this text I will include the status group along with the SES of the individuals studied as defined in Table III.

Table 3:

Status Group Associated with Each Class/Socio-Economic Standing

Class/SES	Status Group
Low Class	Low status group
Working Class	Low status group
Low Middle Class	Low status group
Upper Middle Class/ Professional Managerial Class	High status group
Upper Class	High status group

Personal and Social Identity

To understand the personal and social identity of the individuals in this study as it relates to their upward social mobility experiences, it is important to review relevant theories related to social group affinity and identity development. Goffman (1959) was interested in the way in which individuals interact with one another in society and argued that individuals play various roles in society and in so doing absorb the meanings and expectations of those roles. Cerulo (1997) builds on Goffman's theory and posits that as individuals act out their various roles, they must interact with others through which they create their sense of self, or their personal identity. And, Stets & Burke (2000) agree that an individual's personal identity develops based on the role they play in society but also posit that as individuals create and/or join social groups, aligning with others similar to themselves, they develop their social identity as part of those groups.

18

The three studies discussed below describe the way in which individuals develop social identity as they affiliate with a group that aligns with their personal identity. In addition to providing insight into issues of identity, these works also describe the cultural traits associated with the working and professional/managerial classes, the groups represented by the participants in this study. Dunk (2003) studied the low status group of male, working class laborers, Lamont (1992) studied the high status group of male, professional managers, and Sherwood (2010) studied male and female high status group members of exclusive country clubs.

Dunk (2003) conducted an ethnographic study on a group of working-class men, using participant observation as the method of discovery. Dunk describes working-class culture as more than a "mere expression of economic interests, but rather as an articulation of various cultural phenomena in an oppositional struggle with the dominant culture which reflects the values and interests of the bourgeoisie" (p. 21). Significant is the distinction that the working-class men made between manual and mental labor which Dunk found was symbolic for them of the difference between their culture and that of the upper class. This does not mean that the men in Dunk's study rejected intellectualism. Rather, the men placed a high value on what they referred to as common sense which was important in a practical sense for their work and their leisure (Dunk). The men in Dunk's study highly valued the intellectual skill and expertise required of the manual work they performed, while simultaneously devaluing the mental work of upper class professionals. Leisure time for the men in Dunk's study was spent building or repairing things and engaging in physically challenging sports, all of which required a specific knowledge and skill valued by the working-class men (Dunk). The men develop a role as a skilled laborer which was highly valued by the group, thus reinforcing their personal identity in this role and strengthening their affiliation with their social group.

Language was also an important way for the men in Dunk's (2003) study to express their working-class culture. Dunk found that they used improper grammar, not because they were ignorant of the rules, but as a way to distinguish themselves from those in the upper class. In addition to how they themselves used language, Dunk found that the men in his study had "disdain for those who manipulate words rather than produce objects or perform useful services" (Dunk, p. 148). Using language to persuade others or to network was of no use to them in their roles within the working-class culture and anyone who might do this, Dunk observed, was considered snobbish. Dunk reported that as the working-class men expressed their role in their culture by placing value on the physical and practical aspects of life it simultaneously united them to one another while strengthening their opposition to those they viewed as the powerful of society: the upper class.

Lamont (1992) conducted a study using in-depth interviews with 160 French and American upper-middle class male executives, who by virtue of their role are placed in the high status group. The men in her study were aware of their culture and understood the role they played in it as gatekeepers, excluding those who were unworthy from professional opportunities that would allow them access to their status group (Lamont). She found that even though the men interviewed for this study did not know one another or belong to the same corporations, clubs or organizations, they shared a common set understanding of the qualities others had to possess in order to be included in their high status group (Lamont).

The men in Lamont's (1992) study established "symbolic boundaries" (p.1) to categorize individuals who would be included or excluded from their status group, using moral, socio-economic or cultural criteria. Regardless of which criteria they favored, all of the men in her study selected or excluded others based upon what they considered to be upper class characteristics (Lamont). The men who excluded others based on moral criteria assessed whether they were self-directed, egalitarian, rational, trustworthy and had a strong

20

work ethic (Lamont). Socio-economic excluders focused on whether individuals had a high financial standing, came from a similar class background, and had a position of power while cultural excluders looked at the whether others spent their leisure in ways similar to themselves, valued higher education, were self-actualized, possessed an intellectual curiosity and had a high level of linguistic ability (Lamont, 1992). She found that those in the high status group intentionally act to maintain their group's exclusivity since "if (a person is) not socialized into (upper class) culture at early age, (one) cannot easily integrate into high status groups" (Lamont, p. 3).

Sherwood (2010) studied several exclusive country clubs in the northeast United States to learn how upper class men and women use the structure of these organizations to perpetuate their high status culture. She examined the criteria through which they accepted members as well as how they determined who would be excluded. Sherwood found that members were quite conscious of the benefits that the country club afforded, recognizing that the interaction with others from their same upper class group enhanced their "social capital further by making valuable new contacts through involvement in club activities" (p. 135). Members, according to Sherwood also were aware of the advantage that country club gave their children, speaking of it as a place for them to learn the "proper dress, table manners and interacting respectfully yet comfortably with adults" (p. 38).

Sherwood (2010) like Lamont (1992) found that the country club members applied subjective criteria when explaining why certain individuals were considered acceptable to join their exclusive country club. For example, the men and women in her study thought it was important for potential members to fit in with the cultural expectations and mores of the current members. As Sherwood states, members spoke about the importance of "the ability to interact sociably" and "to dress properly" (p. 46). This means that potential members had

21

a much better chance of admission to the exclusive country club if they observed the same culture, and were of the same status group, as those who were already members.

These three studies illustrate the reinforcing influence that cultural traits has on individuals and the way in which they practice position taking to align with social groups with which they feel an affinity because it fits with their personal identity. The shared culture validates the personal identity of each individual while at the same time strengthening the connection to the group, establishing their social identity. This has implications for those in this study who aspire to upward social mobility since such an affiliation with one's status group of origin may make it difficult to separate from it. Likewise, because cultural traits are most easily learned growing up, it may be difficult for them to practice, or even to learn the position taking necessary to gain access into the high status group.

Identity Development via Primary and Secondary Socialization

Understanding the way in which individuals develop an identity to those status groups with which they have contact is important to this study. Berger & Luckman (1966) argue that personal and social identity develops through the process of socialization. The first socialization one encounters, which Berger & Luckman refer to as "primary socialization", most often occurs in the home within the intimate group of the family where individuals are exposed to and learn about their culture. The influence of primary socialization tends to be very strong because of the emotional bond that exists between family members (Berger & Luckman). It is through this process that the world is filtered to the individual by significant others and an individual's personal identification begins to form (Berger & Luckman).

Applying Bourdieu's (1986) framework, we see that as a result of primary socialization, through interaction with their family and others in that same status group,

22

individuals learn their position in society, experience the position-taking of their status group and develop comfort for the habitus that results from the communal interaction. The result is that the culture to which one is exposed during primary socialization becomes the normative reality for the individual experiencing it.

Secondary socialization takes place outside of the family in a formal environment, such as school. Sometimes, secondary socialization reinforces the culture that was learned during primary socialization and sometimes it exposes individuals to a culture that is different from what was learned at home. Berger & Luckman (1966) state that secondary socialization occurs without the emotional bonding that accompanies primary socialization. This means that the culture an individual encounters during secondary socialization will exert a varying amount of influence, particularly when that culture differs from the one learned during primary socialization.

According to Berger & Luckman's (1966) theory, the cultural norms that children learn at home during primary socialization will be either reinforced or challenged during secondary socialization that occurs in school. These two studies provide an example of this. Lareau (2003) conducted a study of childhood experiences and parenting styles of poor, low and middle class families and found differences in parenting styles based on the family's SES. Anyon (1981) conducted a study of a New Jersey school district, a setting where secondary socialization occurs, and found that while there was a formal curriculum taught to all students, the way in which it was taught differed depending on the SES of the students.

Lareau describes the parenting style in the poor and low class, i.e., low status group, families as "accomplishment of natural growth" (p. 2). The children in these families learned to obey commands, defer to authority figures and accept without question the information that was given to them (Lareau). In contrast, the middle-class parents in Lareau's study practiced what she called "concerted cultivation" where they "made a

deliberate and sustained effort to stimulate children's development and to cultivate their cognitive and social skills" (p. 5). This included opportunities to interact in conversation with adults, and to engage in problem-solving and reasoning activities.

Anyon (1981) reported that teachers in her study focused more on developing critical thinking and verbal skills in the classrooms of middle and upper class students. This type of classroom approach matches the concerted cultivation approach that children from middle class families in Laureau's (2003) study experienced at home. In contrast, Anyon also found that in the classrooms of working-class and low status group students, the pedagogy used emphasized the teacher's authority and deemphasized the student's intellectual freedom by using more worksheets and rote memorization. This style would fit well with the approach used by poor and working class families in Lareau's study. While these studies were not of the same families, they do describe the influence of SES on both parenting styles and classroom pedagogy, from which one can reasonably conclude that the cultural traits learned during primary socialization are often reinforced in the secondary socialization setting of the classroom.

Because of the strong influence of the family during primary socialization, one's personal identity is more likely to align with the culture of the status group of one's family (Berger & Luckman, 1966). And, as Anyon (1981) and Lareau (2003) show, the secondary socialization that occurs in school often reinforces the culture that students learn during primary socialization. There are times, however, when individuals have the opportunity to participate more fully in a different culture during secondary socialization. For those who aspire to upward social mobility, this interaction with a different culture will be important since it provides individuals the opportunity to learn the habitus or normative expectations of that culture. In so doing, they may also begin to acquire what Bourdieu (1986) refers to as the social and cultural capital of that status group.

Bettie's (2003) study of upwardly mobile young girls describes just that type of interactions. Bettie conducted a study at a public high school in California's Central Valley to understand the way in which white and Mexican-American senior class girls constructed their socio-economic class identity. She observed all of the girls from various ethnic and class backgrounds, but focused her analysis on the working-class girls who wanted to be seen as middle-class. Bettie found that the girls who aspired to be middle class assumed the role by practicing the behaviors of the middle-class culture. One of the most important middle-class roles that the working-class girls adopted was to become focused on their academics (Bettie). This not only positioned them to be eligible for post-secondary education – a common next step for the middle class -- but also physically positioned them into the classrooms where they interacted with mostly middle-class girls. Through proximity and interaction, the working-class girls had access to the cultural norms of the middle class, high status group (Bettie). And, as Bettie found, they were able to successfully acquire the social and cultural capital necessary to pass as a member of the middle class.

For those who aspire to upward social mobility, not only does school expose students to cultural traits different from what they have learned at home but also it provides the opportunity to find others who are like them and with whom they can form affinity in social groups. According to Berger & Luckman (1966) as individuals find others like themselves, they create solidarity around the commonly held set of beliefs or ideology. And Bettie (2003) confirms that school was where those who did not identify with their status group of origin found affinity with a group whose culture most closely matched their own sense of self. But as Simmel (1955) argued, as this type of group cohesion increases so too will conflict with those in other groups. This is particularly germane for the upwardly mobile individual from the low status group who finds affinity with individuals from the high status group, since they are interacting with two different, and potentially antagonistic, groups.

The working class girls in Bettie's (2003) study who aligned themselves with middle class girls faced such conflict with their family of origin, but the desire of the working-class girls to be aligned with the middle class girls was stronger than their need to avoid conflict with their family. Burger & Luckman (1966) account for this phenomenon in their theory of socialization. They found that even though family can be very influential during primary socialization, some individuals will shift their emotional attachment from those who influenced them during primary socialization to those who represent their desired culture whom they encounter during secondary socialization. For those individuals seeking upward social mobility, switching their allegiances and developing a strong attachment to individuals who are in the high status group may occur.

While those who aspire to upward social mobility may begin acquiring the necessary social and cultural capital during high school as those in Bettie's (2003) study did, they must continue their educational journey in order to achieve their goal. As Beller & Hout (2006) found, a college education is an important means to achieve intergenerational mobility. Therefore, acquiring a post-secondary education is necessary for individuals whose goal is to achieve the prestigious and high paying occupation associated with the high status group. Low status group students, however, encounter a number of challenges as they puruse this credential necessary to achieve upward social mobility.

Post-secondary Institutions

The first challenge that individuals seeking upward social mobility encounter regarding higher education is that of access to the type of education that will provide them with the skills and expertise to qualify them for prestigious occupations. This is because higher education in the United States is stratified. Colleges and universities are grouped by their characteristics, such as how difficult it is to obtain admission, the type of education provided, and the credential awarded. And, the different strata of educational institutions

have differing amounts of prestige. Ann Mullen (2010) who conducted a study at two institutions in different levels of this stratified system describes the higher education system in the United States as "a pyramid: at the top are a number of highly selective colleges and universities, and at the bottom cluster a large number of institutions with either minimal or open admissions standards" (p. 4). Her image of a pyramid also describes the way that prestige is assigned to institutions in each of the strata.

The institutions at the bottom of the pyramid include public and private not-for-profit and for-profit vocational schools offering a certificate or license in less than two-years along with community colleges which offer certificates and vocationally-oriented associate's degrees (Mullen, 2010). These institutions have minimal academic qualifications for admission making them more accessible to a larger group of potential students. The credential awarded by these institutions qualifies individuals for working-class occupations such as nursing aide or auto mechanic, occupations concentrated in the lower SES categories by Department of Labor (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2008). As a result, the vocational and community college tend to have a low amount of prestige.

Higher up the pyramid are the more prestigious four-year colleges and universities whose curriculum includes preparation for managerial and professional positions. These institutions have higher standards for admission as compared to the community colleges, therefore, this sector of higher education and the credential it grants is considered more prestigious. But even within this sector, institutions are further segmented by characteristics and are granted differing amounts of prestige. The popular annual college ranking editions of magazines such as *U.S. News and World Report* and guidebooks such as Barron's reinforce a hierarchy within this sector. *U.S. News Best College Rankings* uses criteria such as graduation and retention rates, faculty resources, financial resources and student selectivity to further segregate this group of schools, ranking the top 100 schools in various

segments such as regional private liberal arts colleges or national liberal arts colleges (Morse, 2011).

Barron's categorizes colleges by competitiveness of admission, creating a four-tier hierarchy from "Noncompetitive" to "Very" competitive within the sector of four-year colleges and universities. These top tier, "very" competitive schools require SAT scores above 1250 and a high school grade point average that places a student at the top of their high school graduating class while schools in the less competitive categories have progressively lower standards on these measures (Barron's, 2000). These are the schools that Mullen (2010) categories as highly selective. At the very top of Mullen's pyramid are the ivy league schools, considered the most prestigious in the country and with the most stringent criteria for admission (Barron's).

To be upwardly mobile, students from low status group families should attend a more selective and prestigious institution in order to acquire the credential that qualifies them for the types of professional positions that will place them in the high status group. But, students from low status group families tend not to attend these types of institutions. Warburton, Bugarin, Nunez & Carroll (2001) looked at those who were the first in their family to attend college (first-generation college student [FGS]), most of whom were also in the low status group, and the type of 4-year institution they attend. Their analysis reveals that FGS are more likely to attend a public rather than a private institution. Numerous studies show that low-income students with SAT scores that would qualify them for entry to a highly selective college are four times more likely to attend a non-selective college (Choy, 2001; Hahs-Vaughn, 2004; Pascarella, Person, Wolniak & Terenzini, 2004; Walton Radford, Tasoff & Weko, 2009). Even if they do apply, low income, FGS students may not be admitted since evidence shows that elite institutions are more likely to accept a less qualified, upper class (high status group) student and deny one whose socio-economic

background is below that of the institution's student and alumni population (Younge, 2006/2007).   And, it is important to note that those from the high status group understand the value of attending this type of institution. According to the National Education Longitudinal Study [NELS], students from highest SES quartiles, i.e., the high status group, rated reputation as very important when selecting an institution to attend (Ingels, Dalton & LoGerfo, 2008).   All of these studies indicate that even at the point of choosing a college the position taking of one's status group advantages those in the high status group while disadvantaging low status group students.

College-going Behaviors by Status Group

Two of the major social institutions in society, education and the family, greatly influence an individual's college-going behaviors and therefore play an important role in upward social mobility. High schools sort students into different educational program tracks, such as vocational or college preparatory and as Anyon (1981) and Lareau (2003) demonstrate, these tracking assignments are related to the family's level of education and income with students whose parents are working-class most concentrated in the vocational track and those whose parents have college degrees and hold professional/managerial positions most often placed in the college preparatory track.   A study conducted by Ainsworth & Roscigno (2005) confirms this, finding that students from the low SES, who also were more likely to have parents with manual labor jobs, were tracked into vocational courses during high school and chose to go on to the same type of jobs as their parents after high school.

Most students from the low status group have parents who did not go to college and therefore are likely to be unable to provide guidance regarding the college application process. These students need help from others during this process. Because most school systems have guidance counselors, one would expect those professionals to provide the

practical knowledge that the low status group students cannot get from their parents. Unfortunately, for those low status group students who look to college as a way to achieve their dream of upward social mobility, schools are not always filling the gap left by the parents.

In a study of juniors at a high school in a predominantly working-class community, Freie (2007) found that the guidance counselor did consult with low status group students about going to college, but provided information that limited rather than expanded the students' options. She observed that the guidance counselor presented four options to the low status group students: go to work immediately after high school, enlist in the military, attend the local community college or go to another college (Freie). And, when students expressed interest in attending a four-year college, Freie states that the guidance counselor always recommended that they first attend the community college for two years and then transfer. She further noted that neither the counselor nor the teachers had a grasp of the hierarchy of institutions or the advantages students might obtain by starting at a four-year rather than a two-year college.

A number of studies have been conducted on the college-going patterns of individuals confirming Berger & Luckman's (1966) theory that the influence of those with whom one interacts during primary socialization is very strong.

Gerber & Cheung (2008) compared students' demographic profile with institution type and labor market outcomes at graduation. They found that individuals most often choose an institution that will prepare them for the same type of occupations held by others in their status group of origin (Gerber & Cheung). According to this study, students from working-class (low status group) families tend to go to vocational schools or community colleges where they can train for vocational, which are most often also low paying occupations while those from the middle- and upper-class (high status group) families most

often attend four-year, in particular, selective schools, preparing them for professional

positions (Gerber & Cheung). The influence of what Bourdieu (1986) referred to as habitus,

that intangible motivator to act in ways that fit with one's peer group, appears to be at work

here.

      Examination of quantitative data also confirms that students from low status groups

tend to pursue post-secondary education at the types of institutions that will prepare them for

occupations more common to the peer group of their family of origin rather than for

professional positions and upward social mobility. NELS data (Figure 1) shows the results

of a study that looked at the post-secondary educational plans of students who were high

school seniors in 2004 (Ingels et al., 2008). This study found that 31.9% of seniors in the

lowest SES quartile were either not planning to continue education beyond high school

(23.7%) or planned to attend a 2-year vocational school (8.2%) compared with only 7%

from the highest SES quartile.
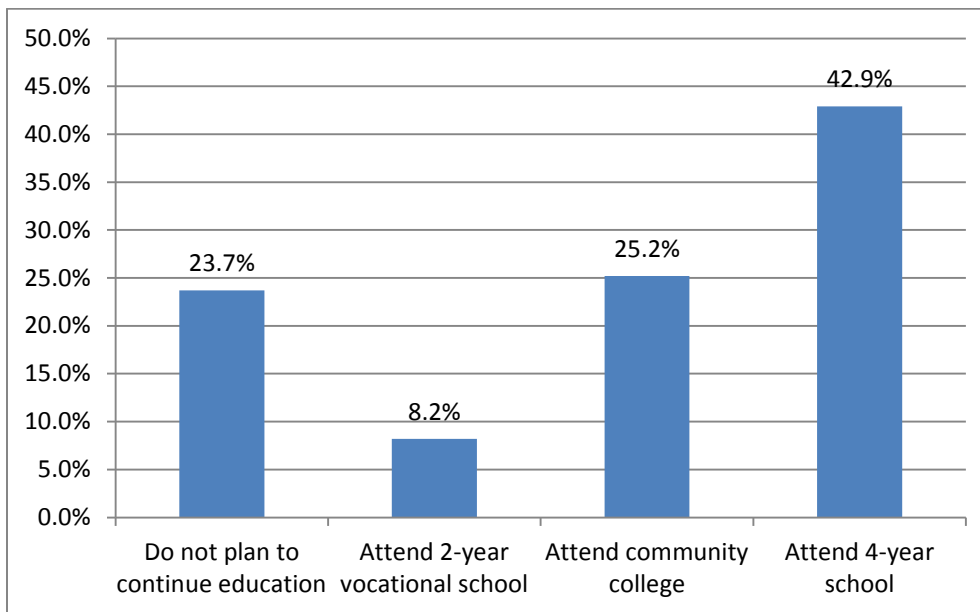
Figure 1 Post-secondary plans for 2004 high school seniors from lowest SES quartile.
Source: NELS data

      Studies of college-going plans of first-generation college students, i.e., those whose

parents do not have a college degree and who are typically low or working class SES, find

that they have lower degree aspirations than their peers whose parents have a college degree (Inman and Mays, 1999; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996; Volle & Federico, 1997). Choy's (2001) study confirms this finding and also learned that the low educational aspiration began for these students as early as the 8th grade.   She found that even though by 12th grade over 90% of all students expect to pursue post-secondary education, only about half (53%) of the FGS actually expect to earn a bachelor's compared to nearly 90% of those seniors whose parents have a college degree (Choy). Goyette (2008) conducted a study using SES data from the National Center for Education Statistics "to explore the relationship between educational expectations, occupational expectations and social background" (p. 466). She found that while more students from the low SES were going to college than had been the case in earlier such studies, the type of school they attended and the rate at which they remained enrolled or completed was much lower than that of students from high SES. All of these studies reinforce the fact that individuals from low status group families most often act in ways that reinforce their social class standing rather than to make choices that will encourage upward social mobility.

Unfortunately, many low status group students who go on to post-secondary education do not achieve social mobility. Berkner, Choy & Hunt-White's (2008) study provides some explanation for this. They analyzed NELS data and found a direct relationship between the parent's level of education and the type of institution the child chose to attend (see Figure 2). Students pursuing post-secondary education whose parents had no college degree were more likely to enroll at a vocational or two-year school while those with parents who held a bachelor's were more likely to attend a four-year school (Berkner, et al).
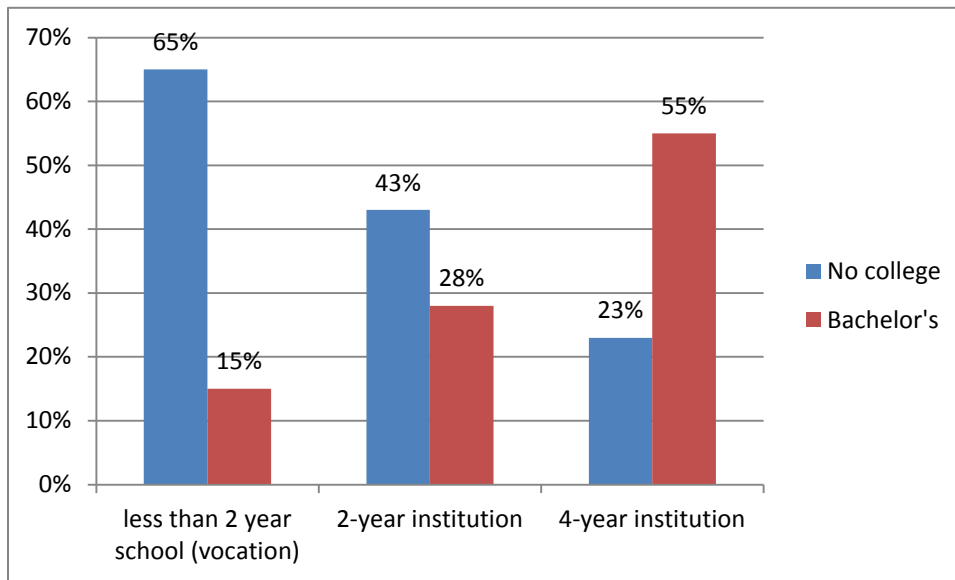
Figure 2 Students entering post-secondary education in 2003-04 by parent level of education.
Source: NELS data.

And as seen in Figure 3, family income and student college-going patterns are also closely

related with low income students more likely to attend a vocational or two-year school

(Berkner, et al., 2008).
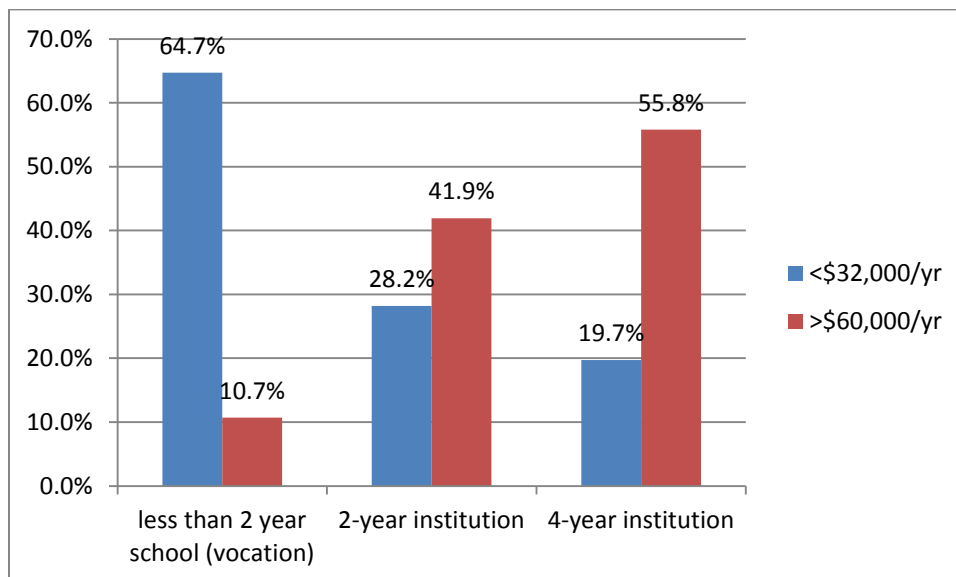
Figure 3 Students entering post-secondary education in 2003-04 by family income.
Source: NELS data.

The habitus of high status group families encourages college-going since those parents tend to establish going to college as normative behavior, expecting it of their children and making intentional decisions throughout their children's lives to ensure that it will happen. Brantlinger (2003) in her study of middle- and upper-class (high status group) parents found that they very deliberately intervened in their children's elementary and high school experiences to be sure that their children were provided the best opportunities and preparation for college. Lareau (2003) found that the middle-class (high status group) families in her study considered activities and programs in addition to school so important to their children's future that they often spent large sums of money and sacrificed their own leisure and other activities so that their students would have enhanced learning opportunities. These intentional activities during childhood create the habitus that college attendance is normative behavior for students from the high status group. A study done by McDonough, cited in Hurst (2009), confirms this. He interviewed economically diverse high school students about their college decision-making process and found that middle-class students had a sense of entitlement about attending college that was strikingly missing from working-class students (Hurst).

Numerous studies have been conducted in an attempt to understand the college attendance patterns of low status group students. These studies provide useful information regarding the level of emotional, practical and financial support that low status group individuals receive from their parents.

Gorman (2000) interviewed 80 white working-class and middle-class parents to learn about the goals they had when they were children, their educational experiences and the extent of familial support they received for their choice of occupation as well as their aspirations for their own children. Not surprisingly, middle-class (high status group) parents had always assumed that they would go to college and they had the same expectation for

34

their own children (Gorman). Working-class (low status group) parents, however, fell into

two distinct groups: those who wanted to attend college but were unable to do so and those

who had no desire to go to college. Those parents who had wanted to go to college

themselves had the same goal for their own children to have that opportunity (Gorman).

In contrast, those working-class parents who never pursued college as those whose

"self-esteem has been battered by the world of the college-educated, white collar worker" (p.

714) and they did not believe that a college education was necessary for their children

(Gorman, 2000). Freie (2007) found similar results in her study where she encountered

parents who had watched their child struggle in K-12 schooling and had no desire to see that

continue, particularly since they did not believe there was any economic benefit for their

child by going to college. In some cases, such as what Hurst (2009) found when she

conducted a study of working-class students who attended a highly selective college,

students encounter parents who deliberately attempt to sabotage their aspiration by doing

such things as refusing to disclose the information necessary for students to qualify for

federal financial aid.

Support from family members can have a profound influence in major life decisions,

such as college attendance. In an attempt to understand why FGS aspirations were lower

than those whose parents had college degrees, Hossler, Schmit & Vesper (1999) found that

the FGS received very little encouragement from their family members about going to

college. In a similar study, Wentworth & Peterson (2001) reported that the aspirations of

FGS students regarding college attendance and upward mobility were directly related to the

amount of encouragement and emotional support they received from significant people in

their lives.

Freie (2007) found that the parents of the students in her study were emotionally

supportive but because they were unfamiliar with the college-going process were unable to

help the students with the practical aspects of applying. Other studies confirm that whether or not low status group students pursued college was also directly related to how much practical and financial support they received during the process of applying to schools (Choy, 2001; Horn & Nunez, 2000). Kim & Schneider (2005) found that because low status group families tend to not understand the importance of such things as standardized tests, application deadlines and cycles of the application process, their children missed deadlines and had incomplete applications. York-Anderson & Bowman's (1991) study shows that the difference in basic knowledge about post-secondary study along with a low personal commitment and lack of family support put those low status group students who hoped to go on to college at a disadvantage compared with students from the high status group whose parents had a college degree.

While as these studies indicate many students from low status group families do not pursue a college education that will provide opportunities for upward social mobility, there is a small percentage who do go on to college. These are the students with the greatest potential to achieve inter-generational upward social mobility, particularly if they attend a highly selective four-year institution. Therefore, the college-going patterns of this particular group – low status group students who are first-generation college students – are of interest to this study.

First-Generation Student (FGS) v. Continuing-Generation Student (CGS) College Experience

In order for those from the low status group, who are typically also first-generation college students (FGS), to achieve upward social mobility, not only is it important that they attend the type of institution most likely to prepare them for a professional position, they must stay there and earn a degree. Because this is a concern to both researchers and policymakers, a number of studies have been conducted over the years to understand the experiences of FGS while in college.

Pascarella, et al. (2004) produced a profile of FGS showing that, in general, they work more hours for income, are much less involved in campus-related activities of any type (curricular, co-curricular, extra-curricular, or social), typically live off campus, take fewer credits in each enrollment term, and have lower GPAs than continuing-generation students (CGS).

Longwell-Grice (2003) was interested in knowing what first-generation, white, working-class, male freshmen thought about their college experience and learned that they considered it to be antagonistic. He described their approach to their approach to their experience as a utilitarian one, viewing the various rules, regulations and bureaucracy as hurdles designed to weed out those who are weak and as training for the hostile environment they expected to encounter once employed (Longwell-Grice). As a result, the students in Longwell-Grice's study did not believe there was any benefit to getting involved in college life. There were also practical reasons for the lack of involvement since they all had jobs while attending college and had very few free hours available when they were not either in class or working. Like the working-class men in Dunk's (2003) study, the men in Longwell-Grice's study brought with them the cultural capital that they learned during primary socialization which values "doing". As a result, they failed to see the benefit of participating in social activities or even class-related activities such as attending evening lectures or exhibitions. By not participating in extra-curricular activities, the men in Longwell-Grice's study failed to gain the networking and relationship-building experiences that the upper class men in Lamont's (1992) study considered a valuable criterion to be selected for a professional position.

Participation in extra-curricular activities in college is an important way for students from the low status group to acquire the social and cultural capital of the high status group that they will need for upward social mobility. Stuber (2009) conducted a study to

understand how social class structured students' participation in extra-curricular activities. She found that working-class (low status group) students were less involved in activities not only because of limited financial resources, but also because they had no interest in participating. For example, she found that working-class students were less likely to take advantage of opportunities for study abroad because of the "'working-class value,' namely staying close to home and maintaining a sense of family solidarity" (Stuber, p. 887). Whereas upper-class (high status group) students were involved in activities as a way to build their resumes, working-class (low status group) students considered this to be "phony and inauthentic" (p. 888) way to show one's viability as a job candidate (Stuber).

Retaining FGS is particularly important if they are to achieve upward social mobility, but they face unique challenges staying in school. A number of research studies have been conducted to identify reasons for the high attrition rate for FGS. Most of these studies have focused on financially-related causes and the inadequate financial support available to students, whether because families are unable to fund higher education, the inability of federal and state financial aid policies to keep pace with the cost of education or because students must balance time devoted to school with time needed to work to fund that education (Paulsen & St. John, 2002; Strayhorn, 2006; Wells, 2008).

According to data from the Department of Education, most students who began at a 4-year institution in 2003-04 academic year were young (85% were 19 or younger) and financially dependent on their parents (Berkner, et al., 2008). The cost of attending a 4-year institution can be so high that even if low SES families receive some sort of financial aid, many do not have the resources to support a child in college for four years, which means that the student has to either drop out without graduating or temporarily stop attending so in order to earn money for future college costs.

Other studies of enrollment data found several patterns to explain the high drop-out rates for FGS including lack of parental support (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Strayhorn, 2006), inadequate academic preparation (Alon & Tienda, 2005; Grodsky, et al., 2008; Ishitani, 2006), or moving from institution to institution as well as not maintaining continuous enrollment in a single institution (Goldrick-Rab, 2006) as the most common causes.

Even among those low status group students who hold higher aspirations than their peer group and thus attend the type of institution that will prepare them for a professional role, there are noticeable difference between their aspirations and that of college students from the high status group. In a study comparing the experiences of FGS students at a public 4-year institution with experiences of FGS and CGS at a highly selective, private 4-year institution Aries & Seider (2007) found a difference in the aspirations and occupational goals of the FGS compared with the CGS at the elite institution in that the FGS students had lower expectations and aspirations. This is consistent with the findings of an earlier study by Walpole (2003) who found that the aspirations of FGS were low regarding the selectivity and quality of institutions to which they applied. In addition, the FGS in her study who earned a college degree did not continue on to graduate and/or professional school at the same rate as CGS nor were they as likely to pursue the type of occupations that would have placed them in the high status group (Walpole).

As has been established, a college degree is important for low status group students who aspire to upward social mobility. One factor that may increase retention for low status group students is for them to develop an affinity group and to have a sense of belonging. When students from the low status group attend a highly selective or elite college where they have the opportunity to interact with those from the high status group, they may also then develop an affinity with that status group. However, Aries & Seider (2007) found that

the FGS in their study who attended an elite institution mentioned a feeling of dissonance between themselves and those who were CGS.

Another study of college students and their experiences was conducted by Ostrove & Long (2007) who were interested in what effect students' social class background might have on their sense of belonging at college. They administered a survey to 324 students at a selective, liberal arts college and found a correlation between students' SES and both their adjustment to and sense of belonging in college (Ostrove & Long). Students from low SES had a low sense of belonging, had difficulty adjusting and accused others of activities they considered class privilege or classism (Ostrove & Long).

Lehmann (2007) was also interested in why students left college and conducted a qualitative study, providing students with an opportunity to explain their reasons for doing so. He interviewed twenty-five FGS students who dropped out of a large, research-intensive university with a relatively affluent student population in Southwestern Ontario. He further categorized the students within the FGS as either working-class or middle-class based on family income. The focus of Lehmann's study was to understand whether the students felt a sense of belonging in the educational environment. He found that the few middle-class FGS in the study left because they never felt as if they belonged and spoke of feeling intimidated because of the status differences between themselves and those of the high status group students at the college. Even though these middle-class FGS students left the university, they maintained a belief that a university degree was an essential symbol of and prerequisite for social mobility. In contrast, Lehman (2007) reported that many of the working-class FGS rejected the university and its values, through their action of leaving the university as well as by embracing a belief that a college degree was not necessary to achieve success. Lehman concluded that the desire to leave the university -- whether because they felt inadequate and/or intimidated or did not feel as if they fit in – was heightened when students

strongly identified as working-class. Identification with the low status group seems to have made it difficult to develop a sense of belonging in to the high status group culture of the college.

But, none of these studies articulated any specific cultural traits that may have affected low status group individuals' ability to affiliate with the high status group culture. Other studies have been conducted that take into consideration the role that cultural traits might have on the experiences of first-generation, working class students while in college. Gos (1995) looked at how a specific cultural trait – the communication style of working-class students – affected their ability to be successful in college. He states that working-class students often grow up in families that have lived in one area for generations, creating a kind of familiarity with extended family and friends whom they have known for a long time that produces a communication style where a tone, gesture or a look and "short, grammatically simple, often unfinished sentences are understood because the listener knows those connections" (Gos, p. 2). As Gos explains, the college environment operates using a more formal language that has a structure and rules so that it can be understood by anyone who knows the rules, regardless of their relationship status with one another. Gos argues that the working-class students are at a disadvantage in the college environment because they do not have the experience with the type of communication required there. In addition to affecting their academic work, this disadvantage may also interfere with their ability to fit in and feel a sense of belonging in this environment.

Several qualitative studies have been conducted specifically to examine this tension between the cultural traits that low status group FGS learned via primary socialization and bring with them to college and the high status group cultural traits of a highly selective college and the role that the students believe SES plays in the college experience. Langhout, Rosselli & Feinstein (2007) administered a survey to 950 college students at a wealthy, elite,

private liberal arts school to determine whether classism existed and the extent to which students themselves experienced it. They found that "working-poor and working-class students, as well as students of color, felt marginalized and isolated at the college" (Langhout, et al., p. 173). Certainly such marginalization and isolation would interfere with their ability to feel any affinity with those from the high status group or to develop a sense of belonging. A lack of affinity, then, affects their ability to remain enrolled in college.

In response to the high attrition rate of FGS and other low income students, the federal government has provided different types of support in an attempt to help low status group students remain in school and raise graduation rates of this sector. One such approach is in the form of financial assistance through programs such as Stafford Loans and Pell Grants (Start Here, 2010). The federally funded TRIO program provides assistance with the emotional and structural challenges for low status group students (Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program student Services [USDOE]). These programs are intended to provide intentional, consistent and structured support in the way of financial and economic literacy, academic tutoring, and individualized personal and career counseling, as well as exposure to cultural events (USDOE). Assessment of these programs from the Department of Education suggests that they have a modest, positive effect on FGS retention (USDOE). However, when asked, FGS students who participated in the TRIO program reported that they appreciated having these types of support programs available for them and did believe that they were beneficial (Engle, Bermeo & O'Brien, 2006). By learning how to negotiate the bureaucracy of the institution, FGS may also be better able to feel a sense of belonging.

Some schools, rather than implementing the TRIO program, develop their own in-house support programs. The few published program evaluations of these support services offer mixed results. Several studies compared data on variables such as hours of

participation in organized support program activities and rates of retention and completion, but were unable to say with certainty how much one was related to the other (Potts & Schultz, 2008; Rodger & Trembley, 2003).

Hand & Payne (2008) conducted a study at a large Appalachian university of an in-house program using similar measurable variables as well as qualitative information gathered from interviews with FGS students. The researchers found that those who participated in the program had stronger relationships, higher levels of emotional support and access to information to assist in navigating the college culture as well as higher rates of persistence than FGS students who did not participate (Hand & Payne). Davis (2010) asked first-generation students who participated in a program at Sonoma State what was most helpful in keeping them in school and learned that students needed both academic skill development as well as social support to negotiate the structural and social culture of college.

It is important that there be support, emotional, financial and practical for students from the low status group, most of whom are also FGS, to attend college as well as once there so that they can fit in and find a sense of belonging in that environment. Otherwise, students will drop out of college without a degree or fail to acquire the necessary social and cultural capital along with their degree, all of which are needed to move into the high status group and achieve upward social mobility.

<div align="center">Social Mobility and Identification</div>

In order to be upwardly socially mobile, individuals from the low status group must qualify for occupations that will place them in the high status group of the professional/managerial class. But, as Bourdieu (1986) argues, occupation and high income alone does not signal one's position in the high status group. Based on the studies by Dunk (2003) and Lamont (1992), it appears that individuals must also identify as a member of

<div align="center">43</div>

their particular status group. This suggests that for those who achieve upward social mobility there will be a change in one's status group affiliation along with a change in one's personal and social identity. For low status group students, going to college is a journey of moving from what Kaufman (2003) describes as their assigned status group (the one into which they were born) to an ascribed status group (i.e., their aspiration) and finally membership into the achieved status group that signals that they have been socially mobile.

While much research has been conducted on the college-going patterns, experiences while in college and rates of persistence to degree of FGS, only a few studies have been done to follow up on those who have achieved social mobility. Jones (2004) provides information on four women who were FGS and who had chosen to attend college as a way to escape oppressive conditions in their personal lives. The women in her study spoke of watching their mothers struggle in difficult manual labor jobs where they suffered a loss of dignity (Jones). The women in her study repeated that pattern by working in the same types of conditions, living in deteriorating neighborhoods where violence, particularly male rage, was common (Jones). According to the women in this study, taking classes became a welcome respite from that environment and it was in the educational environment that they developed their personal identity as an intellectual as well as an affinity with other intellectuals (Jones).

The women in Jones' (2004) study became college professors, who because of the level of education completed and their professional role are part of the high status group. They report that certain aspects of the high status group culture as fulfilling, in particular being able to talk about ideas with peers as well as prepare and deliver engaging courses, while other aspects of the culture were challenging, confusing and problematic (Jones). The women in Jones' study found the social rules, behavioral expectations, unspoken language

and values that permeated the social interactions and the educational institutions of the high status group completely foreign to them.

Jones (2004) found that the women in her study self-identified as intellectuals, but even so, they did not feel as if they belonged to the high status group. In another study Jones (1998) had conducted of working-class women who also became college professors, she reports that they expressed the feeling of living in the borderland between two worlds: the world of their upbringing (the low status group) and that of their current professional class (the high status group). Even once they were established in their profession and interacting with a social group which valued academic intelligence, the professors from the working-class who self-identified as intellectuals still did not feel as if they belonged to either the low or high status groups (Jones). This feeling of not belonging in the former and current status group seems to be a common theme for those who have been upwardly social mobile.

Lubrano (2004) also looked at those who have been upwardly socially mobile, interviewing more than 100 individuals form the working class who were employed in high status group professions. He writes in his narrative non-fiction account how they described feeling as if they were in a state of limbo, not belonging to either their former or current status group (Lubrano). Ryan & Sackrey (1996) edited a selection of autobiographical essays by professors who grew up working class, all of whom recount their feelings of internal conflict about their social mobility journey as they attempt to negotiate between the two status groups and their different cultural traits. Dews & Law (1995) also focus on working class academics in their collection of autobiographical essays. These narratives express the difficulty each of the professors has had identifying during their social mobility journey as well as their ambivalence toward either their old or new lives now that they have arrived at the high status destination to which they aspired.

45

This theme of existing in two worlds but not belonging in either permeates the writings by and about individuals from the low status group whose occupations grant them membership in the high status group of society and who have achieved upward social mobility. These accounts, most of which are by or about college professors, portray a confused identity with the authors expressing frustration at their inability to feel an affinity to either status group. They seem to crave an identity that would fit somewhere, even though they do not seem to know what that is or where that would be. The common theme in the literature of those who have achieved upward social mobility is that individuals must choose one group and reject the other, or live in a state of inner conflict without a sense of belong to any group.

<div align="center">Identity Development Models</div>

The focus of this study is on the personal and social identity development of those from the low status group who achieve upward social mobility. Therefore, it is important to review the models that describe the decision upwardly mobile individuals face regarding which status group with which to align and the effect this decision has on their personal and social identity. These are discussed below.

<div align="center">*Kaufman's Model*</div>

Kaufman (2003) studied working-class law school students who had formed a social identity that provided them with social transformation rather than social reproduction. To make this journey, they had to practice what Goffman (1959) called impression management, which required them to distance themselves from their family of origin and align with those in the group to which they aspired. Regardless of the extent to which they practiced "associational embracement of the aspiration group and associational distancing" (p. 484) of their original group, Kaufman (2003) reported that the process was difficult for

these students. They had to continuously cross socio-cultural boundaries and develop skill at appearing to fit in with whichever group they were currently interacting.

Kaufman's (2003) model suggests that those who are upwardly socially mobile must

Follow the cultural norms of the status group with which one is currently interacting, even if those norms require very different or conflicting actions

Hurst's Model

Hurst (2007) conducted extensive interviews with 21 working-class college students at a large, moderately-selective public university to understand "how their class identities were being constructed or reconstructed in the process of becoming college-educated" (p. 87). She found that students handled this experience differently based on their own class consciousness. Hurst's (2007) model suggests that students will respond with one of the following strategies:

(1) "Renegade" strategy: have a more individual understanding of poverty and inequality and actively seek immersion in the middle-class culture of the college; or

(2) "Loyalist" strategy: have a structural understanding of inequality and retain close ties to their home culture (p. 100).

Both Kaufman's (2003) and Hurst's (2007) models suggest that to be upwardly mobile, which requires a professional position and practicing the culture of the high status group in which such positions are located, individuals must switch their allegiances.

Reay, Crozier & Clayton's Model

Reay, Crozier, & Clayton (2009) offer another option for low status group students. In their study of working-class students at a highly selective university in the UK, they found that these students displayed incredible resiliency which they used to cope with adversity. Specifically, these students relied on what they considered a value associated with the culture of their status group, i.e., knowing how to work hard even while

simultaneously conforming to the middle class norms of the institution. This model suggests that:

> *Students must demonstrate an ability to move in and out of different identity*
> *positions and roles*

But even here, the language they use of moving in and out indicates that the two worlds that they inhabit must be kept separated and cannot be combined or integrated in any way.

Phinney's Model

Phinney (1989) provides a model of group identity transformation with additional options. This model originated to describe ethnic identity development and offers an alternative pathway for those who wish to maintain connection to their ethnic identity while interacting with the dominant, white culture.

> *Assimilation – when an individual abandons all connections to ethnicity in*
> *order to identify with the dominant culture*

> *Separation – characterized by minimal if any interaction with the dominant*
> *culture and an intense focus on the ethnic group and its traditions*
> *and values*

> *Marginality – characterized by forfeiture of the individual's native culture*
> *and an absence of involvement with the dominant culture*

> *Integration – when the individual identifies strongly and is involved with*
> *both the ethnic culture and the dominant culture*

Phinney's model of cultural identity development acknowledges that power is held by those at the top and those not in the powerful status group exercise agency by choosing how they will participate in the stratified society. In a study in Yonkers, New York, Carter (2006) discovered high school students of color who maintained a strong affinity to their racial identity and culture while simultaneously achieving academic success. The high school students in Carter's study did not feel compelled to choose one group over another as they

pursued upward social mobility, but appear to have done what Phinney calls "integration" by maintaining positive association with members of both social groups in their lives.

While this model was developed to analyze how individuals have negotiated their ethnicity to achieve mobility, it may be relevant to Whites who must negotiate their status group to achieve mobility. But, with only a few studies that have been conducted with those who have attained social mobility, we have very little information about or understanding of their experiences, and in particular regarding their personal and social identity.

This study was conducted to address that void in our understanding by seeking to answer these questions: What is the self and social identity process like for those White individuals who were first generation college graduates and who have attained a professional position in society? In what way(s) do they identify with their status group of origin? In what way(s) do those who were first generation college graduates identify with the status group associated with their professional role? To what extent and in what way(s) do they maintain an identity in both status groups?

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research design of this study. The chapter begins with a restatement of the problem, the purpose of the research and the research questions, followed by the rationale for using a qualitative approach. Next, an explanation for the selection of the participants and information regarding how the interviews were conducted is provided. The third part of the chapter describes my approach to data analysis and synthesis. This chapter ends with the ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research is to understand how Whites who are in the first-generation of their family to graduate from a highly selective private college experience upward social mobility. In particular the research addresses how individuals experience transitions from the culture associated with their status group of origin and that of their professional role. In addition, this research seeks to understand the status group identity of those who made this transition, and how that identification informs their sense of integration in these two status groups.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were: What is the self and social identity process like for those White individuals who were first generation college graduates and who have attained a professional position in society? In what way(s) do they identify with their status group of origin? In what way(s) do those who were first generation college graduates identify with the status group associated with their professional role? To what extent and in what way(s) do they maintain an identity in both status groups?

Rationale for Qualitative Study

This research was conducted from the epistemological perspective that reality is socially constructed by individuals who make meaning of their experiences, which Willis

(2007) states is a defining characteristic of the interpretive research paradigm. Since the

goal of this study was to understand the experience from the perspective of those who have

achieved upward social mobility and to gain an awareness of their personal and social

identity, the interpretive research paradigm was selected. Willis suggests interviews as the

phenomenological approach to learn about experiences of the participants, their reflections

on those experiences and the meaning they make of their journey. Therefore, I conducted

in-depth interviews with 39 college graduates whose parents did not have a college degree.

The questions were carefully constructed using the conceptual framework as the organizing

structure to guide the interviews, but the interviews themselves were a conversational

partnership where the participants were able to expand upon the questions as they shared

and reflected on their experiences.

Population

I define first-generation college students (FGS) as individuals from families whose

parents did not graduate from college. By defining FGS this way, I was able to include any

individuals whose parents may have begun but dropped out of post-secondary education

before obtaining the credential. This definition was chosen because studies have shown that

there is little difference in the SES of families with no education beyond high school and

those who started but did not complete college (Bishaw & Semega, 2008). Research also

shows that income closely correlates with education, therefore families falling in to this

category would most likely be in the low SES, and share the culture of the low status group

(Bishaw & Semega).

Taking a purposive approach, I limited the population to individuals who graduated

from Dickinson College, a highly selective private liberal arts college. While studies show

this is the type of institution chosen by very few FGS (Bishaw & Semega, 2008) it is the

type of institution whose graduates are more likely to hold occupations in the high status

group of society (Mullen, 2010). The participants selected for this study currently hold or have retired from occupations that place them in the professional/managerial class and the high status group. Growing up in households where the parents did not have a college degree and then graduating from a highly selective institution, these professionals are likely to have interacted with the cultures of both the low and high status groups.

The FGS participants for this study are limited to Whites. Most of the research on social mobility and identity development has been with individuals of color, in particular African-Americans and Hispanics. Whites have a unique experience, yet have been understudied as a group by researchers. Also, Whites from the low status group can hide their association with that group. In Bettie's (2003) study of high school girls, she found that the low status group white girls were viewed by others as middle class, the class to which they aspired, because they were able to appear as if they were middle class girls. I was interested in exploring if the participants in this study, like the white girls in Bettie's study, appeared as if they were part of the high status group associated with the professional role to which they aspired.

<div align="center">Selection of Participants</div>

Dickinson College was chosen as the institution for this study because my personal connections with the institution as an alumna and current employee provided easy access to those whose support I would need to conduct the study. The President of the College at the time of this study, William Durden, is a FGS who was also very interested in the objectives of this study. President Durden directed the Alumni Office at Dickinson College to identify alumni who were FGS and to assist me by communicating with the alumni about this study.

I composed an email that explained the study and asked for volunteers which President Durden signed (Appendix A), giving the invitation added importance because of his position. The Alumni Office sent the invitation to 2300, selecting those in their data

base who had an email address, graduated in 2003 or earlier, were coded as White and whose parents did not have a college degree. Those who graduated after 2003 were excluded because it is likely too early in their careers for them to have had the personal and social identity experiences relevant to this study.

In addition to the email invitation from the Alumni Office, I personally contacted the alumni who had been interviewed for my master's thesis, which was a study of White FGS and their experiences during college (Bretz, 2002). Several of them agreed to participate. A notice was also placed in the Dickinson College alumni magazine explaining this research and inviting alumni to participate (Appendix B).

I had expected to apply the snowball technique, using the networks of the participants as well as the faculty and staff at Dickinson College to locate additional participants who were FGS alumni. However, because of the high number of alumni who responded to the email invitation, there was no need to use this method to obtain participants.

Within two days from the date that the email was sent by the Alumni Office, 520 individuals expressed interest in the study. A follow-up email was sent to each of them in which I explained the research in more detail, and asked anyone who was interested in participating to email me (Appendix C). As individuals responded, I began scheduling interviews. The 39 individuals who participated were the first of those who responded whose schedules were compatible with mine. While I could have stopped the interviews after approximately the first 15 because I began to see patterns emerge in the responses, I continued with all of the interviews that I had already scheduled, having made a commitment to do them.

Alumni continued to respond to the explanatory email as I scheduled and conducted the 39 interviews. Eventually, 209 responded indicating they would like to participate. I

have contacted the 170 that I did not interview to thank them for their interest and to let

them know that I had completed the interviews for the dissertation. I also offered to send

them a copy of the completed dissertation if they were interested. Several have responded

asking for a copy.

The 209 alumni who responded represent all decades of alumni from the 1950s to the

2000s. Data in Table 4 shows that the 39 interviewed include at least one from each of these

decades.

Table 4:
Graduation Decade of Participants

Decade	Number of Participants
1950s	1
1960s	3
1970s	16
1980s	8
1990s	6
2000s	4

Because the age distribution of the alumni who participated spans six decades, the 39

participants represent professionals at the beginning, middle and end of their careers. The

majority of the 209 respondents are female, as were the participants. Of the 39 participants,

26 (67%) are female and 13 (33%) are male. Each of the 39 participants currently hold or

recently held positions identified as professional by our society: 1 is self-employed, 11 are

attorneys, and 27 hold upper management positions in a variety of fields. All have at least a

bachelor's degree and 21 (54%) also hold an advanced or professional degree.

Method of Data Collection

Rubin & Rubin (1995) suggest that when gathering information on a topic about which little is known, the best approach is "a kind of guided conversation" (p. 7). To gather information in this manner, Johnson (2002) recommends conducting in-depth interviews which are planned to take approximately 60-75 minutes to conduct. Most of the in-depth interviews for this study took between 75 and 90 minutes to complete and used a guided interview script (Appendix D). Several of the interviews lasted more than two hours and all of them lasted at least 60 minutes.

Johnson (2002) suggests that interviews work best when there is trust and rapport between the interviewer and the participant, and that conducting the interviews at the participant's choice of location is recommended. I had planned to meet with each of the participants in their home or office, but they were geographically dispersed throughout the United States and scheduling constraints along with the expense of travel prohibited me from conducting the interviews with those who lived more than four hours away in their own home or office. However, I was able to conduct in-person interviews with many of the participants who lived at a distance either by scheduling the interview when I was travelling in their area or they were travelling in mine. For those who chose to be interviewed when they were travelling through Carlisle, the interviews took place in my office. For the others who lived at a distance and travel was not possible, I conducted interviews either via Skype or the telephone.

Table 5:
Site of Interview

Medium for Interview	Number of Interviews
Skype	9
Phone	8
My home or office	13
Participants' home or office	8
Barnes & Noble	1

This study did not require observation of the participants and it was not necessary to

evaluate or document their environment. Thus it was not necessary to meet with them in

their home or office. I was initially concerned that if I did not conduct the interview in

person that the participants might be less willing to share their experiences or that it might

be difficult to achieve the level of trust and rapport that Johnson (2002) suggests is

necessary. However, after the first few interviews, it was clear that conducting the interview

via Skype or the phone did not negatively affect the conversation. For the participants who

lived close enough for me to travel to them, I always volunteered to meet with them at their

choice of site. A few of the participants who lived close to me preferred to be interviewed in

my home or my office. Whether the interview was conducted in person, on the phone or via

Skype, the participant completed the Demographic Information Sheet (Appendix E),

reviewed the description of the project (Appendix F) and signed the Informed Consent

Release Form (Appendix G) prior to the interview.

Each interview session began, as Johnson (2002) recommended, with a few moments

of introductory chit chat. I then shared with the participants why this topic was of interest to

me, including the fact that I grew up in a working class family. I always began by

explaining that I had a set of questions that I was asking every participant, and encouraged

them to share whatever came to their mind as they responded. The guided interview questions (Appendix A) were constructed in consultation with my dissertation committee as a way to gather information, but not to predetermine a response or to assign a value to those responses.

Occasionally, I shared some of my own experiences during the interview. For example, one participant was describing the negative affect her brother's death had on her family. The memories she recalled brought tears to her eyes and she became very silent. I shared with her that my sister had died when I was a pre-teenager and that I too had watched my family struggle for many years afterward to deal with that loss. Her eye contact and smile seemed to signal the recognition of an understanding between us of a shared event. She then continued to talk about her family and other events in her life.

The first set of questions in the guided script asked the participants to recall the kinds of activities in which their parents participated as well as any other memories of life growing up. I then asked what values the participants thought were important to their parents as well as why.   The way in which they thoughtfully answered this question indicated that they were seeking to make meaning of their memories. I then asked the participants to share what they thought their parents aspirations were for them, educationally and professionally. In response, the participants often shared who it was that influenced them to set educational or professional goals as well as the process they used to choose Dickinson College.

The next set of questions asked the activities in which the participants now engage, as well as the values they currently hold. Often without any prompting, the participants would talk about the ways in which their lives currently are similar to or different from their lives growing up.   I asked the participants what their success has meant to them and if they felt as if they "fit in" with the various cultures with which they interacted during this upward mobility move.

Warren (2002) suggests that when the goal of an interview is to gather information about an unknown phenomenon, those who are interviewed are not simply respondents, but rather partners in the construction of the new knowledge as they make meaning out of their experiences. It was important throughout the interviews that the participants had the chance to reflect on their experiences and to share in the process of constructing the new knowledge that was being created on this topic. Whenever there was an opportunity to do so, I asked questions such as "what did you think about x?" or "why do you think your parents expected x?"

Being aware throughout the interviews of Johnson's (2002) belief that good interviews require a high level of trust and rapport, I consistently paid attention to the cues when the interviews were conducted in person or on Skype. I watched their facial expressions and body language as well as listened carefully to the tone of their voice. For those interviews conducted on the phone, I paid very close attention to aural cues, such as the tone of the voice, rapidity of answers, or the way in which silences seemed to either help or hinder the comfort level of the participant.

I ended the interviews by asking the participants if they would like to offer any advice or provide guidance to Dickinson College regarding the way it supports FGS who are currently enrolled. Some of the participants had been consistently engaged with the college since graduation, doing such things as interviewing potential students or serving on committees and were familiar with the college's current commitment to FGS. Others, however, indicated that their response to the invitation for this study was their first interaction with the college for decades and were not familiar with the college's current priorities or aspirations related to FGS. Regardless, all of the participants were willing to offer advice to the college on this topic.

At the end of each interview I summarized for the participants the main points or themes as I understood them, and invited their reaction. Many of the participants were curious to know what others had shared and how similar their own experiences were. I shared what I had learned either through the interviews already completed or from the literature that informed this study. Sometimes the conversation would continue for quite some time as they asked questions and gave their thoughts and opinions on my initial analysis.

After each interview, I attempted to complete the transcription within a few days while the experience was still fresh in my own memory and always before I conducted the next interview. Once each interview was transcribed, verbatim, I sent the word processed document to the participant, inviting any additional thoughts or feedback about what they had shared. Several of the participants provided additional commentary, which was then appended to the official interview transcript and included in the analysis.

Analysis

To meet the goals of the research project, which was to understand the upward social mobility experiences of the participants, I used a non-linear, iterative and interactive process for data collection and data analysis. Because in the interviews the participants shared not only their memories but also their own thoughts about those experiences, the verbatim transcriptions include what Maxwell (2005) referred to as "rich" data (p. 110).

Van Manen (1990) argues that a participant's lived experience should be given primacy in the analytical process. In order to apply his standard to this study, during my analysis of the transcripts I paid special attention to the interpretation that the participants offered in addition to their descriptions about their lives. The reflections the participants offered during the interview served to connect the data collection with the analysis, a criteria

Willis (2007) states is necessary for studies using a phenomenological approach within the interpretive paradigm.

As soon as possible after each interview was completed, I wrote analytic memos, reflecting on my impressions of the interview and jotting down key thoughts and information I wanted to be particularly aware of as I began the analysis. Because I transcribed the interviews myself, I could immediately add any additional thoughts or comments to the accompanying analytic memo during the transcription process. The analytic memos were useful as a way to think through themes that seemed to emerge during the interviews. Often, my initial thoughts were reinforced, but some of my impressions and reactions were challenged once I began the formal process of analysis.

The transcription of the interviews were created and stored in a word processing package. As soon as the transcription was completed, I began analysis of it. To do that, I read through the entire transcript and made summary notes about my overall impressions of what the participant had shared as well as the specific comments and topics to which I wanted to pay particular attention. I then compared the summary notes to my analytic memos of initial impressions to see if there were commonalities or if new issues emerged. The next step was to conduct line-by-line coding of each transcript.

A duplicate copy of the word processed transcript was placed into NVIVO, a computer assisted analytical tool which allows digital line-by-line coding of the data. Using the coding approach suggested by Bazeley (2007) and Saldana (2009), I applied multiple levels of coding to both the interview transcripts and my analytic memos by establishing starter codes that fit the conceptual framework. The starter codes included only a few categories: "Activities" "Values" "Behaviors" and "Expectations", each of which contained a large number of passages from each of the transcripts.

Next, I subdivided those large categories by identifying such things as: "Values Stated", "Values Implied", and distinguishing between "Values Now" and "Values Then", and doing the same for the categories "Activities" and "Behaviors". As the codes became more focused, patterns began to emerge and new codes were created, such as "Motivational Factors" "Influential Adults". When a new code was necessary, I went back to the interviews that had been coded previously and reviewed them for the new codes. I then conducted line-by-line coding of each transcript for commentary of the participants that could be categorized as "Reflections".

After the initial coding of the transcripts with NVIVO, I printed out the word processor versions of the transcripts which did not have any codes or comments. I read the printed out transcript of the interviews and made notes in the margins of such things as general impressions, reactions or questions that I wanted to pursue further. These marginal notes comprised an additional set of analytic memos for this study. I conducted this type of analysis to be sure that the line-by-line NVIVO coding did not extract words or phrases out of context or in a way that seemed to misconstrue the participants' meaning. It was during this additional step in the analysis process that the themes "Independence" "Academics Important" and "World Growing up is Small" emerged. After reviewing the printed copy of the transcripts and creating new analytic memos from the marginal notes, I returned to NVIVO to recode all of the transcripts with the new codes.

Each transcript was reviewed in NVIVO at least four times as the coding progressed. I read the paper copy of each of the transcripts twice, making copious notes each time. As new codes emerged, transcripts previously analyzed were reviewed for the new codes.

Ethical considerations

Because this study involved human subjects, the research design was submitted to the Institutional Review Board at Indiana University of Pennsylvania for review. The

61

research was conducted within the parameters requested and approved. The written explanation of the research project that accompanied the Informed Consent Form (Appendix F) were provided to every participant before conducting the interview to be sure they were fully aware of the parameters.

In addition to meeting the ethical standards that are expected of a professional when conducting research with human subject participants, I also felt a personal responsibility to maintain a high standard of ethical behavior because of my affinity to the participants as both a Dickinson alumna and my own experiences as a FGS. I brought a bias to this study which I did not ignore or hide, but did continuously attempt to manage. One way I did so was to be transparent about my own experience which I did by sharing with the participants at the beginning of the interview why I was researching this topic.

It was important that the participants trusted me with their memories as well as their thoughts about those memories. Therefore, throughout the interview I tried to signal to the participants that I was interested in their experiences and that what they thought about those experiences had value. In the interviews conducted in person or via Skype, I maintained eye contact throughout the interview, smiling and encouragingly nodding as they spoke. In all interviews, I limited my comments and questions to ones that expressed my empathy or communicated my genuine interest in hearing more about what they were saying. In those situations where I felt the participants were having difficulty sharing a memory or were a bit shy, I asked follow up questions about the mundane aspects of the situation to allow them to maintain focus on the topic but to relieve them from any obligation to share things that were uncomfortable or too personal. If there were any experiences in my own life that were relevant to their difficult memories, I shared those with them, communicating empathy and understanding. Then, when it seemed safe to do so, I asked a question that gave them the opportunity to address the topic again. In almost every interview when this occurred, the

participant was willing to talk more about that particular situation or incident that had initially caused them to hesitate.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Rubin & Rubin (1995) suggest that the credibility of a qualitative study is judged by its transparency, consistency/coherence and communicability. The interpretivist research paradigm and the phenomenological approach to the interviews meet these standards.

To achieve transparency throughout the entire process, I shared the topic of the study in every communication, including the first email invitation to potential participants. In all subsequent emails and conversations with the participants, as well as during the interview, I explained what I was interested to learn, and why. I offered each participant a copy of the guided interview questions prior to the interview. None of the participants took the copy or even wanted to see the questions during the interview.

As partners with me in creating the knowledge about their experiences, each participant received a transcribed copy of their interview. This "Respondent Validation" as Maxwell (2005, p. 111) observes, ensures transparency and provides an opportunity for the participants to correct and/or expand upon any aspects of the conversation. Because there was a time lapse between when the interview occurred and when they received the transcript, the participants had the opportunity to reflect on the interview experience itself and any issues it may have raised for them. When they read the transcript, the participants had the opportunity to provide additional information or reflection as well as to rescind their approval to participate. Several of the participants provided additional comments and reflections to the transcript of the interview. None of the participants dropped out of the study.

To achieve consistency in each of the 39 interviews, the semi-structured design of the guided interview was used. All of the participants were asked the same questions,

although not all participants needed the prompting of follow-up questions. As the participants responded to the questions, I listened carefully for any inconsistencies. When inconsistencies occurred, I asked follow-up questions to gain further understanding. As Rubin & Rubin (1995) have found, in most cases when there are inconsistencies, they are important and relevant to the discussion. In the interviews, the inconsistencies typically occurred when the participant was reflecting on their own experiences, trying to make some sense of what they had experienced as they were thinking aloud. For example, throughout an interview, participants would sometimes refer to their socio-economic class growing up as working class and later on in the interview as middle class. These inconsistencies provided an opportunity to ask what criteria they used to situate their families into a particular class.

To achieve coherence in the study, I asked the interview questions in the same order in each interview. In only a few cases did the participants talk off topic or answer in a way that seemed to be irrelevant to the questions. I would ask them how their point of view on that particular topic may have been informed by their background or current professional interactions. This questioning allowed me to maintain a focus on the topic of the research study, while also providing an opportunity to for the participants to share their thoughts about the influence of their socio-economic class on their views.

I also paid close attention during the interviews and while conducting data analysis of the transcripts in order to identify consistent themes across interviews. While the themes that were emerging from the early interviews did not require a change to the interview guide (Appendix A), they did reinforce that certain questions were of particular interest and importance to the participants and thus to this study. The areas of questioning that elicited the most reflection from participants were those that asked about the values of their parents and values they hold now and the question regarding parents' expectations. Thus, I made

64

sure that all of the interviews, particularly those that might have had time constraint because of the participant's schedule, covered those important experiences even if it meant spending less time discussing another topic.

Rubin & Rubin (1995) indicate that communicability is also important for a study to be considered credible. As stated above, a complete copy of the dissertation has been sent to all of the participants. I have also made it available to those who had expressed interest in the study but were not interviewed. In addition, a paper on the initial analysis and findings was presented at the Southern Sociology Society conference in April 2011, affording the opportunity to share the findings and seek feedback from other scholars. Another paper sharing the findings and analysis from this study will be presented at the March 2012 Southern Sociology Society conference and the April 2012 North East Sociology Society conference. In these papers, quotes from the participants serve as the organizing principle around which the information is communicated.

An article appeared in the Winter issue of the *Dickinson Magazine* sharing the research project and reporting the initial findings. Several alumni and current students have contacted me expressing interest in the study and asking for additional information and I have been in communication with them. Dickinson College administrators are also interested in the results of the study and a formal presentation to the President's Staff has been scheduled for late April 2012. In addition, I have been asked to lead a working group at the college to pursue programming specifically for first-generation college students. The suggestions from the participants themselves as well as the information on FGS college going patterns and experiences gathered from the literature review will serve as the basis for that group's work.

Conclusion

This chapter described the research design for this study. The rationale for choosing a qualitative approach and selecting the participants was presented, as well as the process used to gather information and analyze it. The chapter concluded with the ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness, maintaining throughout the importance of the role of the participants in the study. The next chapter shares, in their own words, the experiences of the participants and their reflections of their social mobility journey.

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experience of those individuals who have achieved social mobility, in particular their experience with the different values, behaviors and attitudes associated with the status group of their family of origin and the status group with which they currently interact as a result of their professional role. The conceptual framework for this research assumes that these are two different status groups and that each has a unique culture. This study was also designed to understand the participants' self-identity as well as how they identify with the status groups with which they interacted as they achieved upward social mobility.

The research questions for this study were: What is the self and social identity process like for those White individuals who were first generation college graduates and who have attained a professional position in society? In what way(s) do they identify with their status group of origin? In what way(s) do those who were first generation college graduates identify with the status group associated with their professional role? To what extent and in what way(s) do they maintain an identity in both status groups?

This chapter presents the findings from the in-depth interviews, which were conducted to provide the upwardly socially mobile participants with an opportunity to share their experiences and then reflect on them. Recognizing that they are "meaning makers" involved in the construction of knowledge (Warren, 2002),the participants' own words and reflections are the source for the findings presented. By sharing these findings and the analysis that appears in the chapter to follow, other FGS as well as the individuals who interact with them – family, friends, professional colleagues, higher education officials – may better understand their experience.

Organization

This chapter begins with the participants' understanding of their status group affiliation growing up. Next, the values, activities and behaviors to which the participants were exposed during primary socialization, using their own memories and reflections, followed by the values they current hold and the activities in which they currently engage. The participants' thoughts about their social mobility journey comprises the third part of the chapter, which ends with the key themes that emerge from their memories and reflections.

Status Group Awareness

The participants grew up in different geographic areas of the country as well as in different time periods. The oldest participant was a child in the 1940s and 50s, while the youngest experienced primary socialization during the 1980s and 90s. Even with this demographic diversity, growing up, the culture the participants experienced most is that associated with the low status group.

While my focus in this study is on the culture associated with low and high status groups, when asked to describe their lives growing up, an overwhelming majority of the participants (35 of 39 [90%]) first responded in terms of economic standing. A majority of these (25 of 35 [71%]) spoke of knowing that money was a concern, and they were aware of challenges that not having enough money presented for their parents. As Nancy recalled "my parents fought about money all the time." Rebecca also was aware of financial concerns and shares the advice she received from her father:

> "Look I'm a dummy, I work shift work, I work 39-60 hours a week," -- because if they ever had overtime he always worked overtime -- but, "I still get the same amount in terms of I don't get increases in pay." … my parents didn't have any money at all. It took me twenty years to pay off my school loans.

Rhonda was aware of her family's financial difficulties and discovered that others were too. She recalled how one of her teacher's assumed that because she was poor, she should lower her aspirations:

> And, my teacher said you can't afford Dickinson. And, not only can you not afford it, it's a school that's above your, your level in society. That really bugged me and that made me more determined than ever. Hey, I'm not some hick.

Georgia also recalls how a teacher made a judgment her because of her low economic standing, in this case associating it with low intelligence:

> … the Spanish [teacher] stood up and said "We're coming up on the annual tests and you need to do well for the greater glory of [our school] …and I know our test scores will be low because there are new people in the Adler subdivision who will bring it down." And I sat there in the second row. But when the scores came back, she called my name and congratulated me and I almost said to her, but of course I was too shy to say "I'm from the Adler subdivision."

Only a few (2 of 35 [6%]) of the participants experienced a change in their family's financial situation while they were growing up. Renee shared how her family seemed to move up while she was a child:

> I grew up, mainly, in Yardley Pennsylvania which is in Bucks County. Prior to that, up until, from the time I was born until the time I was 12, we lived in Trenton, New Jersey and then when I was 12, we moved to Yardley. I thought we had just hit the big time. We had a much different, you know when I look back on it I realize it was a huge achievement for my parents. But to me as a little kid, going from a very small house in Trenton, New Jersey – and it was small – to this house, which is a normal size house, but I thought that, "Oh my god, where did we get this money?" I just loved it.

Wendy, on the other hand, experienced what downward mobility as a child when her family's financial circumstances changed:

> … we lived in northern New Jersey, in the suburbs, in one of the, really a wealthy town: Mountain Lakes … my mother's parents were quite wealthy. … My parents divorced when I was 11 so money became an issue also. I ended up living below the poverty level for 6 years as a result of that. Well, the perspective of being poor is very different when you have been upper middle class. When you have had lunch at The Plaza every year to be, at Dickinson I had one pair of shoes.

Even if they did not experience a change in economic circumstance growing up, most (30 of 39) of the participants were aware that their economic situation was not the same as everyone else they encountered. Susanna shared:

> And the church that we went to was not in the same town where I grew up and the people there were a lot poorer, so it was interesting because in the community I grew up in, I sort of felt like … I mean, not that it was a very affluent community looking back at it now, but didn't feel like we had quite as much money as everyone else. But then where we went to church, we, you know, I felt like I had a lot more privilege than those kids had, those kids that I was going to CCD classes with and meeting there.

Karen also was aware of the difference between her family and others in her school:

> Well, my friends, my really good high school friends, one whom I'm good friends with now and we had very different backgrounds in that she was one of six kids: four girls, two boys, and they lived in a, you know, a small 3-bedroom house … and the four girls shared one bedroom and the two boys shared another bedroom and her mom worked in the cafeteria in the school and her dad worked for a seafood company. … my friend ended up going in the banking field and I remember her

70

telling me after she, when she was out of high school, that her mom came in to her bank that one day and was all excited, opened up her first savings account. When we were freshmen in high school this friend, we all were given a field trip to Washington, DC and it was the first time my friend had ever been out of Pennsylvania.

Some (8 of 35 [23%]) of the participants did not remember any financial concerns and, like Colleen, thought of their parents as "the professionals of their day without the college education". Phoebe's father was successfully self-employed and was able to provide well for his family. As she stated "We lived a nice life. … my parent's always had a live-in – it's kind of embarrassing, -- a live-in maid." Sharon remembered living comfortably as well: "I did not know how much money my father made, but it never felt as if money was a problem. My mother told me not to apply for financial aid because my father made too much money."

Even so, those eight who felt they grew up comfortable financially some (2 of 8 [25%]) were still aware that they were not quite as well off as others in their neighborhood or school. Cathleen recalled:

Well, we lived in a development, so all the houses were pretty much the same. Ours was always decorated nicely. … my parents were very careful with money, so we didn't always have a lot of new things. We weren't always replacing things. Because when we moved in we had like a 1942 Chevrolet or something, and I was embarrassed. And we were probably the last ones to have a television. …. I had one friend, her parents belonged to a country club. ... and there was enough money for her to have riding lessons. Some of them went on vacation together. They rented cottages on Cape Cod. We used to go to Cape Cod too, but we'd rent a housekeeping cottage in kind of a, like a, not quite as nice an area as they were. We

71

went at different times. So, it was always, I don't know, just a little bit behind everybody else.

Paul also thought that his family was not as well off as others in the community and his friends in school:

We were probably in, I mean, we were middle class growing up. The town that we grew up in was upper middle class. But, there was, so it was upper middle class, and I mean, we weren't lower class by any means and there was some lower class students there. We weren't lower middle class either. But, you know, we were middle class. My parents, you know, they had jobs behind a desk, but they weren't substantial jobs. We weren't living in a 2500, 3- or 3900 square foot house growing up. We weren't able to spend freely as much as others. You know, people, I got a car for my 16th birthday, but it was a 1989 Subaru station wagon that was rusted. Meanwhile, some other people in my high school at that time were getting like brand new Volkswagen Jettas and stuff. I mean they weren't getting BMWs, you know it wasn't upper middle class/upper class area. They weren't getting brand new BMWs, but they were getting brand new Honda Civics and you know Volkswagens and stuff like that.

Even so, whether the participants described their families' socio-economic standing as working class or middle class when they were growing up, they recalled that it was when they went to college that they became of how different their financial situation was from others. As Jerry remarked:

The biggest adjustment for me [when I got to college] was of class because I am a child of the working class and Dickinson at that time was very much an upper middle class school. Children of doctors, lawyers, accountants, entrepreneurs, and, you know, in America, we're all raised to think of ourselves as middle class. And then

when I got to Dickinson and I figured out what middle class really was, I looked at

myself in the mirror and said, "Jerry, you're not middle class, you're working class,

don't kid yourself."

Stacy also remembered how different she felt from others in college:

I always felt we were in a very working-middle class neighborhood and type of

community. I always felt we were very middle class. Not lower middle class but

just a regular American family, kind of. We had the station wagon and the dog, and

you know, the whole nine yards. And the dance lessons and the music lessons and,

you know, being involved in things like that. You know, we went to the beach and

those types of things. So, yeah, it was very working middle class. …. we [my

husband and I] always felt like, I, we always felt like there were more kids at

Dickinson that could afford to be there than we were. …we felt like we were lucky to

be there.

Nancy recalled the awareness she experienced about her family's economic situation when

she got to college:

I didn't realize we didn't have a lot until I came here [to Dickinson], because there

were so many people in my community who had so much less than I did. We at least

had a nice house, we had a car, we never were hungry, maybe we had something, but

there were other people who were not like that. They actually really struggled.

The financial differences between the participants and others at Dickinson become apparent

in a variety of ways. For Georgia, the financial difference meant that she was not able to

participate in a sorority:

…one of the sororities did rush me and they knew I didn't have money. So, much

so, that they said if you just pay the initial fee and for a pin we'll take care of the

rest. So, I called my mom and dad, I was so excited, because my friends.. I called

73

my mom and she said, "Absolutely not. We don't take charity." And that was it. I

remained independent.

For Francine, the financial difficulty her family faced almost meant that she had to drop out

of college:

I felt like I didn't fit here and I was in college at a time when funding was at a really

deep low there in the early 70s so staying in school was really tough for me. My

brother who is eight years older than I am at one point paid half my tuition for one

semester because I couldn't come back to school. I didn't have enough loans, I

didn't have enough grants, I just didn't have enough money. My parents didn't have

any money, and my brother – I don't know how he came up with the money, frankly,

but he did to keep me in school. And, so I felt different from the other people that

were here. I was a little bit bitter about it at times because it seemed so easy for

everybody else.

It was not only a financial difference that the participants noticed. There were cultural

differences as well. Jerry remembered a pivotal moment for him in one of his classes:

So, we're in Latin class and if you know Leon, you know the kind of man he is, he's

very outgoing and very engaging. And we were talking about something and he said

something and my response was, "well you can, but it don't do no good." Which,

when I was growing up that was perfectly acceptable. Everybody in class giggled. I

was embarrassed and Leon said, "Jerry, what you just said is perfectly acceptable

Latin but it's lousy English." I learned real quick, you speak standard English.

Nancy noticed the cultural difference when it came to material possessions:

… I don't know if I ever felt that I didn't fit in, but I certainly recognized the day I

got here [at Dickinson] that there were people driving BMWs and I only knew one

person growing up who had a car. And she was the wealthiest girl in the whole

county and she had a car in high school. Nobody else had their own car. And then here, and people, you know, the clothing. I remember here I felt, oh, because we used to buy all of our clothes at a Kmart-type place because that was the only – well there was one department store but we could never afford to shop there – so I bought most of my clothing in a WalMart-type place. And that's all we knew and that was fine. And then I came here and I thought, "Oh my god". This is how I'm supposed to be dressing. And I remember going home at Thanksgiving and saying, "Mom, we've got to find some button-down cotton shirts." Oh my god, we went hunting for button-down cotton shirts so I would not feel out of place and discovered LL Bean, which we had never heard of – ever heard of.

<div align="center">Parents' Values</div>

Even though the financial circumstances of the participants varied, there was much more consistency in their parents' values and activities.

<div align="center">*Family*</div>

During primary socialization, the participants learned that family was highly valued and played an important part in their lives. All of the participants (39 of 39 [100%]) spoke of their lives growing up being consumed by activities that involved family. Five of them (13%) grew up with grandparents living in the household with them. Almost half (16 of the remaining 36 [44%]), like Jerry, lived within a short distance from other family members.

> ... when my mom and dad got married, [my grandfather] subdivided and gave approximately a third of it to my dad. And, my mom and dad built the house on their third of the lot. … So, in effect, we had an 8 person family: me and my three brothers, my mom and dad and my paternal grandparents.

For Mary, the family close by meant the extended family as well:

I had all my extended family, everyone from my mom's side of the family as well as my dad's when I was growing up actually lived in the same town. Nobody left. And they just lived like in the actual town. So, you'd have to drive to see them, it took about 15 minutes. All my mom's brothers and sisters, all my dad's brother and sisters all lived there.

With family so close, as Colleen reported, family interactions were a routine part of their lives. "Friday nights we all…went to my dad's parents and had dinner and the cousins would play games and the adults would talk." Linda also commented on the way in which interaction with extended family was a part of daily life:

We were extremely involved with our family. We lived in an area where we had a very large extended family. And, although people were not always at our house, we were always at other people's homes. So, I was probably at my mother's parents' home anywhere from 2-3 times a week… Sometimes it would just be, they needed something from the grocery store and we were dropping it off and it was a 20 minute visit, and other times we would spend half the day there.

When asked to recall an important event growing up, most (35 of 39 [90%]) mentioned an event that involved family. Colleen remembers:

Thanksgiving… with my dad's family. Everybody getting together and having a big meal and we would go out afterwards and go look at Christmas lights. Everybody was decorated for Christmas and we'd drive around and look at everybody's decorations for Christmas.

Linda also recalled how hectic, but fun those events were:

I have really, really fond memories of Christmas day because we did a tremendous amount of visiting and it was very fun and, you know, everybody was in good spirits. … we would have Christmas at home and then we would go to one grandparents and

then the other grandparents and then sometimes both of my great grandparents and then there would be aunts and uncles that we would visit on top of that. So, by the time we got home we had probably made six stops.

Interactions with Non-Family Members

Growing up, the participants recalled very few occasions when there were interactions with adults other than family members. Only three (8%) of the participants remembered their parents socializing with adults who were not family members. When they did socialize, the activity most often mentioned were card parties. Sharon recalled: "My mother was part of a card club, they played Canasta. We had to make sure that the house was prepared when the card club met at my house. Then, during the card game, we had to do something else." Cordelia also remembered the parties: "My parents had parties – card parties. You know, Canasta Parties. I had to be all dressed up and pass the little silver nut thing."

The extent of non-family socializing in which Karen's parents participated was rare among the participants. She shared that:

> … a person, younger than I am, but who was the daughter of one of my parent's friends, saying to me, "Your mother… I would love it when your mom would come to our house for dinner,…" when you know they would have these big dinner parties – that was the age of the dinner, the era of the dinner party – she said, "I never wanted to go to bed, so I would sit on the steps, my parents never used to know, I would sit on the steps just so I could hear your mom tell stories." And that was such a neat thing to hear, because it's true. My mom was, she was just hysterical. You know, she was really bright, and dad even knew that she was probably smarter than he was. Although … you know, because I said, reading, interested in everything, you know. She'd be the one playing jeopardy who would know all the answers. I

was like, "Oh my god, mom, how do you know this." Well, she was reading all the time. So, they liked. She liked people. They liked getting together with people. Everyone loved her. And if dad would do entertaining like couples, she would… they would do it in the city, in New York, whether it was taking somebody to a show or out to dinner or something like that.

Some (4 of 39 [10%]) of the participants mentioned that non-family members were not welcome in their houses when they were growing up. As Rebecca noted:

And, because there were so many of us, we weren't allowed to have people in the house. The house was really… I mean, if we were going someplace with a friend, which sometimes we would go to the movies or we would go bowling or something, if we were doing that, then whoever was picking us up, if they were picking us up, they would come into the house and wait for us. But, beyond that, friends didn't come over and hang out and spend a lot of time.

For Georgia, the memory was a bit painful:

Well, we were the poor people. We never had people in our house because our furniture was from Salvation Army. We did the church youth group and people picked me up at the door. Mother would say, "Don't invite anybody in." It was hard.

Renee, whose family had experienced some upward mobility while she was a child, remembered trying to persuade her mother to host social events and include non-family members, but to no avail:

My mother … came from very humble beginnings, so when my father started having some success, I think my mother never really felt like she fit in. And so that hindered her ability to, you know, really kind of socialize. … I think that because she always felt like she was not good enough. I think she tried extraordinarily hard,

but I think it limited her confidence to socialize a lot. … I can remember having a conversation with her as I was older, saying like "You have this beautiful home, why don't you, let's have a Christmas party." She would never do that.

Hard Work

As they provided descriptions of activities and values to which they were exposed during primary socialization, all 39 (100%) participants recalled the way in which work and being busy was a constant in their lives. As such, they learned that working hard was an important value. Some (11 of 39 [28%]) of the participants spoke of how their parents seemed to worked a lot. Sally recalled that her "father, … man, he was just so busy all the time with his job and then he would fall asleep." Renee remembered how it seemed as if her father was always working:

> The rule was, he would go to work, but my mother made him, not made him that sounds horrible. He would come home every night, we had dinner together, every night as a family. I mean, that was, you did not miss dinner. And then he would go back to work.

Kristos found it difficult to even remember his parents having leisure time:

> When they weren't working? That's a good one. My parents worked most of my childhood. I raised my little brother for most of it. … For the most part, I'd say from age 8 or 9, I was basically father and mother to my brother until my parents got home later at night.

William remembers that his dad would often be unable to attend his sporting events because he had several jobs:

> When I was in high school, I played basketball … when basketball games were over and everybody was filtering over to the dance, I was getting picked up by my dad

because his second job: he would go to farm houses and get chickens, put them in crates, take them to the slaughter house.

Even when their parents weren't working at their job for pay, an overwhelming majority (35 of 39 [90%]) of the participants reflected that even when pursuing what might be described as a hobby, their parents still seemed to be working hard. Francine remembers that her "mom did a lot of sewing, a lot of knitting, crocheting. My dad did a lot of gardening, a lot of outdoor tinkering. He had a garage and he was always fixing the cars and that kind of stuff." The theme of doing some sort of physical, tangible work was common. Rachel shared:

My dad, we didn't spend a lot of time with because he would work during the day and then during good weather he would come home for "supper" and it seemed like we ate pretty early and then he would go off and do other work. He would put on roofs, he would lay cement, he would do carpentry work. He was really an all-around handy guy. And he just worked a lot and then maybe around dark or when he couldn't work anymore he would come home.

Stacy, whose father had a position that would not be classified as manual labor, recalled:

Even though he worked as a photographer, he was very good with his hands, doing other things. He was a "fix-it" kind of guy. We never grew up in a house where we had people come to our house to fix things. My father could fix everything. He did painting. He did wall paper. He did electrical work. He did plumbing. Anything that needed done, he was very good with doing that.

The participants learned the value of hard work as their parents modeled it, and through the expectations that their parents had for them. Growing up, the participants were expected to work hard and had different types of responsibilities. Cordelia recalled, "I do remember doing chores. I felt like everybody else was watching cartoons and I was dusting." Taking

care of siblings was a common expectation for the participants. Rebecca was primarily responsible for raising her younger siblings:

> I had younger brothers and sisters and so two of my siblings who were the youngest were girls and I would watch them. It was my job to take care of them all the time. So, when I think about "what did we do?" it was bathing them, feeding them, getting them ready for bed, helping them with their homework at school.

For Peter, hard work was the norm for his family since they owned an ice plant on the Maryland shore and everyone in the family was expected to work there:

> You know, all these summers from age 12 to about 22 that I worked in the family ice plant, all the money, I mean they totaled up the hours and paid us so much an hour, but it all went to a common family purse to pay financial expenses. So, I had a second and a third job in the evenings. One night a week in the summer, my two brothers and I shared this job, we were all-night desk clerks in a hotel. So, every third night I would work from 6:30 in the morning until 5:00 or so in the ice plant, have some supper and then shag for Ocean City and work from about 7:00 at night until about daybreak at the hotel desk and then get back to the ice plant in time to clock in for the next work day. Every third day that was my work day. So, if I wanted spending money, I had to have a part-time job in the evenings because the money I made at the ice plant went into the family purse, which I was fine with. I never resented or regretted any of that. When I saw how hard my parents were working to try to give us a chance in life, I thought the least I can do, and I remember formulating this at a very early age, is to do the same.

The expectation to work hard applied to leisure activities in which the participants were involved as Paul shared:

My father and my mother always made sure that whatever we did, we always used

the term, "110%". My dad always said, "If you're not going to put 110% into

something, don't do it at all." … Because of the emphasis on working hard, because

of the emphasis on not being lazy, because of the emphasis on my studies and sports,

we never really went out and did a lot of things for fun.

The participants' parents equated hard work with physical work. A few (4 of 39 [10%]) of

the participants recalled how they became aware of that. Linda shared how her parents did

not understand that a professional position might also require working hard:

… when I was a trainee I was paid on an hourly basis, I was paid overtime. When I

became a manager, I was salaried. No one in my family had ever been salaried

before. … Like they wouldn't understand, they kind of wouldn't understand how I

got stuck at work late sometimes or why I was working as hard as I was.

Amanda recalled the moment she learned of her family's lack of respect for those who

perform the type of mental work done by college graduates:

The last time I was home I was sitting around the table and … dad started going on

how college educated people have no common sense. And I'm sitting right there,

right? He's talking to a daughter who is $130,000 in debt because they couldn't give

me good, I mean I didn't have anyone to ask about the right decision to take. …

And here's someone, he's talking about it, and my brother just jumps right on board

and they're having a conversation about common sense, people with college degrees

have no common sense.

<center>Parents' Expectations of Behavior</center>

<center>*Manners and Etiquette*</center>

In addition to the value of family and hard work, most (35 of 39 [90%]) of the

participants mentioned how important it was to their parents that they be well-behaved,

<center>82</center>

mannerly and know the rules of etiquette. David stated "one of the most important things for my parents was manners. And I think that helped me a lot no matter what I was doing or where I was doing it." Barry recalled that manners also were important:

> My mother was extremely ahead of her time socially and … if it wasn't for my mother, my father and I would still be, you know, wouldn't have any class at all. She taught us how to behave! … they called her, affectionately the Martha Stewart of [local town], so she was extremely proper and tried to teach two knuckleheads, being my father and I, how to behave and have some sort of class, I guess.

What the participants learned in school was reinforced at home as well as Georgia shared:

> Oh, my mother was table manner queen. Table manner queen. We knew to turn knife blades in to the plate. We knew how far back from the edge. And there was home economics in those days that taught you how to do introductions and greetings, and Roberts Rules of Order were taught in high school. I learned a lot of that from school. And my mother did know some of those homemaker things.

For these participants, the expectation of good behavior also included how they were to treat others. As Lisa noted, "I think my parents have always instilled in us to be respectful and courteous and thoughtful and have good morals, be honest people. . …courtesy and respect for people." Sally reflected that the emphasis on respect for others really meant that she should blend in with the group and not stand out or take credit for accomplishments:

> It wasn't just appearance being so important. That was part of it. I mean, it was just basically a very conservative outlook on life, not being a risk-taker. And that's also I think related to this group thing. You've got to be part of the group. You can't stand out.

Helping Others

Helping others was a common value mentioned by most (35 of 39 [90%]) of the participants. Sharon remembered her "mother was very involved, particularly in the church, and there was an expectation that we would be involved and help wherever needed." This help manifested in a variety of ways. As Nancy recalled:

I wouldn't say we certainly weren't philanthropic because there certainly wasn't extra money to go around, but you know, helping the neighbors, reaching a hand out to people. We had elderly neighbors growing up that had difficulty sometimes shoveling the snow and where we grew up south of Buffalo there was a lot of snow, so we would help them out. If you saw somebody who was stuck in the snow, we would get out and push the car. So, that type of thing.

Julie recalls the way in which helping one another created a sense of community:

… the good things about my old community [was] the closeness. People would give you the shirt off your back, help you in a anyway, especially the church, in your church. If you were sick, they would bring you food.

Prejudice and Bigotry

A few (5 of 39 [13%]) of the participants recognized that there was contradiction in their parents' attitudes since they simultaneously emphasized respecting others by helping those in need and holding quite bigoted viewpoints. Sally shared:

… we lived on a street that was quite working class. I mean there were people who lived there when they were first married, families who lived there when the parents were first married and then they went on to better places in West Hartford. But, we didn't until I was in college. So, my parents, specifically my mother, didn't associate with any of the neighbors who were, you know, working class. … so I really distanced myself from people who were sort of working class. Um, and …

84

well, because, by 7th grade we were in these groups. That became my, pretty much, my social group. Other people were around, too. We weren't that cliquish, but I had friends in that group of bright women and men who weren't particularly working class and who came from college educated backgrounds. And some who didn't. but I think I identified in that.. yeah, I mean, oh wow, I really identified with being in this top group. And now that I'm talking, I can see why. I didn't have any other way to really identify. My parents were sending out strong signals not, at least my mother, not to, you know, not to befriend the Italian, etc. in the neighborhood. I mean, she was really quite bigoted about it all. So, that kind of became my identity group.

<div align="center">Parents' Leisure Activities</div>

Even though the most common memory the participants had is of their parents working or being busy at some sort of activity, they did mention some activities that were more leisurely or relaxing.

<div align="center">*Reading*</div>

Like half of the participants, (20 of 39 [51%]), Zachary recalled that his "mother was a voracious reader. … Jacqueline Suzanne, Jackie Collins and that sort of thing." Stacy reflected how her father's reading choices were a way that he educated himself:

He was very in to <u>National Geographic</u>. He said that was his college education. He didn't go to college, but he became educated by reading things like <u>National Geographic</u>. And studied… loved aviation, loved the space program, was very in to things like that.

<div align="center">*Watching Television*</div>

The only other activity that a majority (34 of 39 [87%]) of the participants remembered their parents doing was watching TV. Linda shared:

<div align="center">85</div>

… there were times when [my mother] would have one or two things that she would

religiously watch on TV. But that was what she would do. … And then my dad,

um, my dad when he wasn't working, he watched more TV.

Gloria thought that these TV shows served a purpose for her parents, her mother in

particular:

My mother definitely watched TV. You know, she had her shows. My dad was not

much for the weekly shows, he watched the news. He watched the Sunday talk

shows. … It seems to me [my mother watched] quite a few Westerns: Gunsmoke,

Bonanza, that era.

Travel and Vacations

Other examples of leisure time activities mentioned by 12 of 39 (31%) participants

included day trips or short vacations. In some cases, the car ride itself was the activity itself

as Colleen shared:

… and go for, often go for a ride somewhere. In fact, I was thinking about that the

other day, like on a Sunday, that would be often what we would do, is go for a ride in

the countryside. Because you didn't have all the other distractions that you have

today.

For others, like Andrew, travel was by car and usually was for the purpose of visiting

family:

They didn't have a lot of socializing that I recall, except related to we'd drive over to

Shamokin [about an hour away] to see my mother's family, which we did quite a bit

when I was young.

Five of the 12 (42%) participants who mentioned vacations felt that these activities did not

qualify as vacation. Francine commented:

86

But, we didn't go away really on vacation, because we didn't have the money, really. My dad only had a week vacation every year and it was unpaid. So, we pretty much… our vacation was like a two hour drive to visit my uncle in Philadelphia and that was like a weekend and then we'd be back.

Some (3 of 12 [25%]) did vacation at the beach, which for Phoebe was close by: "… we went down the Jersey shore, New Jersey shore in the summers and we sat on the beach, walked on the Atlantic City Boardwalk at night." And Stephanie, who came from a large family, recalled other types of vacations:

…we would pile in to the back of a station wagon and go on vacation. So, my father was quite open to other cultures, so he'd always take us to the Fair, and the Bavarian Festival and country music cook outs, or the Club Cookout. He would take us to food-related, ethnic events. So, that I recall. Camping trips down to Chincoteague was something, again, family we would just all be piled together and go off. I have memories of that.

For slightly more than half of these (7 of 12 [58%]), there were more frequent and extensive family vacations, but nothing extravagant as Nancy shared:

I had never been on an airplane until my freshman or sophomore year in college – first time I had ever been in an airplane. I'd only been to a couple of states and one of the trips was on a band trip, it was something, we had gone to Gettysburg and we had been to Myrtle Beach a couple times, but other than that we never travelled.

Most (27 of 39 [69%]) of the participants did not mention vacation or they spoke of vacations as something missing from their life growing up. Rachel shared:

… that's a little bit of a sore spot with me because we didn't go on vacation very often. I do remember family picnics and we would get together for maybe picnics or bar-be-ques at relative's homes. And occasionally we had friends, my parents had

87

friends who had a cabin and I remember going there a few times and being in the

water and having bar-be-que's. Occasionally we would go to parks and have, it was

our, recreation was mostly picnics. My parents did not go on vacation very much.

Whether it was for economic reasons or, I know my dad just did not like to travel

particularly, but also for economic reasons. He didn't make a lot of money and

probably couldn't afford very much. So I had cousins, I had male cousins who every

year they went to the beach for a week and I just thought that had to be the greatest

thing in the world. And we didn't do that. Now, today I have such an urge to do

everything that I didn't do.

Peter recalls his father's leisure activity because it was a contrast to daily life:

My parents did not take vacations. Our lives revolved around work and economic

survival. I don't remember my father ever spending any money on himself, except

once a year or so – we lived near Ocean City, Maryland – he would go fishing. That

was it.

The Arts

A few (6 of 39 [15%]) of the participants mentioned the importance of the arts in the

household growing up. Karen recalled that "on a Sunday afternoon I can vividly remember

mom being in the kitchen sitting listening to the Metropolitan Opera." Stacy recalled how

her grandmother's interest influenced her own interests:

My grandmother always loved the arts. She was very in to music and dance and she

was the one who started me in dance at a young age, too. She said, "You're going to

be a dancer." So, she gave me my first year of lessons. Actually walked me to the

dance studio when I was four. …. I started out at a little neighborhood dance studio

and then when I was in high school I actually danced with the New Jersey Ballet.

Two of the 39 (5%) had parents who were actively involved in performing music. Max shared that his father was a "very accomplished mandolin player and he and four other men of his age every Friday night would play music. They did that in the home. They travelled to nursing homes. They didn't do it for any remuneration." Cathleen also recalled the importance of music and the arts in her life growing up:

My father and his father played the flute. My grandparents listened to the opera every Saturday. You'd go over and the radio would be on and they'd be listening to the Met every Saturday. My parents, I think, and went to the theatre and went to the movies a lot. My uncle, my maternal uncle, was a musician also. He was a singer and an entertainer. So there was always music in the house of one kind of another.

Angela was aware of how unusual it was for someone from a low status family to have such tastes:

The things that we did with our immediate family, it was kind of like I lived in a world of high-low culture. Constant balance between the two. For example, my father was really interested in Italian Opera and I did go to several opera productions at the New York State Theatre. At the same time, my father was in to watching professional wrestling.

Supporting Participants' Activities

A few (7 of 39 [18%]) of the participants mentioned that their parents offered support for activities in which the participants were involved. David recalled that "my mother ... would volunteer to help in school stuff, like picnics or chaperone stuff for outings and that sort of stuff." William mentioned how important it was in the family that everyone supported one another's activities:

Well, I would say, the respect of each other's, back then, of each other's aspirations and each other's lifestyle, each other's activities where, you know, it was not a

question "you can't go play ball" it's a question of "you want to play ball, we'll do

our best to accommodate our parenting schedules to do that".

Only asmall number (2 of 39 [5%]) even mentioned that their fathers would help to coach

their teams. Lisa remembers this as a way for her parents to show support for her interests:

My brother and I were both very involved in sports and music growing up. So, my

father coached my softball team from the age of… from when I was age 8 through I

would say 15 or 16. My brother played baseball, wrestled, he dabbled in basketball,

so they spent a lot of time attending our sports activities and being involved. Also I

played the violin since the third grade, they've been very involved in encouraging

me to do that and spending time with me, taking me to practices.

For Brian, this time spent helped to develop a close father-son relationship:

I'm very close with my father. He coached my brother and I in every sport you

could imagine growing up. He worked like an earlier in the day schedule, maybe

like 6 AM to 2 or 3, so he was always home in the evenings and he was coaching our

sports. My family was very involved. My parents wanted to raise their kids the right

way and spend time with them.

Education

Parents Valued Education

When asked about their parents' expectation for them regarding college, everyone

one of the participants (39 of 39 [100%]) stated that getting an education was valued and

they were expected to do well in school. Nancy recalled that her parents' expectation was

understood in terms of grades and work ethic:

We certainly were expected to do well in school and we certainly were expected to

get good grades. And if I came home with a "B", I was in trouble. My brother never

seemed to get in so much trouble. He always seemed… if he got a "B" that seemed

to be OK. I don't know, maybe I'm remembering… this could be a sibling thing.

He's three years older so maybe I'm not quite remembering all of that. We certainly

had to do well in school. I never missed a day of school in four years, 9th, 10th,

11th, 12th, not a day. So, it didn't matter if you had the flu, you got up and went to

school. So, you had to be present and you had to do well. No slacking. No skipping

school.

Rebecca remembered learning that education was important from the way in which the

dinner table conversation was focused each evening:

It was my job to prepare dinner and have it on the table, but we would all eat dinner

together. My father used to always say "the children are to be seen and not heard"

but when we were at the dinner table, he would also be the one, after he would have

a conversation with my mother about how things went during the day, then he would

ask us various questions about school. It was really very important to him that we

did well in school. He would ask us questions about school: what were we doing?

What did we learn that day? Who were we hanging out with?

Expectation to go to College

A majority of the participants (32 of 39 [82%]) had parents who were either very

supportive, expecting them to go on to college or indifferent to any plans for education after

high school. Some (8 of these 32 [25%]) had parents who had wanted to go to college but

for one reason or another had not been able to do so. As Zachary reflected, "both of them

believed in education and didn't get one and were insistent that my brother and I would, you

know, get educated." Francine shared that:

Both of them wanted to go to college. They were both children of the depression and

came from poor families. My mom wanted to be a nurse but her father died when

she was 3 and her mother only had a 3rd grade education. So, it just wasn't an

option for her. Her mom was just struggling to just even keep food on the table for her children. My dad wanted to be a math teacher. But, his family had always been farmers. When he approached his father about working his way through college his father said, farmers' sons don't go to college. You need to get a job. So, that's what he did. But, they both really wanted for all of us to do what they weren't allowed to do.

Several (5 of 32) shared that they were very clear about their parents' aspirations for them. As Brian recalled:

We [my father and I] were digging and our hands were dirty and he was like, "… there's two choices in life: to work with your hands like this or work with your brain. I work with my hands because I was from a poor family, poor town, no one went college where I came from so I work with my hands. I don't think you want to work with your hands, so you better work hard and study."

Paul reflected how significant it was that he was going to college since he was not onlky the first in his immediate family, but first in his extended family, and first to go to college of the children of his parents' friends:

…my father and my mother were just very proud that I was taking that next step instead of just graduating high school and getting a job, you know, that I was going on to college. …. But, I remember Pappous -- my grandfather from my father's side, … talking to me and he said, "I'm surprised you just didn't go into the army." And, I said, "Why would I go into the army?" I said, "I can go into college right away." He said, "Well, you can go into the army and they'll pay for your college." I said, "Well, you know, we're taking out loans and we're going, I've got this big grant, Dickinson gave me $16,000 of grant guarantee." I was able to get student loans, I was able to get a whole bunch of local academic scholarships as well. I said,

"Pappous, I want to go to college. I'm not interested in the army. I want to be a businessman. This is the fastest way to go about doing this." He's like, "Well.." He went to the army. My father was almost drafted to Vietnam. But he went directly into the Army. My, now, my father's sister: all of her kids, except for the daughter went to the army right after high school. They're my cousins. They went directly into the army. They live very close by to my Pappous. So, my Pappous thought success was going into the army, helping out your country and then from their determining your business path. I disagreed. That stuck into my head because I understood then the difference between the generations as to how they viewed success and how they viewed next steps in their life. And so that event really stuck in my head as to like a turning point for me. It also stuck in my head because I had family members there, I had my father's friends. My father's friends, none of them went to college and I was the oldest out of all my father's friends' kids. So, I'm not necessarily a role model by any means, no one ever treated me like a role model, but I was the first out of my entire network to go to college. And my parents treated it as something that was amazing, a great first step for the family.

But, for a few (7 of 39 [18%]) participants even though their parents thought that getting an education was important, college was not the obvious next step. Wendy shared:

Well, my father's comment was that with legs like mine I'd make some man a fine secretary, why should we spend money on college when you're just going to get married and pregnant anyway. … And, my mother, …. she wasn't hell bent on me going to college by any means because she had done fine. At that point she was working on her 3rd husband, which is a lucrative proposition, at least it was in her case, not for the men, lucrative for her.

Julie also was aware that college was not a priority for her parents and when asked where her desire to go to college came from, she reflected that she "wanted out from an early age, I really did. I had relatives from a little further away who were very well educated and naturally they lived further away, that's why. And, they encouraged me." Nancy reflected that the desire to go to college came from within:

> If I had said I wasn't going to college, that wouldn't I think likely have been a problem. If I just said I wasn't going to go to school. This was more something, I think – going to college – that I took on. Especially my mother probably would have been OK if I hadn't gone to college, really.

Of these seven, two (28%) had to persevere against their parents for college. Phoebe explains that "They really tried to discourage me because they thought I was too stressed. Yeah, I was. I bit my nails to the bone. You know, but it was me, it was what I wanted to do." For Georgia, it was more than just discouraging her from college. In her case there was the real possibility that she would not be able to complete her degree:

> Dickinson raised the price of tuition between my junior and senior years. Spring, you had to give a deposit for your senior year. And, my mother called me and said, "Dickinson sent us a bill for the deposit and your scholarship won't cover the difference and we don't have it and it's your sister's turn to go to college so you go to the dean of women and tell her you have to drop out." So, I went to see Barbara Wishmeyer and she said, in effect, is your mother crazy? And, what are your parents thinking? Nine more months and you'll have a degree and be able to help your sisters. She said… she'd called my mother and I said, "there's just no point." She said, "I have a little stash of jobs that I can give if you will get up in the morning and work breakfast for the food service, that will cover it." And that's how I managed to finish at Dickinson.

For these participants, college became a possibility only when someone whom the parents respected, intervened. Julie recalls that:

> I did really well in the National Merit Test and so I got offers from schools all over the place, but when your parents don't want you to go away, it's very difficult even though you have a full ride. … a priest's wife told me about Dickinson. And she said, "it's nearby, it's only a couple of hours away, they give good financial aid packages, go take a look at it." So I did and I fell in love with it. … My dad did take me there for an interview. He did bring me up and I think he was impressed with how they were impressed with me in the Admissions Office and he was a little impressed with me himself then.

For Georgia, the intervention came with the promise of funding, since her parents would not provide any financial support:

> When I was in 8th grade, I went to my very first junior high dance and there was a gang fight in which coke bottles were used. I came home and told my father about it and that week he looked for a new job and moved us from the neighborhood to … a sort of exclusive, well-to-do community …. I went from being very low blue collar into a new subdivision … that my parents could barely afford and was the bottom of the pecking order. But, when they went to register me with my transcript a man who changed my life forever, a guidance counselor named Mr. Edmonds, said "we want to put her in the college prep program". And both my parents said, "We have no money. She needs to be a secretary." And he said, "…, I promise you, if you put [her] in the college prep program we will find her a scholarship."   And he did.

For a few (4 of 39 [10%]) of the participants, if it had not been for a tragedy in their lives growing up, they may never have been able to go to college. Three, like Christine, lost a parent:

…with my dad's passing, it definitely kind of changed the course of all of our lives,

obviously. I mean… who knows if college would have been in my future or if I

would have stayed in that area… I don't know. …when I graduated from high

school, I wanted to go and be a teacher and likely come back to the area. But I could

have very easily seen me living a very similar life to my parents versus the path I

took then, which is going to Dickinson and now I live in Philadelphia, work in IT.

So, I don't know. It's one of those forks in the road. It's interesting to think about

potentially the different path that I would have taken. I just.. I guess I just don't

know if I would have necessarily moved away from … well I grew up in Dairy,

Pennsylvania. It's just, who knows what the future would have held, but I definitely

… I think that is a reality that I could have easily stayed in that area.

The fourth, Andrew, suffered from serious physical problems that opened up the opportunity

for college funding:

So, between those two injuries and the resulting problems with my back, the

principal, the vice-principal referred me to the Office of Vocational

Rehabilitation….. They did testing on me and determined that I was not ever going

to be able to work in the unskilled labor force because of my injuries to my eye and

my back and my hip. So, I was officially declared not able to participate in a large

sector of the working world. So, then they tested me to see whether or not I could be

educated. And, of course, I had a very high IQ and was highly motivated so I passed

those tests. In their jargon, at least, if I were to get an education, that would give me

entre into the skilled labor force. There I could make a living.

Participants' Educational Aspirations

The participants also shared their own educational aspirations. Many spoke about

making their own decision early on about going to college. Jerry was very clear about why

96

he wanted to go to college, since as he reflected, "I determined fairly early in life that I was going to make a living using my brain, not my back. I made the mistake of saying that to my dad once and he never let me forget it." When asked about the origin of those aspirations, he shared, "you know, that was what was set out for me. Not that anyone set it out for me but I understood that that's what I was going to do. I determined it myself. But, it was what I always wanted to do." Andrew also had the same internal drive:

> … when I was nine I decided, I knew I wanted to be a lawyer. So nobody stood in my way, but then again nobody really went out of their way to make sure of that. I was primarily my own motivating force, I think.

Motivation: Escape from Limiting Environment

An overwhelming majority (35 of 39 [90%]) of these participants spoke about limited opportunities and experiences they had growing up. As Fred stated, "I felt like I was alienated from that setting where I grew up and wanted more. I wanted to be different… " and college was a way to escape from that sheltered and even smothering life." Cordelia also shared her awareness that college became a way for her to escape the sheltered life:

> And, when I was older, when I was in high school, our noses were up in the air about this little, tiny, dumpy town. Just generally in a bratty fashion, ready to leave and see the world. I think if you were well read and if you were smart there was a natural inclination and hunger and explore the world. We knew it was bigger. And I guess everybody didn't have that. It's amazing how many kids in my high school stayed. Even if they went away to college they came back to town.

For Rebecca, her motivation was to escape the responsibilities she was carrying to run the household:

> … when I was in high school, I knew that no matter what I was going to college. I was in high school, my teachers were really very supportive. They knew my family

background and they were really supportive of me and so if they could encourage me they would. I think that they thought that my parents really asked a lot of me. So, in their minds it was like I was going to school but I was really the person running the household too. I knew that I had to, in order to do something in my life, to get ahead and not want to live like my parents live. I knew that as much as I love kids I'd never have 8 kids, I knew that. But I also knew that I also didn't want to live life like my parents did. I also knew that if I didn't go far enough away to school, my mother would really rely on me so much.

Rhonda sums up the thoughts of those who saw college as the answer to their difficult situation when she stated, "I remember just thinking that I had to do certain things and accomplish them because I was not going to find myself in the situation I grew up in."

This desire to get away from the restrictive, stifling community they grew up in did not depend upon the geographic location. Julie grew up in a very rural mountain community in Appalachia:

And being… wanting to do something else, not… I guess it is sort of an insult to the town, a sort of slap in the face. Why wouldn't you want to do what everyone else does? Well, small town's a very conforming place, very limiting, I think. I found it to be that way, anyway. Judgmental. Limiting. They weren't necessarily happy for your success, you know what I mean?

Barry, on the other hand, grew up in a suburb in the shadow of Philadelphia, which served as a beacon to him, offering exposure to culture not available in his hometown:

Well, I knew I had to be sort of halfway successful to get out of… I knew I didn't want to live there. And I was probably I made myself exposed to things that weren't available to me in the area that I grew up. I used to go up to the city of Philadelphia and go to art museums or movie theaters, foreign movie theaters, and then sneak in

to see music. So, I was aware, always thought I had a great awareness of the other side of the tracks. I always wanted to be on the other side of the tracks.

Motivation: Exposure to Different Lifestyle Growing Up

Slightly more than half (25 of 39 [64%]) of the participants shared how their aspirations for a different kind of life came about when they visited friends, as Fred shared:

… going off for the first time to sleep overnight at someone else's house when I was like in junior high, at a friend's house, which was sort of a whole different world there. It was a large house, the people owned a business in York, they were Jewish…. Well, I got to see a whole different world through them and with them, because it was just different in a whole lot of ways from the world where I had grown up.

Susanna also learned about the finer things in life when she met her mother's boss:

The gentleman my mother worked for, for many years, he although he wasn't himself a rich man, I think also had exposure to that kind of world and he and his wife didn't have any children and they kind of would take care of me sometimes in that way. He always sort of appreciated nice things and fancy dinners and things like that and sort of exposed me to that. So that would probably be where the first exposure came from.

Motivation: Innate and Insatiable Curiosity

An overwhelming majority (37 of 39 [95%]) spoke of always being curious, and this interest in other people and places helped to increase their desire to seek a life different from what they knew growing up. Rachel shared about an important person in her life:

Oh, a lady down the street who my parents helped take care of, they cleaned and did things for her, and she was what we might call in those days an old maid school teacher from Philadelphia. … She was a teacher and she really got me interested in

99

travelling. I remember sitting down with her and looking at pictures or <u>National</u>

<u>Geographic</u> or something, but I was inspired but I was excited about these wonderful

places that she had been.

This curiosity that they embraced also informed the way in which they spent their time, as

Phoebe shared:

> And even in the summers, like middle school age, I would make a project for myself
>
> each summer and go to the library. One summer I read all of this Freud stuff in
>
> middle school and then, you know, I'd read a lot of novels like <u>Exodus</u> and huge,
>
> heavy-duty novels, and somehow that kept my attention. Another summer I studied,
>
> just my own thing, like drug addiction and drug use, and you know, why and how
>
> and the psychology of it and the sociology of it. I just made projects for myself.

Motivation: Exposure to Opportunities at a Young Age

An overwhelming majority (37 of 39 [95%]) listed the many activities in which they

were involved growing up, activities that exposed them to new opportunities and

experiences. Colleen shared that "growing up the boy scouts had these explorer offshoots

where you could be active in a group that looked at different careers." High school also

became an important time for them to get involved in different organizations where they

could assume leadership roles, as Andrew recalls:

> I was the state president of an organization called the Pennsylvania Junior Historians.
>
> At the time it was a pretty active high school organization and I won the presidency
>
> of my local chapter and then the regional and then the state. And I was elected twice
>
> as state President – the only person to do that. After that they changed the by-laws
>
> so that you could only serve one term.

Amanda shared that these activities were important enough to her to risk some tension at

home:

<center>100</center>

Like, I wasn't a part of the popular crowd, but I was the student body president and

you know all of these different things, was the statistician for the baseball team, and

the manager for the basketball team, and Mock Trial, and all of these things, …. It

created more tension at home than it created, you know, than it created at school, I

think.

Motivation: Television and Books

A few (7 of 39 [18%]) of the participants specifically mentioned the influence of

media in their lives. Nancy spoke of the influence television played, stating that "my father

was a news junkie, I'm a news junkie, so we never missed the local and the national news.

So I would see things on the news and I would think, 'I want to see those things.'" Cordelia

remembered how important books were in motivating her:

I had my bags packed to go to college pretty much the day I got the acceptance. I

was leaving town. That was always clear in my mind. … When I was little and had

to dust the bookshelves while other people were watching cartoons as I mentioned,

one of the books on the bookshelf was a picture book -- it's funny what you do

remember -- sort of a National Geographic kind of thing and there were pictures of

cities all around the world. I loved that book. This was when I was 5 or 6, 7, 8. I

loved that book. I looked at those pictures a million times. Japan, China, Germany,

Switzerland, Italy, France, England, wherever. I remember from an early time

having a strong desire to leave this town and go see these other beautiful things.

Gloria reflected on how ironic it is that television influenced and motivated her:

… oddly enough, even though my husband and I today don't watch TV, and I watch

very little, and I kind of thought less of my mother for finding refuge in her shows,

you know week after week, I think TV opened up so many options to everyone in

small towns in rural areas who watched it that I just knew I was going to college.

101

There were ways for people who could not afford it to go to college and I could not

conceive of life being worth living if I didn't.

College

Parents' Involvement

Every participant (39 of 39 [100%]) spoke about the fact that their parents – even

those who had wanted to go to college themselves –were not very helpful when it came to

choosing a school. For Sally, this meant that she was discouraged from attending a

particular type of school:

> Luckily, I came from a very academic high school, and the teachers there encouraged
>
> us to go to the best schools. I remember that my senior year honors English teacher
>
> called my mother and told her I should go to Mount Holyoke, the school she had
>
> attended. My mother thought the college would be full of women from wealthy
>
> backgrounds, very sure of themselves, etc., and didn't think I would be comfortable
>
> there. Who knows? But it's an example of how my family did not push the
>
> envelope, did not encourage me to individually attain distinction.

Nancy shared that she had very little assistance with the entire college selection process:

> I'm not even sure how that came about, but we talked and she [my high school
>
> guidance counselor] said, "OK, here's some colleges that you should look at." I
>
> brought them home to my father. That was back when they had all the pamphlets
>
> and I remember the dining room table, which was also our kitchen table, which was
>
> also where I studied, I put them all out and he said [as she points] no, no, no, yes,
>
> yes, yes, yes. These are good.

Stephanie had even less assistance from her parents:

> And at that time, I had a boyfriend who was a year older than me, also a first-
>
> generation kid, a little bit more, I mean less economic woes in their family, there

were only two kids and, so I think that their expectation was to go off to college and

he went to Franklin & Marshall and my brother's girlfriend in high school went to

Dickinson. … I looked up Dickinson and I will tell you the garsh darn truth, it had a

lot of land and I thought "Oh, that must be important to select a college."

In addition to the fact that the participants' parents were unable to provide practical help

with the application process, they were also unable to advice regarding the college

experience itself, as David recalled:

There wasn't much in the way of preparation. … there wasn't any: "well, in order

to be successful in college you have to do this, this, and this." It was just: "well,

you're going to college, throw the trunk in the car, pack your stuff, where's Morgan

Hall, drag yourself stuff up there, and well, good luck, call us every week." That

was about it.

Once in college, it was clear from the participants' recollections, that their parents also did

not understand the significance of the educational experience at Dickinson. As Rachel

shared:

… you can see from the education level that my father grew up on a farm and had to

quit school to help on the farm. And my mother, I'm not sure my mother ever really

liked school and to tell you the truth in later years, my sister and I suspected that she

couldn't really read very well. But, I think that maybe she had some experiences in

her life that prompted her to want her daughters to want to be able to take care of

themselves. … My parents expected us to get college educations and they were

proud of us, but I don't think they fully, I was very hurt when I came home and told

them I had been elected to Phi Beta Kappa and they had no idea was that was. And,

my good, my best friend in college's parents were having a graduation party for her

and we weren't doing anything. I was really hurt and thought "you don't understand how significant this is."

A few (7 of 39 [18%]) of the participants commented that their parents did not seem to understand how college prepares someone for a professional position. Barry stated that his father viewed college as vocational training and had a strong reaction to Barry's plan to enter the sales profession after college, "Then my dad said, "Hell, I do sales, and I didn't go to college. What are you doing there other than taking up space?" Phoebe shared that "my parents wanted us to go to college, but more to meet a guy and to get married and to be housewives and to teach Sunday School." Sally remarked:

> … the real guidance that I got from my mother was that, you know, there's no harm in being a secretary. You can go to college and then be a secretary and work up from there. And since I didn't seem to want to be a teacher or nurse.

For Susanna the fact that her mother did not understand how a college degree could provide greater professional opportunities translated into all of the energy was placed on going to college, with no expectations regarding what happens upon graduation:

> And I definitely feel like that was sort of where, what I lacked as a working class person who eventually ended up going to college…. I sort of felt like growing up the end game was always college and it was never discussed like what you were going to do afterwards, seriously. So it was like once you got to college and you were there you kind of made it

Cordelia also remarked on the way in which she made the decision about what was next after college:

> I didn't know what I wanted to do afterwards. I had no clue what I wanted to do. … Really, I had no other plans, …and it [law school] was a reasonable decision because it was sort of like a trade school. You could go to law school, come out, get

a job, make a salary. The idealism wasn't there so much anymore. It was more of a

practical decision. Had I had some guidance or a little more confidence in myself, I

remember what I really wanted to do was go to Cornell's graduate school for

landscape architecture.

A few (5 of 39 [18%]) of the participants mentioned that their parents had very strong

opinions. Even though he did not follow his father's desires,, Zachary knew that his father

"expected that I would go to law school [in Carlisle] and move back [home]." Lisa shared

that she was well aware of what was acceptable to her parents:

It [fashion] is something that I've always loved and when I graduated from College, I

think this is probably the only time my parents took any real strong voice in saying

what career I should choose, but when I graduated from Dickinson I really wanted to

go to fashion school, because I do love the arts. Being a Spanish major, learning

about the food, the music, culture, and I've always loved fashion as well. Around

the time that I was looking at law schools, I said to my dad, "Well, I think I would

like to look at fashion schools as well." He said, "No, you'll get a real career." So

[laughs]… it was meant somewhat as a joke, but somewhat as a hint, but, you know,

"I'm expecting you to go a different route."

A few (5 of 39 [13%]) mentioned that they were aware of tension between themselves and

their parents after college. As Linda shares, this involved where she would live:

… every so often they would bring up a job, but it was frequently like, you know, a

regional bank was hiring, there was an opportunity there. It was always a little hard

for me to tease out whether it was a job that was like just barely a step above a teller

or not. So, I think that it was… they were encouraging to a certain extent of me

coming back to the region. They were very alarmed about the idea that I wanted to

move to New York. They just didn't think that I would… they didn't have a real

understanding of why I would be comfortable in such a big city.

Paul noticed a difference in his relationship with his father:

But, I did know that right after I graduated college, and I had a job and I was living

by myself with roommates, I just know that a lot of the conversations that my father

and I had, you know, a lot of times he would bring up that, you know, that because

I'm college educated I think that I know more than he does. I'm not someone that

boasts at all with regards to my intelligence, with regards to my possessions. I'm not

someone that boasts at all. I'm a very modest person. Anyone would tell you that

and so my, you know, I thought it was weird that my modesty was being eclipsed by

my father telling me, you know, "Oh, you think you're smarter and better than

everyone else now."

<div align="center">Participants' College Experience</div>

While I did not ask any questions about their time at college, all of the participants

(39 of 39 [100%]) mentioned the importance of their college experience and shared various

memories and events. Jerry's reflection on the significant intellectual change that he

experienced best expresses this:

What college prepares you for is to learn to think and open your mind. A few years

ago there was a segment on 60 minutes about the lady who was and for all I know

still is the president of Brown University and Morley Safer was interviewing her and

he said, "Well, if college is not vocational school, what's it for." And her answer is:

"to feed your soul". And … maybe it's because I was a first generation college

student that I really bought in to that because on some level I knew that I was going

to spend the rest of my life working even if it wasn't physical work, I was going to

spend the rest of my life working and college is there for an opportunity to have

<div align="center">106</div>

those 4 years of life when your chief obligation is to learn, not to work. And, when you leave there you're brain should exist on a different plane than it did before you got there.

Study Abroad

In college, some (10 of 39 [26%]) of them had the opportunity to study abroad. They spoke about the affect this had on them. Zachary said that "junior year I went to London, and I sort of came back and announced to the world that [my hometown] wasn't going to hold me." Lisa also reflected on the affect this had on her as she shared:

> I think, being over there [Malaga, Spain] you realize that there's so much to see in the world and it's OK to live a different way than Americans do and there's a lot of pride taken in spending time with family, so you come back and you realize that maybe the material things that you focus on as a college student aren't as important, or your status, who you're dating… I think I had a little bit of a different perspective when I came back that maybe other things are more important.

Susanna spoke about how her college experiences helped her to connect with her co-workers:

> I worked at a travel magazine, so luckily I did have the experience of Dickinson that I could draw upon and talk about my study abroad things, but aside from that at the time I really hadn't travelled much outside of college because I didn't have the money. And these people were going on amazing trips constantly and I got to do a little bit of that when I was there. And now I'm a few years older, I have a little bit more means than I did then, so I would fit in a little bit more now even than I did then.

In addition to travel abroad, a majority (33 of 39 [85%]) of the participants also spoke of the way in which the opportunities they had while in college exposed them to new information, ideas and opportunities. Stacy recalls a moment when she saw direct benefit of her coursework in a non-work setting:

My husband and I went to Italy for our 25th and we happened to be in a church and the tour guide was talking about this painting. It was a Caravaggio, the painter of light. Professor Akin! It was like the light went on in my head and I remember studying that picture in his class and to see it then in person! Just one little aspect, but I have those all the time and I think back to that liberal arts education. If I didn't study art history, if I didn't study, you know, religion, anthropology, sociology, all those things, I'd be a fraction of the person I am. Seriously!

Cultural events and activities were also mentioned as an important part of the college experience. Cathleen shared the following:

When I went to Dickinson and I don't know if they still do that, but I had a cultural affairs fee which I think was $10 out of our $2000 a year that we paid. We had wonderful groups that came to perform. We had the Julliard String Quartet. We had opera singers. We had Joffrey Ballet. It was on a regular basis. So, you were exposed to even more than the local cultural things or music in the house or whatever [that you may have known growing up]. There were the Sharp Room, do they still have the Sharp room Tea? … And they had writers and poets who would come and you would have tea with a silver tea pot and little sandwiches and it was just. It was kind of a nice way to get in to that, to learn how to function in a social, that kind of social setting, maybe a little bit more formal. … That was just part of being there, which was great. And it was also more of that stuffing things in your head there.

An overwhelming majority (35 of 39 [90%]) of the participants spoke of how important the relationships were that they built in college. As Rhonda shared:

I had a totally different social strata that I came from and if it were not for a big [sorority] sister, I was not even going to join a sorority – fraternities they were called them then – she was wonderful, and she took me and was with me a good deal and got me involved in things. And, I think if I hadn't been that, this campus would have been nothing to me except a place to study. Go to class and then home again or to work. But she got me involved and that was a tremendous, it was through her and getting involved in the fraternity that I got to deal with people on a social level. It was. It was a tremendous boon to me.

Sharon recalled how she felt "very connected to the basketball team." These relationships continue to be important to them as David remarked:

But, the social interaction, living with people and accommodating them and having them accommodate you and, you know, doing things as a group, as part of a team. I think that's invaluable. Sports gives you that as well. The fraternity stuff is more, because it's not just a season, it's not just practice, it's not just when you're out there. You live with these guys, so, you know, you learn how to get along. … I still have friends from back that far and we're still pretty close.

Some (8 of 39 [21%]) of the participants mentioned that they noticed a difference between themselves and their classmates in college regarding their attitude toward education. Julie said, "I think I appreciated it more than almost anybody I know at Dickinson, probably. That was my feeling then and it still is." Gary shared his thoughts as well:

I always kept saying to myself, "What am I doing here at Dickinson?" The caliber of

students, the social economic base they come from was far beyond me. And I took

my studies serious. I went to some classes and never saw students for the whole

semester except for exam time. I'm saying, "What?" They would borrow notes and

stuff from other class members and come in and take a test and that as it, you know.

I said, "Well, I'm here to learn."

Brian also knew that he had a different attitude, but as he reflected:

I wanted to take advantage of every opportunity that I had. And I saw education as a

way of doing that. I think some, so my values were grounded in education as a

means to have a better life and to like prove myself.

Participants' Values Now

Family

Family, whether parents, siblings or their own children, was mentioned by every one

of the participants (39 of 39 [100%]) as something they valued highly. Renee stated, "I very

much mirror my family. I'm very engaged with my family, especially my younger sister."

Christine also makes spending time with family a priority:

But, you know, so, family, and I make it a priority to spend time with my nieces. I

have dinner every Sunday with my brother and his family. It's a tradition that we

have, and we started, essentially, every Sunday, if not we try to do it on a Saturday.

So, at least once a week I have dinner with them.

An overwhelming majority (36 of 39 [92%]) have moved away from where they

lived growing up – and where many of their family members still live -- but they find ways

to stay connected as Susanna shared:

Just thinking of like another thing is, this maybe isn't quite so related but just the

experiences that I get to have now, I so wish my mother could experience. Like the

travel I've gotten to experience. Even now we're talking about trying to do a ... 60th birthday mother/daughter trip for her this year. And it's hard because half the things that I want to do she wouldn't be able to afford and I don't really have enough money to pay for her too at this point. I could do it, I could pay for myself, but I wouldn't have money to pay for both of us. So that's kind of becoming challenging. And even if I could, I don't think she would let me.

Linda's decision illustrates the extent of sacrifice this type of commitment to stay connected with family can require:

You know, we – both my husband and I – both make a really substantial effort to spend time with family even though they are so far away, and partially because they are so far away. So, we spend a lot of time and money, to be really blunt about it, going to see people. So we... my daughter last year probably took six separate trips where we were flying. We took two cross-country trips. I took away, my sister had a daughter, she had a her second child, and I took a week away from work and my daughter to go out and see her in San Diego. So, we really do make it... we try very hard to invest our time and our energy and our money in making sure that we have time with our family. Particularly when my daughter, she's changing so quickly, and that they feel like they're seeing her in all these different stages of her life. We're very proud of that fact. We're very proud of that both of our sets of parents probably saw her once her every three months last, you know, for the past two years. We take a lot of, we take that very seriously, we take a lot of pride in that.

A majority (30 of 39 [77%]) of the participants commented that they recognize differences between themselves and their family members regarding values. Mary shared:

I think I have 30 cousins and they all live in my hometown. And they all got married and have bazillions of kids and they all hang out and do family things. I feel left out

of that a lot, because I don't get to go home as much as I'd like to. It's about an 8

hour drive. I try to go home, you know, once every other month or so for a weekend,

but it's not really the same. So that, I feel like an outsider in that sense, because I

don't have that like daily contact with them that they have.

Linda also spoke of this:

But I have to say when I am actually dealing directly with my family, I frequently

feel embarrassed. I frequently will either feel actively embarrassed or will hide the

details or will do something I blatantly think is really weird. Like I, um, uh… there

are just uncomfortable moments. People will be sitting around talking about, you

know, tax brackets and I am not saying a word. You know?

Rachel shared her interaction with her father in this regard:

I have dinner with my dad once a week. … My dad will often say to me, "I don't

understand why you are interested in that". My dad once said to me, "I'm not really

interested in anything". And, it's so set me off. I couldn't, I thought, how could you

be that way? Unless there was some practical reason to be interested in this, like the

Kentucky Derby: "Well, do you have money on that race?" "No, I like, I'm

watching it because I'm interested in it." "Well, why are you interested in that?"

You know, he just doesn't get why for its sake you would be interested in stuff.

Sometimes these differences can create some tension, as Andrew related:

… most of my family went on to, my extended family, my cousins, went to college,

went to become teachers. Although one stand-out exception is I have a cousin who

is a Pharmacist. He and I were the only really educated past four years of college

and into any specialty. …. I guess I've just gotten from their comments to me, their

assumptions about me, I've just gotten the feeling that they recognized that I've

definitely climbed the social ladder. That I've definitely gotten to a different level. I don't know how to describe it. I really don't.

And, as Zachary states, working on those relationships is a priority:

We're [my brother and I] burying the hatchet. Now, having said that, he's never been to my house in Indiana. My dad has. But, he doesn't travel a lot with my dad and I don't really push him to come out there because I wouldn't want him to see how well I do. I mean, I think he kinda knows, but I don't think he really knows. Now, my dad, of course, is just amazingly proud. I have a corner office in a big building and all that stuff. But, my brother would not be. But, you know, we're going to a soccer game. We're going to see Manchester United play down in DC in July, my brother and his wife and I. So, we do things together.

Because they acknowledge that the fact they now have different interests and priorities in their lives and this can create tensions in their relationships, a few (5 of 39 [13%]) shared their strategy to avoid antagonizing their familial relationship. Jerry states:

I think they [those who leave their working class neighborhood and family] look at themselves and they look at their families and they look at their friends and the families of people who they meet at various places and times in their lives and they can't reconcile where they started with where they want to be. Fair or not. There is a girl who grew up in the house next door to me who is like me a child of the working class. She lives in California now. She is an entrepreneur and she acquired what I consider, whether they're middle class pretentions or upper class pretentions, but if you know the Peter Gabriel song, "Big Time", that's what I think of whenever I see her. And, maybe I'm being unkind, maybe I'm not. But it's like, well, yeah, you are … you know, you grew up right next door to me, you can't undo your past or where you came from.

113

For Brian, maintaining physical distance from his family is what helps to preserve the relationship:

> … I don't go back for the family reunions that happen each year. It's just too hard for me to get back. Plus, it's just more glaring now. I'm so much more different than my family members, my cousins. A few of my cousins after me went to college, which is good, but then I have some second cousins that live in trailers and are 19 years old with kids and there's no way they're going to college. I just don't… I don't have much in common with those people.

As the participants reflected on the values they currently hold, they acknowledged that those core values were influenced by their families. Zachary stated:

> I'm an Eagle Scout because my parents taught me to be that way. I still live my life that way. That was my upbringing. …My parents were not educated, so they're bigoted, anti-Semitic, anti-black, anti-everything. They're getting better, but my dad, I think, kinda, sorta thinks, maybe I voted for Obama. But, if I were to tell him that, I don't think that would go over so well. So, we skirt around that. He's, you know, still got his "W" sticker on his car. So, my moral center, I got from my parents. Everything else sort of drifted away. He's probably never voted for a democrat in his life and I'm a registered democrat.

Amanda, who spoke of how different she is from her family, reflected on how complex that relationship is:

> … I think I'm so much more comfortable in my skin and who I am and have not left those roots behind but I know where they are in me. Like they don't define me anymore and I think there was a point specifically in my mid-20s and even my late-20s where they were defining me, you know. Because they were defining me as "the

other". You know even if like, "well I'm not that", these were still defining me because I'm not that. Whereas now, I'm like, they're a piece of me…

Half (20 of 39 [51%]) of the participants have children of their own. Although I did not ask questions regarding their parenting style, all of the participants who have children raised the issue during the interview. When sharing how she spends her time, Rebecca stated:

Well, first of all my kids were really involved. They were in marching band, baseball, piano lessons. So, I would do that with them. One of the things I said is when I had kids, because my family never had a vacation, that I wanted my children to have that opportunity. So, when school would get out every year, what we would do is we would leave that weekend and we would go somewhere for 2 or 3 weeks. … That carried over for the whole year because as they got a little older they became involved in that planning. What is something that you want to see? What is something that you're talking about in school? So, one of those trips was when we went to Mesa Verde, my older son was learning about that in school and so that's where we went. We went there and went through the Painted Desert and everything. It was neat because we were camping and we were outside so whatever we did today we could talk about that. I did a lot of reading to them as they were growing up. I played a lot of games with them as they were growing up. I just really know that they know that they had a good upbringing.

Karen also spoke about her parenting style, in particular how she chose a different approach from how she had been parented:

All he [my son] had to do was this final project and it took 3 years to do his final project. And I'm not kidding you, I really think if we hadn't been hounding him, he wouldn't have done it. We had fights over it. "Mom, you don't have to say that. If I

115

do it, I'll be doing it for myself." I said, "I know you'll be doing it for yourself, that's the first person you should do it for, yourself and your wife." I mean, aye-yai-yai. But we hounded the living daylights out of him, because I saw how easy it was to just stop. My daughter, on the other hand, grades were always hard for her. She always had to work extra hard and… but she went to Elizabethtown. Graduated from E-town and in May she'll have her master's from St. Joe's in Food Marketing. She's work, work, worked her little tail off to get it. But, I know that my experience of being just kind of left, influenced how we handled it with the kids insofar as not just letting them, really encouraging them, taking that extra… "well, what are you studying, what are you doing now, how's it going?" Because it's too easy, especially when you get to that stage in your life, to just kind of sit…. "Oh I'll get to it" or "It's not necessary".

Relationships

In addition to maintaining a relationship with their family, all (39 of 39 [100%]) of the participants spoke about how important their friendships are to them. Nancy said:

Friends… I value, as far as what I value: I value my family, I value my friends. I spend a lot of time, you know, because I don't… I have a very small family, I value spending time… a lot of my friends are really my family because I don't have… I don't have nieces and nephews.

Linda gave an example of how important friends are to her:

I had a friend who had a pet die suddenly and I paid a condolence call in the middle of my workday over my lunch hour. So, I ran across town to go say hello to her and to comfort her and to be there for her ever so briefly on my lunch hour.

And because these friends live all over the world, a majority (30 of 39 [77%]) of the participants gave examples of how they prioritize their friends in their lives. Renee shared:

116

I do have friends and I socialize with them. My problem is that because I do so much travel and have travelled a lot of my friends are not in the general vicinity. So, I'll go and spend a long weekend with my friends in Chicago and my friends in Texas or go out to California.

Angela found ways to combine business with pleasure:

There's someone I'm very good friends with and we hit it off from day one. She was one of three African American students we had at Dickinson, … I went to a conference last summer and stayed with her for a week.

An overwhelming majority (37 of 39) [95%] of the participants indicated that their current friends share similar interests and values as they do. Stacy stated:

I would say that the circle of friends that my husband and I have are pretty much the same kinds of people that we are, that have had the same kinds of experiences. You know, maybe their parents didn't go to college, but they did and they're professional people. I think for the most part, that's true.

That does not mean that all of the participants have friends who were also FGS. Susanna described her current group of friends:

Well, all my friends just have backgrounds, they come from a lot of money and it's just, you know, I'm constantly saying "well, back from where I'm from this is how we do things… when other people's parents come to town, not so much now that we're in our 30s, but when we were in our 20s, it was like, "My parents are going to be in town, let's pick like the nicest restaurant we can go to and have them take us out." Whereas my mom comes to town it's like I try to pick affordable places and I'm the one treating her a lot of times. … I don't really have any friends, or keep in touch with any friends from high school. Um, you know, that kind of happened early on, not really by my choice. I feel like actually that the friends that I met at

Dickinson and that I met in New York have become much stronger friendships than

any friendships I had growing up.

A few (7 of 39 [18%]) of the participants commented on how different their friends now are

from those they had growing up. Rachel stated:

I have a friend from school. We met in 6th grade. She's always been a good friend

and she's always been someone I could confide in. … I must admit I don't see much

of her. She's very smart. She did go to design/art school. … But we live in totally

different worlds. There just, we're just not interested for the most part in the same

things. … It's just that we just don't have the same drive, or motivation, or work

ethic… It definitely is in some ways stayed at a certain place and I moved on, I guess

you would say. I guess, again, I think it is just a broadening of my world. It's not

that I moved up, it's that I moved over. I broadened and she didn't broaden.

When asked if she stays in touch with anyone from high school, Nancy responded:

No. One person, maybe, an old-time family friend, sometimes I'll hear from. He'll

send me an email. But, he's an electrician, but not generally. Although I don't stay

in touch with a whole bunch of my high school friends. But the ones that I'm closer

to, that I communicate with on a regular basis are also college educated or have

graduate degrees.

Hard Work

All (39 of 39 [100%]) of the participants responded that they maintain the value

learned growing up of working hard. Even though that the work they do is now more

mental than manual, they still have the same sort of work ethic modeled by their parents. As

Amanda stated:

It's a privilege for me to be able to work and make a living doing something that gets

to use my mind and not my hands. And not to have to use my physical body to make

my living, to not be, like I mean, I look younger than I am partly because I live in a

humid climate, but partly it's because I'm not working, you know, I did work 80

hours a week for a very long time, but I'm not working 80, well, I don't physically

work 80 hours a week. That takes a different toll on your physical body, you know,

so, but I mean part of it's money. I make more now than my parents did growing up,

I mean when I was growing up, I make more than they did total.

Paul shared how he applies that learned value in his life:

We're very, very hard working. … So, our jobs are very, very demanding, and

luckily they're very flexible. So, when we're working from home, we're not

messing around. We're not watching TV, you know, we're not messing around,

we're not doing yard work. We barely have enough time to let the dog out. So, we

still work very, very hard, but we value fun much more than my parents ever did.

For Christine, this ethic applies to her leisure activities as well:

I'm training for my 3rd and 4th marathon. … I'm running Chicago in October and

then in January, this past January, last January and this past January I ran the Disney,

Walt Disney World Marathon. This past one I actually did what they call the Goofy

Challenge so I did the half on Saturday and the full marathon on Sunday. So I do a

lot of running. I'm typically up during the week at 4:30 in the morning, so that

morning I fill with working out, those routines.

For the participants, the lesson that they must work hard was learned well. Amanda

reflected that she "didn't know how not to have three jobs. And even here at Dickinson, I

didn't know how to do less than I was doing." Wendy also shared that she "tend[s] to

gravitate towards things like that: that are a challenge." Peter reflects,

I get a sense of positive self-identity out of doing something that's difficult. My

brother and I were very successful cross-country runners in prep school and I think it

119

was nothing more than the expression of our blue collar identity that we could take something that's really hard physically and do it better than most of the other people around.

Helping Others

Another value that all (39 of 39 [100%]) participants have carried over from their childhood is that of helping others. Cathleen shared her thoughts on why she believes this is so important:

Giving back. Community service, I think that's a big, I think everybody has an almost obligation to do that if we're fortunate enough to get out the other side, especially, you know, at retirement and have something you can give back, you need to do that for the community and for yourself.

Colleen offers her perspective as well:

Being able to make a difference. I'm on the women's board for the Boys and Girls Club here in Cleveland and … we have a big fundraiser every year and the money goes towards scholarships for these kids to go to college. … The new board I'm joining is, our mission is to, we give money to support, if the teachers come forward with a project that they need financial support for, and then we also give scholarships to the students.

Helping others occurs in tangible ways through physical actions, as Georgia explained, "To this day my sister … and I both tip extraordinarily well at restaurants because we know what it's like." Julie also shared her approach to financial support of others:

I see people who have grown up with more, not being polite at all. I don't like that. You say thank you… please and thank you. I don't care if it's the person who pumps your gas or helps you at the gas station, or whatever. You don't just drive off… from the bank, or at the drive-in window… anything. This is just an example:

120

waiters, waitresses, delivery people. What is this! These are people just like you,

they have families, you hear these polls where pizza deliverymen say the worst tips

are in the best neighborhoods. Poor neighborhoods give 10 times the tip.

But, helping others also occurs in intangible ways, like giving advice, as Jerry describes, "I

have told nieces and nephews and anyone who will listen: speak Standard English because if

you do people will think you're smarter than you actually are. And I found that to be true."

For Linda, being a mentor is important:

> I actually have a 10-year long mentoring relationship with a young lady who lives in
>
> an underserved community here in New York. And she and I have this wonderful,
>
> wonderful relationship and it's been hard over the past two years because, because of
>
> Mia and me spending time with – her name is Channel – me spending time with
>
> Channel means me not spending time with [my daughter], or being very deeply
>
> distracted while I'm spending time with Channel. And I have made a very conscious
>
> effort to plan time with Channel in a way I know my daughter's going to be spending
>
> time with my husband, so I feel good about that. And I'm still making myself
>
> available as much as I can to Channel. So, I've really, so that is still very much
>
> something that I value.

A majority (28 of 39 [72%]) of the participants mentioned volunteering for various

organizations. Renee is "very committed to animal rescue. I have a dog so I'm engaged

with my dog. [I d]o volunteer with animal rescue organization." Andrew, now retired,

shared how he is spending his time:

> I'm [coaching individuals on how to set goals to achieve their dreams] in conjunction
>
> with a local hospital …. to get people to think more globally and go short, medium
>
> and long-term set goals and then come up with plans and then try to meet them.
>
> That's what this whole process is supposed to be about. I'm one of three volunteers

from outside the hospital organization who are being trained to be in this role of Dream Manager.

A majority (30 of 39 [77%]) of the participants felt it is very important that they use their skills and expertise to help others and as a way to help others who might come from struggling families. Andrew, who had a disability and therefore received a large amount of governmental support and aid for college, spoke of this stating, "government and public policy really helped me to get to the education level that I really wanted to get to, I felt I had to give back". Some of the participants give back by using their professional positions to make a difference in the lives of others. Rhonda, an attorney, stated "I've always been a person who champions the underdog and I just felt these people need representation." Jerry, an HR professional, spoke about this as well:

> I've never really thought about it, but I think it's relatively common for children from the working class who get in to working [sic] class occupations to be in my field because we know what it is like to be on both sides. You know, you got a foot on both sides of the fence. But, there are guys – people I know, not just guys – who grew up working class and they have pursued occupations, they have pursued lives that are completely separate and they do their thing and god bless them. But that's just not the way I went. It couldn't be the way I went. I couldn't be a lawyer in one of the big law firms. I couldn't see myself doing M & A work. I'm very proud of the fact that in my 25 years in the HR business I've never laid anybody off. I've fired people and I've gone to arbitrations and I've gone to unemployment hearings and I've played hardball with people, but I've never laid anybody off and I hope I never have to do that because being who I am and coming from where I come from I know what that stuff means and I don't want to have to do that to people if I can possibly avoid it.

An overwhelming majority (35 of 39 [90%]) of the participants spoke of how they live their lives in such away as to show respect for others, no matter who they are or what they do. Angela shared:

> I have a nephew, well actually, my niece is now is transgendered from female to male. And he lives in the Boulder area. This is my sister-in-law's child, and I knew him ever since he was like 5 or 6. I think the way I handled the whole transgender issue definitely does not come from a working class perspective, or the cliché typical of the working class perspective. I was like, "that's fine, who cares." I didn't see anything wrong with it.

Zachary remarked on how he held this attitude even when he was younger:

> … come here [to Dickinson] and I end up with two Jewish girlfriends, black fraternity brothers, who I'm going to their house and having dinner, so I got exposed to all kinds of different cultures. Went to London, lived in a big city for six or eight months. So, I think that's what it was. And then, when you go on to graduate school and out in the work world in today's world, you've got to be open-minded about that sort of stuff. Not that I am not, but I had to teach myself to be. I wasn't taught that, you know?

Kristos reflected on how he came to have this attitude toward others:

> You know, you learn more about what's outside your little world. Because when you grow up in [a small town] you grow up in a very biased place, economically depressed in a lot of ways, so obviously economics has a big, plays a big factor in how people react to things. Obviously if you have less money you might be more apt to do the wrong thing if you're in an urban setting. If you're in a rural setting you tend to be more biased and blame so-and-so for your ills. As you move through

the educational system you learn that there are different aspects and different points

of view. … if you throw yourself into something completely different like the Peace

Corps or Americorp or you live abroad for a year or two you realize that there's a

whole world out there and you know very little about it.

Participants' Leisure Activities

All (39 of 39 [100%]) of the participants have active lives beyond their professional

roles, and have a diverse and expansive array of interests. Amanda's description of how she

spends her time is indicative of the group:

I spend a lot of time doing yoga. I spend a lot of time with my friends. I cook. I

read. I get outdoors some but I live in New Orleans, if I lived on the East Coast or in

a place that had hiking and that kind of thing more accessible, I'd do that a lot more

in my free time. So, in New Orleans I just kind of revel in what is New Orleans. I

eat a lot. I do a lot of festivals, you know. But I also take, I mean it's taken years,

it's probably in the last like three or four, yeah four maybe, post-Katrina, but the

time for myself to just sit. I take time to just sit. You know, on my balcony and not

as much as all my other friends who think I'm crazy for how much I do still. But, I

feel like there's an enormous growth in how much free time I have. I have free time,

so like every minute of every day isn't planned. It's still very packed, but you know,

I just have some free time. There's, in my free time sometimes I don't know what

I'm going to do, which I see as a great success actually. But, yeah, and so, but I

spend a lot of time with friends, you know, yeah, friends and yoga. I do, yoga does

take up a lot of time. Just my personal practice and then learning and reading, biking

and walking and those type of things.

For Christine, the way she spends her leisure time is intentionally designed to connect her to

her past:

I actually have a big garden and a lot of flowerbeds and stuff. I'll have 15 yards of

mulch delivered and I'll spread it all myself, and I'm knee deep in dirt and my

fingernails are black, but that is something that yeah, I could pay to have someone do

that, sure. But, to me that kind of does come back to a bit of the roots around,

growing up on the farm, we always had a garden and it is something that I draw

enjoyment from. It's a lot of hard work, but at the end of the day it kind of does

keep me tied to that past and those, to my background and my history.

Stacy also continues with some of the activities she enjoyed as a child, but also has

developed new interests:

Well, of course I still love to dance. I usually take at least two classes a week up at

the Youth Ballet. I used to teach at a local studio for a while, too. I love to work

out. I belong to a female fitness center. Yeah, I've been a member there for ten

years. I like to read. …I go in to New York, quite a bit. I'm a theatre buff. I love

Broadway and I love the New York City Ballet.

Almost all (37 of 39 [95%]) of the participants mentioned reading as one of the

activities they enjoy. Zachary said, "I probably read 50 books a year. I can't talk to people

about what I read: they don't care. As a matter fact, they'd probably label me sort of an egg

head or a pseudo-intellectual or something for reading." Jerry also spoke of being "an avid

reader. I was talking to one of my bosses today and we were talking today about the virtues

of an Amazon Kindle. And I said, 'I'm going to have to get a Kindle because I don't have

any room left for books.'" Reading is enjoyed not simply for pleasure, but as a way to

combine other interests, as Nancy shared:

I garden. I'm trying to get more in to gardening. I have a little house, but it has

really great flowerbeds. I'm actually trying to learn how to garden, you know,

125

reading up on the plants that do well in the type of soil I have and what's indigenous

to the area.

For Rachel, reading for professional development is also important to her:

And that's the other thing, I read books about, you know, strategy and thinking

strategically and planning your career, and how women should work in the

workplace and what they should be doing and how to self-promote. And I was

thinking if only I'd known those things. It didn't occur to me. I was one of those

people who thought if you did a good job it would be noticed. Well, not necessarily.

It depends, it depends where you are and what kind of work you're doing, what kind

of institution you're in. And, again, it's been a great ride, but I'm now learning

through reading things that women particularly have to be more self-promoting. And

that was not in my nature to do that.

Travel

Almost all (37 of 39 [95%]) of the participants mentioned spending much of their

free time travelling. For Paul, it is a priority that he and his wife "be comfortable in our

finances and be able to take vacations. You know, we're going to Greece in September."

Travel for Renee allows her to connect with her friends as she stated, "I travel a lot.

Actually, one of my girlfriends from Dickinson College, we have travelled the globe taking

all these different bike trips." Rachel reflected on why travel is such an important part of

her life now:

Last year we [my boyfriend and I] took three weeks and went out to Sante Fe, again.

We've done that a couple of times, we went to Colorado. I've been to every state but

about 4. And, it's really been… I would love to travel abroad more, but I'm having

trouble getting him [my boyfriend] out of the country because, again, he did that.

"Been there done that". He wants to see the United States. It really has been fun.

126

We've seen some really great places, he likes to site-see, he likes galleries, we like to go, in Sante Fe in particular in to some of the restaurants because the food is so great. We like to shop. He almost always buys me a piece of jewelry when we go out west and we like to buy some art…. I think one reason I love it is because I never did that when I was a kid. And it's so cool that I'm doing it and I have something to talk about.

Amanda expressed making travel a priority:

And then making the decision to travel, like you know, this decision to like, you know, I don't have a car, but I do this trade-off in my head. If I don't have a, and probably someone making as much money as I do, even with the amount of debt I have, might choose to have a car. But I chose not to so it means I can go spend a couple thousand dollars going to Thailand for four weeks.

Reflection On Their Social Mobility

When asked to share what it meant to them to have accomplished all that they had, all (39 of 39 [100%]) of the participants recognized that their lives are different now from what they knew growing up. As Christine said, "I grew up on a dairy farm, moved to Carlisle, and now I'm moving to Philadelphia. So, that was massive, massive change." Susanna recognizes and appreciates the benefits of this move as she shared:

I live in a pretty shabby apartment but I feel like I have access and exposure to you know, a more upper middle class lifestyle. I would say the lifestyle I have … gives access to the upper middle class activities and hobbies and friends, things like that. … I always had those leanings, those interests, and I just carved out a way to live my life there. Those were always my interests when I was growing up. My mom likes to tease me that for my, she asked me where I wanted to go to dinner for my 13th

127

birthday and I said I wanted to go to a restaurant because they served things on silver or something silly like that.

For Renee, the interview gave her the opportunity to reflect on this for the very first time:

You know, I really didn't [ever think about a social mobility move] and I'll tell you why, because my entire, even though I know that we came, you know, I guess you could say in comparison to some I came from humble beginnings. But I never felt that way. I never felt deprived. I never felt like I wanted for anything. And trust me, I didn't get everything that I wanted, but we lived a very happy life. My parents were always very generous with us and my father and mother always wanted what was best for us, insisted on the best. So, I feel like I've just become an extension of my past, but I know that's technically not true, but I think that's the environment that my parents created for us. There was just an expectation of "you're worth being treated well. You're worth having nice things." You know, not to be extravagant, I don't know if I've said that correctly, but I never have felt, I mean talking to you and when I'm really thinking about it, I see the path and the social mobility but it's never been something that I've ever acknowledged, thought about, considered it. And it's never even been, like you know, my parents don't sit there and say, "Well, when we were kids, you know we had to walk ten miles to school." That just never was part of our, I don't know. No, it doesn't seem odd to me and I don't feel as though I've made this giant leap even though I know that I've certainly had a much better life than my parents did as they were growing up. Does that make sense?

Even those who did consider themselves financially secure growing up recognize that they have made a move. Max shared:

I consider myself lucky and I'm about anywhere from 2 to 5 years from retiring. I have 2 houses in Vermont, one on the water, one up in the mountains. … Do some

128

cross country skiing, we have a house right on Lake Champlain with water on three sides so we do boating, kayaking, different water sports in the summer.

Stacy, who self-reported that she grew up middle class, stated:

I feel so fortunate because I think, you know, we have so much and we've been able to give our kids more than we've had. Which is wonderful. I never dreamed … what my life would be like 30 years later. … I don't think I would have predicted all that I have. You know, we're very fortunate. We have a nice home here. We have two wonderfully, great, talented kids. … We own a home here. We have a home in the Outer Banks. We travel. I mean, we have so much. We just have a great life. I think I knew I would have a good life, but I didn't know how good it would be.

The participants talked about their accomplishments, and Nancy's comment, "I'm very proud to be a partner in a law firm" reflected the general sentiment of the group. But, thinking about their accomplishments was also something new for them, as Linda shared:

That's such an interesting question, what does it mean to have done what I have done? Um [pause]. You know, I'm proud of it in that I feel like I've [pause], I feel like I've done well. I feel like some of those like core, you know, very, very basic: don't get yourself in trouble little Suzy kind of things from my dad, like "OK, I'm coming to work every day. I've got that covered. I'm not a hoodlum." But, I think that… so I feel good about that. I feel good about the fact that we live a comfortable life. We are able to see our family. We are able to do a lot of the things that we want to do. My daughter isn't wanting for anything. I'm able to treat my parents myself for some little things like "The Jersey Boys" thing. I'm proud of that and I'm happy about that.

Rebecca stated:

I look at it and say I've had a good life and I've had opportunities that maybe some other people don't have. But, I think, I often. I spoke with the graduates at Dickinson at one point, all the ones who had completed student teaching. And one of the things I talked to them about is that every single day that they're in that classroom or as time goes on and they become principals or superintendents, they are impacting the future. They are making a difference in the life of a child or an adult that they're working with that makes our place better, makes our world better. I feel good about that. It makes me feel good about myself.

Self-reliance and Agency

As they reflected on their experiences, a majority (31 of 39 [80%]) of the participants were adamant about how they were proud that they had accomplished success on their own. Nancy stated:

Well…. I think I actually work harder than just about anybody. I think that's part of it. I work very hard and I'm very driven. I don't think… I think those are two different things, but when you have somebody who's really driven who's willing to put in the time, I think you get somebody who can succeed at just about anything if they have the right mindset.

A few (5 of 39 [13%]) shared how it was through their own insight and tenacity that they were able to get a job. Renee recalled:

I came to the brilliant conclusion that what I would like to do is travel, and if I could get in with a company that did these kind of big incentive trips for Fortune 500 companies, I could travel the globe on someone else's dime. Because they would take like 100 people and their spouses and there would always be young people kind of helping coordinate and all this stuff. So, I did research, I found a company in Philadelphia that was doing this and I literally begged my way in to that company. I

130

sat there one whole week in the lobby until someone saw me. And they gave me a

job, because I'm like, "I have no place to go, I'll come here every day."

Cordelia also talked about doing this on her own, even when others were discouraging her:

I didn't really feel any barriers or any lack of skill. I have to say. And, maybe I was

just ignorant of the barriers, naïve, maybe they were there and I didn't recognize

them so I just barreled through. … You go to law school and you say, "I was smart

in college, now that's all over." You end up being on law review. You build up this

store of successes and it's not that it makes you egotistical or makes you think that

you're always going to succeed at the next challenge, but it allows you to take the

challenges, I think, and say "well, I squeaked through the last time I might squeak

through again." I just honestly never felt any barriers. There was nothing I thought

that I shouldn't try for. … I remember these old guys that were very fond of me and

I of them, saying nicely "why are you doing this? Why are you bothering to go

through this interview process? You're not going to get a job." And I just, what are

you talking about? … I was: "I can get this job."

The participants do not hesitate to state that they deserve everything they have achieved

since they earned it themselves. Zachary expresses this when he says:

And I am a Bill Clinton, Barak Obama meritocrat, period. Everything I have, I

earned. Nothing's ever been given to me. I'm fiercely proud of that. I paid off all of

my law school debts myself, you know. Didn't have a house for five years after I got

married because I had to pay off law school debts. So, I guess what I would say

thinking back on it is, this is what I was expected to do and I did it. And I would be

surprised if it hadn't happened that way.

Stacy also shares that sentiment when she responded to the question about fitting in as she

states:

I really can't say that I have a feeling of not fitting in. I feel like, and I don't want to sound, I don't want to sound, how can I put this? I feel like whatever I've done, I've earned. I've had the proper training, I've had the proper education and you know, you expect certain results when you put the education and hard work into it. So, I feel like I'm where I'm at not because somebody gave it to me or handed it to me, you know like my father wasn't Donald Trump and I all of a sudden and I inherited this real estate fortune, but I feel like what we have in our life we've earned. My husband and I had nothing when we came out of school. We had student loans to pay back and our first apartment after we got married, we had two lawn chairs in it. Well, you know, now we have a nice house. But, I mean I feel like when you come from that and you can look back and say, "No one gave it to us. No one handed us, we didn't have an expense account to do with what we wanted." We had to earn it. But we did that through hard work, our educational background, and just, we had our jobs, that's what we had.

How Experiences Influence Their Life

The participants reflected on the ways in which their life experiences and in particular their life growing up has influenced their decisions. Renee stated:

I don't expect anybody that I manage to have to work any harder than I expect myself to work. Those kind of things, at least from a professional perspective. You know, it's, I think my parents showed me and taught me to take a great deal of pride and if I wanted something bad enough to recognize that I had to work for it. Don't expect things to be handed to me.

Some (9 of 39 [23%]) of the participants attribute their current attitude toward money to the fact that finances were always a source of concern when they were growing up, as Francine shared:

I think I have a different outlook from people I know whose parents are college educated. I have a different view of money and what it means and how it should be spent than I think they do. I think I have a different sense about the security of my life. I think my friends take more for granted than I do. To me, no matter how much money I make, no matter how little debt I have, no matter how secure my job seems, to me I'm always two steps from the street, you know. So, I never feel like I'm secure. … There's an attorney that I work with a lot that I'm good friends with who grew up in New York, went to private school, went to Yale. He thinks nothing of zipping off to England for a weekend if he has the opportunity and time. He travels to Europe all the time. … It would never occur to him in his remotest thought that he could ever be without money, because he's just got so much. He's never had to think about whether he could afford something, ever. It's just a different mindset completely.

For Fred, the work ethic he learned growing up as well as his financial background influences his life:

There is working hard. There's long hours. There's lots of hours all the time. Going to sleep reading your kid a book because you've been working too many hours. Not the same thing, but sort of along those lines was I always was, I did feel a drive to get out and to move on in to something else and it's almost a feeling like you don't want to slip back there, you never want to, in a way it's a negative sort of drive that you don't want to slip back there and so you keep, you, it's a constantly morphing into something a little bit different all the time and not being content to stay where, you know, to keep driving. And, I think in a way, it's almost like running away from that past, but, you know, I embrace it in a way.

Upon reflection, Christine indicated that even those seemingly insignificant decisions she makes are influenced by her background:

> … the first decision when I moved into my new house, the very first year, it's kind of a funny thing, but it was like one thing that was hard, was that the… I mowed my own lawn or I attempted to mow my own lawn for the first year . …I was like, "ok, I am at a point where I can have someone to mow my lawn." It was funny kind of thinking through that and letting myself make that decision and not feel guilty about it, because growing up my brother and I mowed the lawn. That was one of my jobs. The other one that is in a similar vein is I actually have cleaners who come every other week now. It was absolutely one of those: "ok, it is my responsibility to keep the house clean". But the last thing I wanted to do when I came home was scrub the bathtub. So, to me, it's … I find it interesting the decisions I'm making around the worth of… the value of my time versus what I can pay others to do.

Linda also recalled how her parents struggle with money while she was growing up influenced her philosophy and priorities regarding finances now:

> It's interesting from a political standpoint even it's interesting to hear that people over $250,000 – households making over $250,000 being these super rich people clearly have no business ever getting anything and they're villainized and oddly enough in the same tax bracket with Bill Gates. So you have that and you know and then my sister stays at home with her two children and her husband works for the navy he is not an officer and they qualify for food related programs through the government. They qualify for WIC. They qualify for, I don't remember what it's called now, but it's EBT cards, not food stamps, but whatever they replaced the food stamp program with. But my sister can buy certain kinds of foods through these programs and that is a part of her monthly budget and that is part of how, you know,

she makes ends meet. It's very, very strange to kind of … just very, very palpably remember what it was like growing up and the fact that my parents couldn't help me, you know, when I first got to the city and I would have heart palpitations when the electric bill would come in. And now knowing, you know, I'm saving for a house and I have more money in a savings account for a down payment for a house than I ever thought I would have in cash. If anybody had ever sent me a memo when I was 15 years old and said, "some day you will have X number of dollars in a savings account." I would have laughed at them. It would just have been like "That's insane. That will never happen." And now I look at that savings account and I'm like "Oh my god, how many more years am I going to have to save to have a down payment."

Slightly more than half (22 of 39 [56%]) of the participants spoke of the how they believe what they experienced when they were growing up has had an effect on their professional lives. For Sally, it was initially a negative influence since it kept her from being able to see herself as a professional early on:

> I think not being able to find a group professionally was a way to stay loyal to my non-professional beginnings. I wanted to be successful, but not become the typical business woman or professional person's wife -- meaning, to me, emphasizing money, status and power.   I was very critical of women who seemed to take that route and who seemed to define themselves in those ways. So I held back.

Peter is still dealing with this influence today, as he shares, "It's very hard for me to say to somebody 'I'm an options trader.' I've been doing it for a couple of years. Because I'm a little bit leary of identifying myself with that."

Francine reflects on why she thinks it is that some individuals from a non-professional family may be at a disadvantage in the professional realm:

… I notice that a lot of people, a lot of lawyers at least, are lawyers and their parents have been lawyers and even their grandparents have been lawyers and you know, if their grandparent was a judge, their father was a judge, and now they're a judge. There's a lot of that kind of continuity I think in families and I think it's not just in law, I think it happens in other professions, too. And, I think when you grow up in a family that doesn't have that, there's a certain kind of insider feeling that you have about that profession that you don't have if you haven't grown up in it. … I go to lunch with her [a friend who is 3rd generation attorney] in the city that's full of strangers and she knows everybody on the street, and she's comfortable in that atmosphere and she understand what a law practice needs to succeed, just kind of innately because she's grown up in it. It wasn't like that for me. I had to really learn how everything is done, socially. I'm not sure what you can do for somebody who didn't grow up in that atmosphere.

William also reflected on how he thought his background influenced his current professional life when he stated:

He [a friend of mine] said, "when you walk into a courtroom with William, he talks to the tip staff, he talks to the Sheriff's Deputy, the court reporter and gives them the exact same time of day that he gives the judge or the prosecutor." And when he said that, that's been 10-12 years ago, when he said that I kind of took a step back in my own mind and looked at it thought "why wouldn't you?" And I think a great deal of that may come from the fact that I grew up with everything, but not a whole lot. It makes me appreciate the guy who… as far as I'm concerned… well, I tell the girl at the front desk, she's the most important person at this firm because she's the first voice that you hear and the first face that you see as a new client, and because I really mean that. I believe that. I don't believe that she's <u>just</u> another staff member

136

or <u>just</u> another receptionist. That's the way I look at someone who, if they are

sweeping the streets, they are very important part of our overall culture, our overall

economic development, and so I think a great deal of that comes from my small town

upbringing.

A few (5 of 39 [13%]) of the participants mentioned that they their own

circumstances growing up along with the interactions they had with those whose

experiences were different contribute to their perspectives on political issues. Gloria

mentioned an interaction with another attorney in her office:

And someone, either the attorney in charge of the clerks, or the attorney who is more

senior to me, said, "I think at least they should get parking for the lawyers." I

immediately thought, "No. No. It comes with enough perks already. There is

absolutely no reason to look at it that way, as though we're more valuable than other

people." … And I have the same reaction when I read about the mid-year meeting of

the State Bar Association in Bermuda. And you know all those people can go there

and write off the expenses on their taxes. And my family could never afford a

vacation. Because, although my father got a week's "vacation", it was unpaid and he

couldn't've afforded the loss of income. Plus his job was as a local route driver for

Middlesworth Potato Chips. If he didn't do it, it would just back up. I mean that

was… he kind of hated holidays because he had to make them up the next day. So, I

look at all, a lot of things that professionals take for granted and think, "Oh for the

love of God, you could pay more taxes. Stop whining."

Nancy shared how her life experiences have helped to shape her attitude about social issues:

As I've gotten older I certainly appreciate things a lot more than some of my peers.

Most of the people that I,.I don't, I mean, we were on food stamps for a while. I

don't think most of the people that I work with have ever met anybody that has ever

been on food stamps, because they're, they all come from, you know, their parents were in college and sometimes their grandparents were in college and great-grandparents were in college, you know, they go, the Yalies back all the way. …I think I can be a lot more sympathetic or have a different understanding of some of the things that are occurring in the world because I've seen things. You know, I grew up in a small town. I think that also shows you a sense of community and understanding and lack of, in some ways – although with my family it was a little bit different – lack of prejudices, certain prejudices, but other prejudices, being in a small town. We were much more cognizant of racial-type prejudice. I don't mean African-American black, but I mean Irish and actually Italian in my community. But not any… there was never any discussion in my family about people being poor or "why don't they just get a job" or… so, I think I see things differently than a lot of people do. A lot of my peers do.

Some (15 of 39 [38%]) of the participants spoke specifically about how each of their experiences have exponentially served to make them a more informed and complex individual. Rachel's philosophy is that "every experience you have is like a layer and you learn and you see new things and you meet new people. … Living indifferent places and travelling to different places it all adds to the layer." Susanna was also reflective of her own background and how it has influenced her:

I don't know if this is because of the way I was raised or just how I am naturally, I think I was always like overly mature as a child and I feel like that is probably the biggest thing in getting me where I am today. You know, just even realizing what kind of life I wanted for myself and then trying to navigate it. I think like I said, requires a lot of self-awareness and probably maturity too.

A majority (27 of 39 [69%]) spoke of decisions they make in their professional

positions directly result of their experiences growing up. Andrew stated:

> Both of my parents ended up needing worker's compensation and getting it. And I
>
> ended up being an Appellate Judge in Worker's Compensation. So..having their…
>
> knowledge of their dealings with bureaucracy certainly influenced my view of my
>
> role as an Appellate Judge there. It made me much more, if you will, pro-worker at
>
> least when there was a tie, it went to the worker.

For Wendy, it is the combination of her upbringing and her education that informs her

professional decisions:

> Well, that in doing business I'm much more conscientious about honesty and doing
>
> the right thing. A great many other people in business just don't seem to value doing
>
> the right thing. I was talking to one my client's accountants the other day about
>
> something and the accountant said, "oh, he doesn't need to file those forms with the
>
> IRS. The chances of them catching him are so remote that I wouldn't even bother."
>
> And I'm sitting there going, "how can you even think that?" I didn't say that to him
>
> because that would be rude and I'm not going to change him. But, that sort of thing
>
> that I see over and over again in business. And, I think that is just part of family
>
> values and I also think it was more developed and since expanded through my
>
> philosophy studies.

Peter, who for several decades after college had his own business as farrier, then went to

divinity school, and is now an options trader, indicates that he wonders if his knowledge of

the disparity with which rewards are distributed in society and his "own internal, blue collar

identity will in some way…sabotage [his] success as an options trader."

They also spoke of how their experiences informed their management style. Renee spoke about observing her father and applying his style:

> I work with some guy, our Senior VP, he is so condescending to everybody and it drives me crazy. His sense of entitlement drives me insane and I tell him that. But, yes, absolutely. I know I am a much better manager of people because of the way I was raised.

Christine was also reflective as she shared her thoughts:

> I had an admin who worked for me for a while and she called me "the mother hen" because I was very concerned about, I'm not a micro-manager, but I am concerned to make sure that people are OK. Not necessarily, my boss is a very emotionally driven, relationship driven person. I wouldn't classify myself in that vein. But, at the end of the day I do care a lot about team consensus and consensus-building. I don't want decisions, I don't like to dictate, so I want to have informed decisions or at least people to understand why I'm making those decisions. So I do think it does definitely play into my management style.

Sally, who grew up in a family where individual accomplishments were to be downplayed, spoke of this as well:

> … but I think that I conducted my professional life as someone who liked to be part of a group. And even when I got to be a manager of a group, I think I felt that the group itself was very important. Whereas other managers really looked to what their boss and their boss's boss wanted, which is probably very smart. I was more concerned with how are we getting along as a group, how are we having a good atmosphere so that we can produce work that's good.

Because their primary socialization occurred in the low status group where they were

did not have the benefit of absorbing through observation and interaction the expectations of

a professional, the participants shared how they learned to act within the norms of their

professional role. Nancy shared how important it is to gather knowledge and information:

Asking. You know, learning it from colleagues. You just… as time went on, the

client development, the firm now has all kinds of programs about client

development. I even went to this program that's run by a woman who used to be the

general counsel of whoever owns Campbell Soup. Anyway, she had a pretty

prominent job and she actually runs this program called Women Rainmakers. That's

what… rainmaking is what they call in law firms when you bring in money – you're

a rainmaker. Bring in the rain. So, there's programs to teach you how to bring in

clients. You learn it by watching, as I did. Learn it by watching people who are very

successful. … So, you know, you look at who are the really successful people and

figure out what they're doing. So, it's asking, watching, reading, being observant.

It's too, at least for me, it was easy to see these people are successful at the firm –

how did they get there? And if I knew the person well, I would ask them. But I

couldn't ask just anybody, because… although people probably wouldn't mind, but

if I knew them, I'd say "how did you get where you are now?" Ask and observe.

Slightly more than half (22 of 39 [56%]) of the participants said that it is very important to

watch and emulate others. Sally describes this best:

Well, watching other people. The first thing that comes to my mind is a friend in

high school who came from a background where both parents were well educated,

but she did become a good friend of mine. They were social in the community and

she definitely held her head high and, I mean, she was no smarter than I was, so she

141

was kind of a good person to bump up against. That confidence, we were very similar. I know she, there were incidents where she'd tell me, "Come on Sally, shape up, you're making a fool out of yourself." So, yeah! So that was one thing. Well, let's see… well, of course, going to college and going to a small college gave me an opportunity to watch people perform professionally. To watch professors or my contemporaries.… well, I'm an introvert, so I do look out at what other people are doing and sort of process that. I would say that, you know, even in, I mean, when you're writing marketing material, which I did for most of my life, you have to consider your audience, so that kind of became a way of life for me. You know, considering who I was saying what to.

Participants' Behaviors

An overwhelming majority (37 of 39 [95%]) of the participants mentioned how important it is to them to live their lives in their own way, even if their behaviors or the choices they make do not meet the expectations society has of someone with their professional role. Sharon retired as a high school math teacher when she was in her mid-30s and was waiting tables at a higher priced restaurant whose clientele were mostly from the high status group where she "encountered some strange responses from customers when they'd learn [she] was a Dickinson grad and waitressing. It didn't bother [her] to be doing that," but she stated that she felt as if the customers were passing judgment on her about her decision. Kristos also spoke about this:

I decided to go a certain path but I realize in life each decision you make changes the path that you're on. The path to, the choice to go to the Peace Corps vs. going to the work force out of college set me back financially initially because people went out got their careers going, changed 2 or 3 times and got those experiences out of their way and then got on their path sooner than I probably did. But, I went to the Peace

Corps, found out more about myself, made a couple of those decisions just like

everyone else who's young and in the work force makes and you pick the path and

you follow it. If you enjoy it, you stick with it. If not, you jump off and try

something else.

Renee shared that her approach of going her own way and making her own rules has not

interfered with her ability to achieve her goals:

I don't know about behaviors. I mean I think that I, in some ways I think that there

are instances where I feel as though I may not behave in the most, how can I put

this? I may not behave as is commonly expected. I behave in a manner that is very

true to myself. The difference between myself and my mother is, I don't care. I

have a confidence in myself, you know, to be who I am. For example, I work in a

very male dominated profession. Banking is. And sometimes I'm out to dinner with

men who are more senior to me in terms of their titles and I'm sure in terms of their

compensation. And it almost seems as if they get into a chest beating exercise. And

women do this too, you know, in terms of their vacation homes and the cars they

drive. I just don't venture down that path. And it doesn't make me feel bad that I'm

not. So I think my mother would be more inclined to feel defeated in that set of

circumstances. Does that make sense? … But, yeah, that's how I feel. I really do

feel sometimes as though, I see what's happening, I know what I'm expected. I

almost know the script, and I just don't do it. I don't want to and I don't feel like I

have to. And it really hasn't hindered me.

Material Possessions

For over half (25 of 39 [64%]) of the participants, going their own way means that

they deliberately choose not to accumulate the symbols of wealth that they could afford to

have. Gloria made this point when she said, "I have a '95 Mazda Protégé, which I like

because it's a little car and it fits me perfectly. Feels like an extension of me. Every now and then I have to get something fixed. But it's fine." Francine also shared her lack of interest in striving for possessions and prestige:

> … out of law school everybody is a little bit more money-oriented. They define their success in terms of money and making partner, having that status, which doesn't really mean anything to me. I mean, I need enough money to live on but I don't need to be partner.

Angela indicated that she and her husband are "really into very simple living…I don't even live in the upper middle class part of town." Karen also shared the choice that she and her husband have made to live humbly:

> … I think my husband and I are very down to earth, very everyday people. I truly mean that in every sense of the word. But, since he is very well known in the [local metropolitan] area business community, we do get invited to certain things or asked to be a part of… my sister-in-law and brother-in-law are the co-chairs of the capital campaign to raise $2M … they had a big gala. My husband loves to cook, which is his job, you know. He's a great cook. And I said, to him, "I'll tell you what. Why don't we give something for the silent auction. Why don't we have dinner at our house? What do you think?: He's like, "Yeah, OK, I would do that. OK that sounds good." "How many people?" He says, "Only 6 people." I said, "That's fine. We'll make dinner at our house for 6 people." … [It] sold for $1300. My daughter looks at me and says, and I'm not kidding, she goes, "They probably think they're going to some big mansion when they come to your house." And I said, "Oh my god in heaven." I think there is that sense sometime that, "oh, you have this big business" and you know. We're pretty ordinary.

Renee sums this up when she states, "I'm not extravagant. I don't try, I mean, I've been

pretty successful. I do well, but I don't need to be driving the fanciest car. I don't need to

broadcast it."

<p align="center">*Fitting In*</p>

When asked if they felt as if they fit in with the various groups they encountered

growing up, an overwhelming majority (35 of 39 [90%]) of the participants stated that they

had never really thought much about that. Gary reflected and then replied that, "I never felt

uncomfortable. I was myself. I wasn't trying to be somebody else." Fred also expressed

this same point of view:

> I've always felt pretty complete and secure just in being who I am and so I've really
>
> been pretty much at ease, I think, with being a professional. Although I don't know
>
> that I regard it as being all that particularly special or anything like that. So, I've
>
> always been fairly, I'd say I think I've been fairly relaxed with that. I've gone my
>
> own way and have, you know, made, in the places where it wasn't luck and a path
>
> that you took versus a path that was untaken but where it was calculated, I've always
>
> been really kind of independent, self-contained.

This does not mean that they were naïve about how different they were and are from the

status groups with which they have contact. Peter knew that he "was always out of step with

my peer group". But, as Andrew shared, the participants seemed to be more use their

awareness of those situations as way to motivate them:

> I never felt like I fit in anywhere. It seemed when I was a teenager, I got along better
>
> with adults than I did with most of my peers. Although I was very active in high
>
> school, I guess I was lucky that things came easy to me. I was a successful, honor
>
> roll student without really inconveniencing my lifestyle. So, I was involved in plays,

clubs, junior historians. I just took on any challenge that came my way, because

otherwise I was bored.

Rachel shares how she has struggled with this during her professional life, and offers some

advice:

…you have to be proactive and you have to be confident. You can't assume… you

wouldn't take me for an introvert in any way, but there have been times I thought I

was confident but I wasn't. I found myself in situations where I didn't know I could

approach someone or I didn't know I could invite someone to lunch, or you know, it

had to be, you know someone would have to suggest it because it wouldn't occur to

me. I don't think I was confident enough to do some things and to be proactive and

to assume that I could be someone's friend. I'm getting over that.

Some (8 of 39 [21%]) of the participants thought that their experiences growing up of being

a bit different from everyone else may have helped them as they moved in to their

profession. Wendy shared:

I guess the chief thing is that I've always felt really comfortable with men and boys.

You know, I didn't go through some of the phases that some of my girlfriends went

through. I'm in a very male dominated industry and I know a lot of them probably

were initially a little uncomfortable or potentially uncomfortable about working with

a woman. But as soon as they got to know me they realized, Oh, this is going to be

OK, because I … just because of my own behavior, my own comfort level. This is

20-20 hindsight, looking back on it. At the time I wasn't sure how much of a

difference it would make. But I never had the feeling that I needed… Like in high

school some of the girls would feel "oh I need to be coy" "I need to be hard to get".

There was never any of that. It was like… well I wouldn't pursue a boy or anything

like that, but I wasn't playing some of the games. It was more like, "Hey, do you

want to go and shoot some hoops". So, that was different and I think it probably

helped me just in terms of other people's reactions to me. Being the only woman in

the room for so many years in my career: as a Securities Analyst and later as a

Portfolio Manager. There still aren't many women doing it, you know. It's a very

difficult career for somebody who doesn't have the time to devote to their career and

the desire that I have.

For an overwhelming majority (37 of 39 [95%]) of the participants, fitting in with the status

group of origin or of their professional role has never been a concern. William shared:

I don't care if I don't fit. …. And it turned out that it wasn't a question of fitting in, it

was a question of being who you are and being comfortable with it. And if someone

were to say to me, "You know what, I used to be blue collar I'm not now and I now

don't fit", I would say, "who cares? Be yourself. And in being yourself you will

attract those people that are interested in you and you in them." Be true to yourself.

Somebody already said that over 100 years ago. Don't try to be something you're

not.

Some (9 of the 39 [23%]) of the participants spoke about how they are aware that they were

and still are different from those around them, and while they recognize that they went from

as William states the "blue collar experience into the white collar experience", they hope

they "didn't lose the blue collar values and the lessons that I learned" which enables them

see issues differently. Gloria shared:

… my husband and a few of his law school buddies—one might be from an upper-

middle-class background, the other I would say middle class – they despise, they

may have been in to guns and hunting and that sort of thing, but they despise

NASCAR [The National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing]. I have no desire

to watch NASCAR races, but the thing is they keep saying, "Why do you want to

watch all these guys drive left. People just want to watch to see the cars crash. What's athletic about that?" So, I read a little about NASCAR. You have to be short and wiry to even get in the car in the first place. It's very hot in the car. You don't have to worry about where do they pee? because they lose weight in sweat. You're locked in there, going at speeds approaching 200 miles an hour on a grade pulling G's like an astronaut does, with guys all around you trying to get ahead of you anyway they can. There are drivers on the same team will try to help each other, by using the air: drafting one, that sort of thing. Just read, they said of Dale Earnhart he could see the air, he was so attuned with, if I move a little bit left, I'm going to block him and that's good, that sort of thing. It's all incredibly complex, aside from the danger. And it seems to me the only reason a lot of people say it's not a sport, it's not athletic, is that it's working class. I mean fanatic Steeler fans will look down on people who have a favorite NASCAR driver, and it doesn't make any sense to me other than as a class indicator. I can see it's foreign, if they didn't grow up with it. But, if it were say Lacrosse, they might learn about it. But, if it's what the guys in shop did in high school do now, they have no interest.

Jerry sums it up when he states:

… my parents without knowing it taught me to be a humanist and I still am. I still believe in the dignity and the worth of every human being and even though I think to a degree my parents did not believe it 100%, they taught me the right things, that everybody you encounter is a human being. And, they taught me… especially because they knew...especially because I was going to a highly selective college, nobody is better than you and the flip side of that is equally true: you are no better than anybody else. Now that's not to say that I am perfect by any stretch of the imagination and I have prejudices like everybody else does. I don't think they are as

148

pronounced as they were in my parent's generation and I think the present generation is less prejudiced and less racist than my generation is, at least I hope so. But, you know, I still feel… my big picture beliefs are still very similar to what they were when I was younger. Still goes against the tide of a lot of people around me, but I've learned to be true to myself and I am who I am. And, people can like me or not like me, that's up to them.

Themes

Through the telling of their story, using their own words and reflections about their social mobility journey and the way in which it informs their lives today, three themes emerge:

Theme #1: "Success is based on merit."

Theme #2: "Curiosity and critical thinking are important to personal and professional lives."

Theme #3: "Cultural expectations of status groups are rejected."

In the next chapter, the discussion of these findings and the conclusions drawn regarding self and social identity for these participants who have achieved social mobility is presented.

CHAPTER 5
ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research was to understand how Whites, who are in the first-generation of their family to graduate from college, experience upward social mobility. In particular the research addressed how individuals experience transitions from the culture associated with their status group of origin to that of their professional role. In addition, this research seeks to understand the status group identity of those who made this transition, and how that identification informs their sense of integration in these two status groups.

Research Questions

As a way to understand what the self and social identity process was like for those White individuals who were first generation college graduates and who have attained a professional position in society, the project addressed questions about their identification with the two status groups with which they interacted: In what way(s) do they identify with their status group of origin and the status group associated with their professional role? And, to what extent and in what way(s) do they maintain an identity in both status groups?

Chapter Organization

This chapter begins with a discussion of the findings from the previous chapter, using the conceptual framework on which this research study is based as the organizing guide. This is followed by an analysis of the participants' personal and social identity as these identities relate to the three themes that emerged from their memories and reflections:

Theme #1: "Success is based on merit."

Theme #2: "Curiosity and critical thinking are important to personal

and professional lives."

Theme #3: "Cultural expectations of status groups are rejected."

The next section of the chapter presents an alternative identity model for those who aspire to upward social mobility. The chapter ends with a discussion of the limitations of this study as well as suggestions for future research.

Conceptual Framework

The concepts below informed the literature review and the research design and questions. These concepts also provide the framework for the analysis of the findings and presentation of them in this chapter.

(1) Society is stratified with cultural traits and an assigned status that differ by level (Bourdieu, 1986; Gilbert, 2003; Weber, 1914)

 (2) Individuals are exposed to and interact with different social institutions and status groups that affect identity through primary and secondary socialization (Berger & Luckman, 1966);

(3) The way individuals respond to institutions and status groups during secondary socialization will affect their identity and the extent to which they interact and integrate with those groups (Hurst, 2007; Kaufman, 2003; Phinney, 1989; Reay, Crozier & Clayton, 2009; Simmel, 1955).

Social Stratification: Low Status Group

The participants in this study grew up in families where they experienced primary socialization into the culture described by Dunk (2003) and Lareau (2003) as working class where physical activities are highly valued, individuals live and conduct their activities within a small geographic area, social activities center on immediate and extended family members and parenting styles are rule-based, focusing on children's basic physical needs.

Like the white working-class men studied by Dunk (2003), the participants in this study grew up in families where performing physical tasks was normative behavior. This was true not only of the type of jobs the participants' parents held, but also the way in which

they spent their time outside of work. In these families, working hard was valued and usually involved some sort of physically taxing activity. The expectation that one would be constantly working was passed by the parents on to the participants early in their lives. The participants spoke of being responsible for chores at home as well as working for pay as they got older. Some, even at a relatively young age, were taking on the parental role of caring for younger siblings, making dinner and other tasks associated with running the household because both parents worked outside the home.

When not at their paying job, the participants remembered that their parents were always doing some task or chore. "Busy" is the word the participants most often used to describe their parents and it was the normative expectation for everyone in the household. The participants stated that their families were often engaged in some sort of activity that involved helping others. Most often, help was in the form of some type of physical activity like shoveling snow, doing chores at the church, or preparing food for neighbors.

When their parents did take a break from doing some sort of chore or activity, the participants recalled that reading or watching TV were most often the leisure activity of choice. Similar to Dunk's (2003) observation of the working class men in his study, the participants experienced little emphasis on intellectual activities in family interactions. While reading and TV watching certainly have the potential to stimulate discussions or debates, the participants recalled few instances when that occurred. In fact, only one participant remembered conversations that were described as intellectually oriented. Instead, conversation in the household of the participants seems to have been focused on the practical aspects of daily life, such as reporting on what happened in school that day or reviewing the errands that needed to be run for grandparents or other extended family members.

The kinds of activities in which the participants engaged as a family when they were growing up, as well as where these occurred and with whom, is also reflective of low status group culture. As Lareau (2003) found in her study, working class families did little travelling and spent most of their time close to home, interacting with those close by. Very few of the participants did any travelling as children, and when they did travel, most often the destination was at most a few hours away. As the participants related, these short trips were usually to visit with relatives, confirming the central role that family relationships played for these participants' families. The role of family was so important in the lives of the participants growing up, that they remarked about how rare it was for their parents to socialize with other adults who were not family members.

Dunk (2003) found that group solidarity was highly valued among the working-class men in his study. Group solidarity also appears to have been an important value that the participants learned during primary socialization. For the participants solidary to the family and others in their socio-economic group could be shown by avoiding any action that would draw attention to themselves. This included the expectation that they were to be well-behaved, always with good manners so they would not embarrass their family. Another aspect of group solidarity was apparent in that even though they were to always do their best in school or in other activities, such as sports, when they excelled they were not permitted to boast about their accomplishments.

The way in which the participants remember their parents interacting with them most closely matches the parenting style described by Lareau (2003) of working-class parents. The family's activities did not revolve around the children, and when the children were present they were typically observers, not active participants. On those few occasions when their parents did socialize with other adults, such as when they hosted card parties, the

153

participants, as children, were rarely included unless it was briefly to perform a task such as serving snacks.

From the participants' recollections, it appears as if the parents determined the family conversation and activities. This does not mean that the parents were indifferent to the participants' interests and activities. Several participants mentioned that their parents supported them, attending events when possible, an approach that according to Lareau (2003) more closely matches the middle class parenting style. However, unlike the middle class families in Lareau's study, when the participants were involved in sports or school-related activities, those activities did not dictate daily life or the family schedule. Instead, the participants' activities seemed to have been fit in around their parents work and other family commitments.

<div align="center">Social Stratification: High Status Group</div>

When speaking about their lives now, the participants describe the attributes similar to those of the professionals Lamont (1992) studied. The participants are self-directed and self-actualized, have a strong work ethic, are financially well off, value higher education, have an intellectual curiosity, high linguistic ability and are interested in higher cultural traits. In addition, their parenting style matches that of the middle class parents in Lareau's (2003) study.

In Lamont's (1992) study, the professionals placed high value on those who were self-directed and with the determination to accomplish their goals. The participants display these traits of self-direction and self-actualization through the way in which they set their goals and then take responsibility and ownership of the actions necessary to achieve them. For example, when they have recognized that they were missing critical skills or knowledge that they would need to advance, they identified what was missing, developed and implemented a strategy in order to fill in the gaps.

<div align="center">154</div>

The participants also possess a very strong work ethic and are willing to apply the necessary amount of time and energy to succeed in their profession. As Barry said, "I'm not afraid to work." Sometimes this requires that they work long hours and continue to devote hours of their own time to further develop their professional expertise. The participants also apply their high work ethic to their leisure activities. Several are very committed to physical fitness activities, setting goals for themselves and following an intensive and rigorous training plan to meet them. Christine is an example since she ran a marathon in October and then three months later in January, ran the Goofy Challenge at Walt Disney World: a half marathon (13 miles) on Saturday and a marathon (26 miles) the next day.

The participants were not asked to provide information regarding their annual income or any indication of their level of wealth, however, based on the information they disclosed, they appear to be quite comfortable financially. Even the younger participants who are at the beginning of their careers spoke about having achieved more financial success than their parents. Several spoke of recently purchasing a home or their choice to live in areas of the country with high cost of living expenses. Several of the participants were interviewed during a Dickinson College on-campus celebration to honor the major donors to the college's recent Capital Campaign. Others spoke of giving back to the college, donating regularly, an indication that they possess enough financial stability to have disposable income. Travel, including international travel, is a priority for most of these participants, and because it is an expensive activity serves as another indication of their financial situation.

Similar to those in Lamont's (1992) study, the participants value higher education. College was a seminal experience for them, both academically and socially. They spoke of the academic challenge and intellectual growth that they experienced as well as the social opportunities that college provided. In college, the participants were exposed to cultural

traits of the high status group, including what Bourdieu (1986) referred to as social and

cultural capital. They continue to show their commitment to higher education through their

support of Dickinson College, their alma mater.   In addition to financial donations, several

of the participants spoke of volunteering their time to do such things as interview potential

students, host receptions for other accepted students and alumni and serve on college

advisory boards.

The participants also display an intellectual curiosity with an open attitude toward

learning new things, another value that Lamont (1992) found to be important to

professionals in her study. The participants seek ways to improve whatever it is they are

involved with, whether a professional or a personal activity. Linguistic ability among the

participants is also high.   The participants hold professional positions that involve

sophisticated mental activity and high levels of interaction with others, such as attorney,

senior sales executive or human resources executive, for which the ability to communicate

and persuade through their use of language is an important component of their daily lives.

Using language skills in interactions with others seemed to be something that the

participants enjoyed as they spoke of seeking out opportunities to network as well as talking

with professional colleagues and friends about interesting political and social topics.

The leisure activities of the participants match with those of individuals from the

high status group, including such things as international travel, the arts, and enjoying fine

cuisine and wine. Not only are they interested in these higher cultural traits, but several

mentioned that they have made choices in their budgets so that they can enjoy these things.

As Susanna states, "I live in a pretty shabby apartment but I feel like I have access and

exposure to you know, a more upper middle class culture."

The participants who have children voluntarily shared their parenting approach

which matches that of the middle class parents in Laurea's (2003) study. Kristos mentioned

it was important to him that his children "have fun and have play dates and have a video game system or lots of toys" which were things he did not have growing up. Another example of the middle class parenting style of the participants is the way in which they include their children in family decision-making about such things as where to go on vacation and planning out daily itineraries. And, unlike their own parents who were focused on providing the basic needs for their children and fitting in the children's activities around the family's needs, the participants have sacrificed financially and personally to provide opportunities for their children to do such things as participate in a variety of activities or to attend private school.

<div align="center">Status Group Interaction during Primary and Secondary Socialization</div>

Primary socialization is an important time in the lives of all individuals, and according to Berger & Luckman (1966) individuals form an emotional attachment to those with whom they interact during this time. That is certainly true of the participants in this study since they all spoke fondly of their family members. However, the theory that the close emotional tie will also mean that individuals will adopt the culture to which they are exposed during primary socialization is not supported by the experience of these participants.

While learning the culture of their low status group family during primary socialization, the participants were also exposed to other cultures during secondary socialization. According to Berger & Luckman (1966) secondary socialization does not require the type of emotional bonding one finds in a family relationship, therefore, secondary socialization is learned on a less intimate level. This suggests that secondary socialization, which occurs in settings such as school or interacting with friends in their homes, will have less of an influence on individuals, particularly when that culture differs from the culture learned at home during primary socialization. According to Simmel's

(1955) theory, individuals develop solidarity with those who share a culture while simultaneously experiencing conflict with those whose culture is different. This suggests that if individuals encounter a different culture during secondary socialization they are likely to identify with one culture, building solidarity with others in that culture and separating themselves from those whose culture is different.

The participants experienced a culture during secondary socialization that was different from the one they learned at home during primary socialization. And, it appears that the culture to which the participants were exposed during secondary socialization had more influence on them than the culture of their family. In particular, those organizations where some type of education occurred seem to have been most influential. Educational experiences for the participants were varied and included voluntary association in organization such as scouts, as well as formal education in elementary and high school.

Through organizations such as Junior Rangers and the Boy and Girl Scouts, the participants spoke of contact with adults who held professional positions. It was through these interactions that several participants were exposed to the different professions to which one might aspire. These organizations provided the participants with social and cultural capital through exposure to the activities and aspirations of those associated with the high status group.

The different cultures with which the participants interacted should have created conflict for them according to Simmel's (1955) theory. In regard to the educational aspirations, this was not the case for the participants. While the low status group culture in the participants' homes may not have been as intellectually stimulating or have given mental activities high priority, getting an education was a priority. This is not surprising since a number of the participants mentioned that their parents had wanted to go to college but been unable to do so. In this case, the value learned at home during primary socialization that

education was important was in sync with the culture of the educational institution encountered during secondary socialization. The participants were expected to do well in school and they did. Unlike the schools that Anyon (1981) and Freie (2007) studied, where students from low status families were placed into courses that did not prepare students for going on to college, the participants in this study were placed into college preparatory coursework, several even in gifted programs, where they received academic and emotional support from their teachers.

Secondary socialization in the educational environment also occurred for the participants through school activities. Even when faced with time constraints because of part-time jobs and chores at home, the participants found a way to be involved in school-related activities. These activities gave them the opportunity to connect with other students who shared common academic and co-curricular interests such as sports, band and student government. In and out of the classroom, the participants met other students, making friends with those who came from high status group families. When visiting these friends in their homes, the participants were exposed to cultures that were different from what they learned at home. As Fred remarked about a friend whose parents were financially successful and who lived in a big house, "I got to see a whole different world through them and with them…" Several of the participants credited this interaction with exposing them to a different option for life and giving them the desire for that culture.

Differences between the value placed on education by those in the low status group and the high status group emerged when the participants began planning for college. Even though education was valued in the participants' families growing up, it did not necessarily mean that all of them had parents who wanted them to go to college. In their studies, Freie (2007) and Kim & Schneider (2005) found that parents who had not gone to college also were not supportive of their children doing so because they did not believe there was a

benefit to having a college degree. The experience of these participants does not fit with those studies since none of them recalled their parents being hostile to college as an institution. However, some of the female participants did mention that their parents were indifferent to their desire to go to college. Wendy's description best explains the perspective of the parents when she shared that her father had supported her brothers going to college so he was not opposed to college as a way for his children to achieve upward mobility, but that he did not support Wendy's desire to attend college since he believed she had other options for success, such as getting married and pregnant.

For some of the participants it was only when a trusted family friend or an extended family member intervened, persuading their parents to allow them to go to college. These experiences are supported in the literature where studies show that first generation college student aspirations can be increased with encouragement from significant people in their lives (Hossler, et al., 1999; Wentworth & Peterson, 2001). It is likely that their interactions with others students who were applying to college provided encouragement, modeling for the participants how to achieve their desire to attend college.

According to the literature, one of the reasons low status group individuals do not apply to college is because their parents do not or cannot provide support either in the application process or financially (Choy, 2001; Freie, 2007; Horn & Nunez, 2000). For some of the participants, this is an accurate description of the support received from their parents. The literature also shows that when low status group individuals have parents who support their aspirations to go to college, those parents are unable to provide guidance because of lack of experience with the process (Freie; Kim & Schneider, 2005; Lubrano, 2004). Based on the participants' recollections, this was true for them. Several of the participants mentioned that they were the ones who had to seek out information about schools and schedule the admissions appointment. Some even travelled alone to visit campus.

Even when the participants had parents who supported their plans to go to college, the parents did not fully understand the benefits of a college education. These parents fit Mullen's (2010) description of those who want their children to go to college to "gain the knowledge, skills and credentials that lead to good job opportunities" (p. 118). Like those individuals Longwell-Grice (2003) studied, some of the participants' parents saw college from a strictly utilitarian perspective. For example, they wanted to spare their children the burden of physical labor and financial instability so they expected the participant to go to college, earn a degree and get a good paying, steady job. Several of the participants mentioned disagreements with their parents when discussing possible careers after college, learning that there were only certain types of careers that were considered acceptable. Lisa shared that when she spoke about her desire to go to fashion school after college, her father said, "No, you'll get a real career."

The educational experience, and the value of learning and thinking and being able to process ideas, i.e., the mental aspects of the education, was a foreign concept to the participants' parents. When Barry began his position as a sales manager after college, his father – a salesman but one who held a position that was lower on the hierarchy in that field – thought that Barry had wasted his college education. Not only did Barry's father not understand that Barry was going to be able to advance in that profession because of his college degree, but also he did not comprehend that the other intangible benefits of a college education were valued in the professional world. Rachel knew that her parents had no concept of the rigors of college or how difficult it was to perform well when her parents did not celebrate her important intellectual achievements, particularly her induction into Phi Beta Kappa and graduation.

A few of the participants struggled like those in Hurst's (2009) study because even though their parents had supported that they go to college, once there the parents attempted

to sabotage their college experience. Phoebe speaks of her parents trying to "discourage me because they thought I was too stressed." Georgia and Francine both mentioned that they were uncertain if they would graduate because their parents did not have enough money to pay for four years of college. Both of them stated that their parents simply expected them to drop out without completing their degree.

Obviously, none of the struggles to get to and stay in college were a barrier to the participants' own aspiration since they all graduated from college and achieved upward social mobility, moving into a professional role. Based on the cultural traits that describe the participants lives as professionals, they seem to align more with the high status group of their professional role than the low status group of their family of origin. This is not surprising since upward social mobility had always been the goal, and the participants have been striving toward it from a very early age. When they were exposed to the high status group culture during secondary socialization, whether through scouts, visiting with high status group friends or at school, the participants spoke of being attracted to those cultural traits. However, observing the cultural traits does not mean that they identify as a member of the high status group, even though their education level and professional role places them solidly within it. To understand how the participants affiliate with the low and high status groups it is important to look more closely at their personal identity and the core individual characteristics that they share.

<div align="center">Personal/Self-Identity</div>

Goffman (1959) put forth an argument that individuals play roles in society, and in so doing absorb the meanings and expectations of those roles, which become a part of one's personal identity. Cerulo (1997) builds on Goffman's theory arguing that individuals create their sense of self or personal identity as they play their roles while interacting with others.

Stets & Burke (2000) agree, stating that an individual's personal identity develops based on the role they play in society.

Individuals have complex lives and assume multiple roles simultaneously, all of which define their personal identity. The participants in this study assume various roles such as child, sibling, spouse, parent, professional, gardener or marathon runner. Drawing on Goffman's (1959) notion about roles and based on the themes that emerged from the participants' recollections and reflections, an overall pattern appears. Three roles that emerge to define the participants' personal/self-identity in relation to their social mobility journey are:

(1) achiever

(2) intellectual

(3) non-conformist

Identifying as an achiever, the participants proudly acknowledged that they have achieved upward social mobility. Christine's statement when she says, "I drive my own success" reflects the strong sense of self-actualization. The participants consistently identify a goal, devise a plan, and with confidence and tenacity, work toward meeting that goal. This identity as an achiever is directly related to a theme that emerged from their reflections that "success is based on merit". The participants displayed self-actualization at a young age, knowing that they aspired to be upwardly mobile and believing that it was up to them to make it happen.

According to a number of studies, those who are first in their family to go to college have lower degree aspirations and are much less likely to pursue education beyond high school than those whose parents have a college education (Choy, 2001; Inman and Mays, 1999; Terenzini, et al., 1996; Volle and Federico, 1997). The participants challenge this finding since they held high aspirations regarding their education and professional goals

163

even as children. They remained focused on that goal regardless of any practical or financial challenges they may have faced during the college application process or while attending college.

The participants play the role of achiever in their professional positions as well. When Renee was beginning her career she decided she wanted to travel and identified the company she wanted to work for, showing up at the corporate office every day until they gave her an interview. Even once established in their professional role, the participants continue to assume the role of achiever. For example, when Rachel was in a middle management position at a large international firm, she recognized that she needed to enhance her social interaction skills, a skill important in her field. Taking control of the situation, she identified someone whom she admired, and asked her to serve as a mentor. Through this mentoring relationship Rachel was able to develop those missing skills and to advance herself professionally. The participants spoke of the pride they had in their accomplishments, a pride which came from their knowledge that they earned everything they had ever received personally or professionally.   As Stacy said, "I feel like whatever I've done, I've earned."

Second, participants in this study identify as intellectuals. This aligns with a theme that emerged in their reflections that: "curiosity and critical thinking are important aspects of personal and professional lives." As children they exhibited curiosity by responding to what they read or watched on TV with a desire to know more about the places or issues to which they were exposed. The participants did well in school and several were in gifted programs where they were able to develop their interests even more thus validating their intellectualism. Those participants with children shared their parenting style, which includes learning different tips and techniques in order to provide the best opportunities for their children, a style similar to that practiced by the middle class parents Lareau (2003) studied.

164

One participant spoke of how she and her husband required their children to have part-time jobs while in high school to earn and budget their own spending money and as a way to develop their decision-making and problem-solving skills.

The participants also brought an intellectual approach to their professional aspirations and goals. Nancy talked about her strategy to gather knowledge and information by asking her colleagues and learning what was expected of professionals by watching others. The participants spoke of identifying gaps in their experiences and acquiring the knowledge to fill those gaps.

The participants also apply an intellectual approach to their leisure activities, by educating themselves in the way Nancy did when she read gardening books to better enjoy her new hobby. Reading was mentioned most often by the participants as something they did for pleasure as well as to accomplish a project. Zachary mentioned that in general he reads a book each week and Jerry speculated that he would need to buy an e-reader since he had run out of shelf space in his home to keep all of his books. Amanda defined the role of an intellectual best when she listed her many leisure activities and included "learning" as one of them, signaling it as a normative activity.

The third aspect of the participant's personal identity is that they are nonconformists, which aligns with the third theme that emerged from their memories and reflections: "Rejection of the cultural expectations of one's status group." Rather than simply following the norms of their status group, the participants have established their own rules, determining which of the expected actions and behaviors they would follow. They began displaying this trait as children through their involvement in activities that were not typical of children from the low status group, such as serving as president of student government or the career exploration provided through boy scouts. This nonconformist approach to activities continued in college where, unlike what has been portrayed in the literature

regarding the non-involvement of first generation students, the participants were active in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities and organizations, such as sports teams or Greek life.

Professionally, the participants do not conform to the expectations of their roles. Christine spoke of how important it is to her as a manager that she include her employees in decision-making, not wanting to impose decisions on them, an approach her peers ridicule calling her a "mother hen'. Renee referred to a "script" for how professionals in the banking field are to behave and she refuses to do that. Kristos chose to go in to the Peace Corps after college even though he knew this nonconformist decision would delay starting his career and the high income for which he was eligible. But, he did so because he knew that the experiences he would gain while serving in the Peace Corps would be beneficial to him personally. Sharon displayed her nonconformity when she retired from her teaching position at a relatively young age and become a waitress at an upscale restaurant where she experienced customers who judged her negatively for choosing to work in that capacity.

Now that they have the professional position and financial means that more closely aligns with the high status group, the participants continue to show their nonconformity through their display of the symbols of success. Several of the participants spoke of choosing to live in an area that is priced well below what they are able to afford. Others mentioned that they had no desire or need to signal their financial success through such conspicuous displays as a large home or an expensive automobile.

For purposes of explanation, the three dominant roles that each of the participants played and that describe their self-identity have been presented as if they were distinct and separate. But, as Stets & Burke (2000) argue, it is the interaction of aspects of one's self-identity that most completely describe who they are as individuals and how they identify with the groups they encounter. For the participants, then, it is the interrelationship of the

three roles that define self-identity that allows them to construct their affinity to and identification with the low and high status groups that they have experienced.

<center>Social Identity: Status Group Identification</center>

According to Berger & Luckman (1966) as individuals find others like themselves they create solidarity around the commonly held set of beliefs or ideology. And, Simmel (1955) states that group cohesion will increase in relation to the amount of conflict that exists with other groups. The conflict that occurs between social groups strengthens one's identification with those who are similar while simultaneously increasing the opposition to those who are different. Stets & Burke (2000) state that individuals develop their social identity as they create and/or join social groups, aligning with others similar to themselves. The participants in this study have interacted with those who are part of the low status group as well as those in the high status group. Through their interaction with and knowledge of the culture of the two status groups, the participants have the information that would enable them to choose the status group which aligns most closely with their self-identity.

According to Berger & Luckman (1966) most individuals identify with the culture to which they were exposed during primary socialization and during which they are influenced by their family, with whom they have a close emotional connection. And, based on this theory, the participants' experiences in organizations, clubs and with friends from other status groups that they had during secondary socialization should have created conflict for them. Some studies on those who grew up in the culture of the low status group and who aspired to upward social mobility do not fit Berger & Luckman's theory. Kaufman (2003) and Hurst (2007) found working class students who aspired to upward social mobility rejected the culture of their family of origin to which they would have been exposed during primary socialization and embraced the culture to which they were exposed during secondary socialization. Other writers have indicated that some from working-class

<center>167</center>

backgrounds who achieve upward social mobility experience an intense emotional turmoil because they have no affiliation, feeling as if they do not belong to either the low or high status group (Lubrano, 2003; Dews & Law, 1995; Ryan & Sackrey, 1996).

The participants in this study present yet another model regarding the identity experiences of those who are upwardly socially mobile, rejecting the notion that they must choose between one status group and the other or suffer the feeling of not belonging to either. Instead, the participants blend the cultural traits learned during primary socialization in the low status group with aspects of the traits associated with the high status group.

The participants learned during primary socialization that immediate and extended family interactions controlled many of their activities, events and often even where they lived growing up. In order to acquire the type of professional role that would enable them to achieve their professional goals, most of the participants did not conform to the low status group expectation of working and living close to where they grew up and instead moved away from their immediate and extended family members. In addition to physical distance from their families, many of the participants spoke of the cultural differences that exist between themselves and their family members and how these can strain their interactions with one another. Mary shared the expectation that everyone grows up, gets married and has "bazillions of kids". Because she has chosen not to have children, her extended family does not include her in their daily conversations about family matters. For Rachel the strain exists with her father regarding how she spends her time. He cannot understand why she does something, like watch the Kentucky Derby, simply because she is interested in it

As nonconformists, the participants chose not to sever that relationship as is expected in order for them to align with the high status group. Instead, they have achieved their goal of maintaining a relationship with their family members by establishing new rules for interacting with their families. Brian is able to preserve his family relationship by avoiding

family reunions and limiting the amount of time or the context for interaction with his extended family. Several of the participants were cognizant that their own financial success was a contrast to that of their immediate family members and therefore might make their family members feel uncomfortable. Therefore, they established boundaries to avoid focus on their financial circumstances. For example, Zachary mentioned that his brother, who has not done well financially, has never been to visit him in his home, which is quite large and in a well-to-do neighborhood. Linda stated that she is careful not to share information about her financial circumstances or carry expensive accessories such as designer purses when with her family so as not to signal her wealth.

Growing up, the participants recalled that social activities almost exclusively centered on immediate and/or extended family members. The extended family no longer holds the central role in the participants' social lives nor do they share similar interests. Instead, the participants' social circles have expanded to include activities that their parents and even many of their siblings did not engage. The participants began expanding the types of activities in which they participated and those with whom they socialized when they were children. They visited with friends from school and participated in activities and organizations that were more likely to be attended by those from the high status group rather than their own family members. This pattern of expanding their activities continued when the participants were in college. They spoke fondly of clubs, organizations, sports teams and Greek life, all of which were important to them socially.

The participants also expanded their social circle, and spoke of friends whose relationships are as emotionally close and in some instances even closer than those they have with their family members. According to the participants, the friendships they have typically developed through shared interests and included stimulating intellectual conversations. Several also spoke about the way in which their friendships continue to

strengthen over a shared intellectual curiosity, as they do such as things together as travelling to visit other countries or discuss and debate political issues over dinner.

The participants learned about the value of education from their parents. However, their understanding about what constitutes an education and an educated person expands beyond the definition used by their parents. A college education for the participants was more than simply a means to acquire a credential to qualify for a secure, well-paying job. The participants spoke of the joy of learning and as Jerry said, of "opening your mind". The participants spoke of the opportunities provided to them at college to work with other students who cared about academic achievement and feeling a connection with faculty in their academic discipline.

Their openness to and participation in a comprehensive college experience contrasts with other studies done with students from different sectors of higher education that found that first generation college students tend not to participate in these activities and events (Pascarella, et al., 2004). They also spoke of various events on campus such as literary teas or symphony concerts that provided them with exposure to the cultural traits of the high status group. Going to college at Dickinson was for many of them the first step in a geographic move away from their parents. For many of them, the college was further away from their parents' home than any of their relatives had lived. The participants viewed college in a more expansive way and with an openness to learning in contrast to their parents utilitarian view of college.

Another aspect of the participants' lives that they learned growing up that they continue to value, while expanding to fit their personal identity, is that of working hard. The participants learned the importance of hard work by watching their parents as well as by doing their own chores at home, which for many included primary responsibilities in the household and caring for younger siblings. From that experience, they understood hard

work as physical labor and a constant busy-ness that was necessary to meet basic needs. The participants displayed this ethic of hard work in their academic work in high school and college. The participants value hard work, in fact they proudly state that they achieved their goals through their own hard work. But, they displayed their non-conformity by refusing to allow the ethic of hard work to control every aspect of their lives. Paul who spoke of never having fun when he played sports because his parents ethic of hard work required he give 110% effort at all times, established new rules to be sure that his leisure activities bring him joy, while still working hard at them. Amanda, whose family translated the ethic of hard work into an expectation that one must physically suffer in order obtain the basic necessities of life. She continues to work hard, both in her professional role and in her avocation as a yoga instructor. But, she spoke with pride in her nonconformity to that ethic of hard work when she announced that she no longer believes she must suffer physically in order to succeed and that sometimes she enjoys simply sitting on her balcony and relaxing.

The participants also have expanded the way in which they apply the value of helping others. For their parents, help was provided to others whom they knew and typically involved some sort of physical action in response to a specific and immediate need. For the participants, helping others has expanded beyond what their parents were able to do and includes both tangible and intangible expressions of their help. In addition to helping meet an immediate need, the participants speak of giving back and making a difference to a greater number of people. Bringing their strong sense of self-actualization to this value, they believe that through their involvement and contributions that they can achieve a positive change in the circumstances of others. This is demonstrated through their involvement with organizations and agencies that can make a difference in the lives of others.

Sometimes being able to help others has allowed the participants in this study to apply their intellectual curiosity, by learning a new skill. For example, Andrew, who is now retired, is training to teach others how to strategize to meet their own goals. Eventually he will be consulting with major corporations to provide this benefit to their employees. Several of the participants reflected on the fact that their occupational decisions have been in response to what they witnessed growing up and serves as a way for them to contribute to the welfare of others. Several of the participants who are attorneys acknowledged that they chose a specific type of law to practice so they could affect the lives of the disenfranchised. The participants acknowledged that some of their professional decisions to help others has also meant that they do not conform to the high status group expectation that one should continuously amass greater wealth.

The value the participants learned growing up of respecting others is still an important one for them. But, as non-conformists, they have established new rules for the way in which they practice this value in their lives. For Zachary this is a move away from what he described as a close-minded, bigoted perspective associated with the low status group and held by his parents to one that is more inclusive and accepting of those who are different. Gloria spoke of having a more open attitude than her high status group peers toward cultural traits of the low status group, such as interest in NASCAR [The National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing].

Through the core characteristics that represent their self-identity as (1) achievers; (2) intellectuals; and (3) non-conformists, the participants in this study have shaped, expanded and remade cultural traits to comfortably interact with the high status group associated with the professional role without rejecting all aspects of their low status group of origin. As a result, the participants have determined the extent to which they will assimilate into culture

of each. This means, however, that they do not identify with either the low or high status culture.

<div align="center">Personal and Social Identity: An Amalgamation</div>

The current identity models for those seeking upward social mobility address the choices that individuals make regarding the status group with which they will identify. In Kaufman's (2003) model, individuals who are upwardly socially mobile follow the cultural norms of the status group with which they are currently interacting, even if those actions conflict with the cultural norms that they follow when interacting with the other group. Hurst (2007) argued that individuals choose one group and reject the other. She found that those seeking upward social mobility either affiliated with the culture of the high status group and rejected that of their family of origin in order to be successful or they remained loyal to their low status group culture of origin and give up their goal to be upwardly mobile (Hurst). Phinney's (1989) model of ethnic identity development suggests that when faced with the choice between aligning with one's ethnic culture or the dominant (non-ethnic) culture, individuals will embrace the cultural expectations of one group and reject the other.

Reay, et al. (2009) propose that when faced with the different cultural norms associated with status groups, individuals who experience upward social mobility must be able to switch back and forth simultaneously between the two groups. Phinney (1989) also provides this option in his ethnic identity model when he suggests that some will identify simultaneously with the cultural norms of their ethnic identity group and the dominant culture.

In the writings of professors who grew up working class, the theme of social group displacement is strong since they speak of having no affiliation with or sense of belonging to either the low or high status group (Dews & Law, 1995; Ryan & Sackrey, 1996). Lubrano (2003) found a similar emotional "limbo" for those he spoke with who had grown up

working class and held professional positions. Phinney's (1989) ethnic identity model also recognizes that there are those who seek social mobility but in doing so will not align with either the dominant group or their home ethnic group and as a result exist on the fringes of both groups.

The participants in this study have achieved upward social mobility by moving from a family of origin where the cultural traits match those of the low status group into professional roles where the cultural traits they currently follow align with those of the high status group. However, none of the identity development models currently offered by theorists accurately depicts the social identity process of the participants in this study.

When asked during the interview about their social group identification, the participants were uncomfortable doing so. They did acknowledge that by virtue of their professional position they would be classified as upper middle or upper class, but they denied feeling an affinity to or identifying with that high status group. Their descriptions of their lives support that statement. Even though most of the participants have the financial means to acquire expensive possessions, on the most visible actions one can take to signal status group association, they have consciously chosen to live modestly, rejecting overt displays of affluence.

Just like those in Lubrano's (2003) study, the participants stated that they never felt as if they fit in with any class or status group. But, unlike those Lubrano discussed, the participants in this study expressed no concern about this at all. So, rather than choosing one status group and rejecting the other, they took a different approach, establishing a connection between the two status groups with which they have interacted. By blending cultural traits from both the low and high status groups, the participants have created a social identity with which they are satisfied and comfortable.

It is not surprising that the participants have chosen to embrace some cultural traits of the high status group and reject others since they have been doing this their entire lives. During primary socialization, the participants interacted with but did not identify with the low status group. That experience may have established interaction without identification as normative behavior for them, behavior that they continued into their adult life as interactions with the high status group increased. After listening to their memories and their own reflections, careful analysis of their experiences reveals that it is the strength of their personal identity that has allowed them to develop their blended social identity.

When asked about the values that they hold now as professionals, the participants consistently responded with the same list that they had previously given when describing the values that held by their parents. But, it is important to note that the participants did not simply adopt these values, but rather adapted them as they pursued and achieved upward social mobility. The foundation for the importance of relationships, getting an education, hard work, helping others and respect for others was both taught and modeled by the participants' parents during primary socialization and applied in very specific and limited ways. As the participants interacted with others during secondary socialization and through their self-identity as achievers, intellectuals and non-conformists, they expanded the ways in which these values are applied in their lives. As a result, their social identity is a continuum of what they learned growing up and that they adapted into a more open-minded and inclusive one regarding relationships, activities and perspectives that aligns with their self-identity.

The participants learned the value of relationships through the way in which their parents cared for family members. Unlike their parents, the participants have not limited their relationships to family members only. They have expanded their social circles to include friends they have made over the years in college, through professional affiliations

175

and through the types of activities in which they participate. The commitment to family and the ways in which they saw their parents sacrifice for family members now describe not only the participants' relationships with their immediate family but also with their friends.

Education was valued by the participants' parents for utilitarian purposes since they believed it would guarantee an easier life both financially and physically. The participants certainly value education, but they expand upon their parents' limited view of education as a credential, to something that describes their approach in all aspects of their life. As intellectuals they continuously seek out information to add to their body of knowledge both professionally and personally. Several even spoke of using their intellectual curiosity as a way to learn a skill that connects them to their family roots by learning how to garden.

As intellectuals, the participants were always eager to learn. This pleased their parents because they did well academically in school, and it allowed them to achieve their ultimate goal of upward social mobility. Not only was the getting an education useful from a utilitarian perspective, confirming what their parents believed, but more importantly for the participants, what they learned, how they learned it and the various social and cultural capital that the acquired during the process affected them in profound ways. The participants spoke about the ways in which they had their mind and the world opened to them by their experiences at Dickinson College. Being challenged academically and acknowledged by their faculty, fellow students and employers as one who can perform well academically at a selective institution validated for them that they were intellectually capable and boosted their confidence to continue to pursue their goals.

Achieving their goals has required hard work, something the participants in this study definitely have embraced. This is a value that they learned growing up and they continue to work hard professionally and personally. They know that to achieve their goals, hard work is necessary. But, the participants also recognized that the way in which they

approach both their professional responsibilities and their personal interests gives honor to the hard work that their parents had done.

Another value that the participants hold now that they learned through the example of their parents is that of helping others. Like their parents, the participants provide support for others through personal actions at the local level. Because of their financial means and spheres of influence possible because of their professional roles, they are able to support individuals and causes at a macro level as well. But, the participants also used their influence and resources as a way to provide support and assistance to those currently in the low status group. For example, some of the participants pay for their parents to enjoy leisure activities such as Broadway plays or vacations, activities that their parents cannot afford. Mentoring young people from the low status group and encouraging them to set and achieve goals is another example of how the participants have maintained a connection between the two status groups with which they have interacted.

Another way in which the participants connect with both the current and past status groups is the way in which they show respect for others. For their parents, respect was defined as having proper manners and humility. The participants expand this definition to include an emphasis on the way in which they treat others. One form this takes is the acceptance of and support for those practicing alternative lifestyles. The most illustrative example of connected the past with the present came from an attorney for whom it was important to always respectfully interact with the working class personnel who provide services in the courthouse. And, this non-conformist behavior also signals a rejection of the behavioral norms of attorneys.

The social identity that results from this approach can best be described as an amalgamation, combining "two or more things in to a unified whole" (Encarta Dictionary). Blending aspects of the low and high status group connects the participants to both the low

and high status groups. In addition, describing their social identity as an amalgamation recognizes that it is only through the combination of their experiences that they are "a unified whole". Such unification is possible because of the participants' strong personal identity as achievers, intellectuals and non-conformists. Amalgamation, then, provides an alternative identity development model for others who aspire to and achieve upward social mobility. This model recognizes the contributions of cultural traits from both status groups and acknowledges that one can be content and fulfilled by the personal and social identities that develop during upward social mobility.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study. First, most of the participants grew up in the northeast corridor which includes Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland. It is possible that regional characteristics may have influenced primary socialization and the culture they experienced as part of the low status group growing up.

Second, this study included only alumni/ae of Dickinson College. Assuming the type of individual attracted to and who completes a degree at a highly selective liberal arts college is a unique characteristic, that might suggest that these results represent a special population.

Third, the participants were chosen from those who responded to the email invitation. There may be other first generation college graduates of Dickinson College who may have different personal and social identity experiences.

Thus generalizing the results of this study on any of these factors is limited.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future qualitative studies pursuing the same research questions should be conducted but with a design that would address the limitations stated above. The population to study could be more inclusive to include a broader geographic area. In addition, taking into

consideration the race, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation and martial/partner status of the participants would allow the researcher to include these aspects of identity in the analysis.

Expanding the type of higher educational institution in future studies would also be valuable to see if professionals who earned their credentials from community colleges, less selective institutions and other highly selective institutions would result in similar or different responses.

Future studies might also take into consideration the types of professions held as a way of further refining the group to see if there are differences in responses based on the professional roles one has had in society.

Conclusion

This chapter began with a discussion of the findings from the previous chapter, using the conceptual framework that informed the study as an organizing guide. The next section provided an explanation of the participants' personal identity as 1) achievers; 2) intellectuals; and 3) non-conformists by aligning their memories and reflections with the findings, followed by a discussion of the way in which these aspects of their personal identity were interrelated and influenced their social identity. The current identity models of upward social mobility were briefly reviewed. This was followed by the suggestion that amalgamation, blending parts of cultural traits from the status groups encountered into a new unified whole, be recognized as an alternative identity development model. The chapter ended with a discussion of the limitations of this study and possible future research.

REFERENCES

Adams, J. T. (1932). *The epic of America*. Boston: Little Brown & Company.

Ainsworth, J. W., & Roscigno, V. J. (2005). Stratification, school-work linkages and vocational education. *Social Forces, 84*(1), 257-284.

Alon, S., & Tienda, M. (2005). Assessing the "mismatch" hypothesis: Differences in college graduation rates by institutional selectivity. *Sociology of Education, 78*(4), 294-315.

Anyon, J. (1981). Social class and school knowledge. *Curriculum Inquiry, 11*(1), 3-42.

Aries, E., & Seider, M. (2007). The role of social class in the formation of identity: A study of public and elite private college students. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 147*(2), 137-157.

Barron's. (2011). *Guide to the most Competitive Colleges* 7th ed. Hauppauge, NY :Barron's Educational Series, 7th ed.

Bazeley, P. (2007). *Qualitative data analysis with NVivo*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Beller, E., & Hout, M. (2006). Intergenerational social mobility: The united states in comparative perspective. *The Future of Children, 16*(2), 19-36.

Berger, P. L., & Luckman, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. New York, NY: Anchor Books.

Berkner, L., Choy, S., & Hunt-White, T. (2008). *Descriptive summary of 2003-04 beginning postsecondary students: Three years later* (No. 174). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Bettie, J. (2003). *Women without class: Girls, race and identity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Bishaw, A., Semega, J., U.S. Census Bureau, & American Community Survey Reports. (2008). *Income, earnings, and poverty data from the 2007 American community survey* (No. ACS-09). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). Cultural reproduction and social reproduction. In J. Karabel, & A. H. Halsey (Eds.), *Power and ideology in education* (pp. 487-511). New York: Oxford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241-258). New York: Greenwood Press.

Brantlinger, E. (2003). *Dividing classes: How the middle class negotiates and rationalizes school advantage*. New York, NY: Routledge Falmer.

Bretz, B. (2002). *Working-class students at Dickinson College: Crossing class boundaries and living in two worlds.* Unpublished masters thesis, The Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg, PA.

Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2012). *Employment status of the civilian population 25 years and older by educational attainment [table A-4].* Retrieved March 4, 2012, from http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t04.htm

Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2012). *Usual weekly earnings of wage and salary workers, fourth quarter 2011* U.S. Department of Labor. Retrieved March 4, 2012, from http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/wkyeng.pdf

Carter, P. L. (2006). Straddling boundaries: Identity, culture, and school. *Sociology of Education, 9*, 304-328.

Cerulo, K. A. (1997). Identity construction: New issues, new directions. *Annual Review of Sociology, 23*, 385-409.

Choy, S. (2001). *Students whose parents did not go to college: Postsecondary access, persistence, and attainment* (No. 30). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Davis, K., & Moore, W. E. (1944). Some principles of stratification. *American Sociological Review, 10(2),* 242-249.

The Declaration of Independence. Retrieved November 15, 2011, from http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html

Dews, C. L. B., & Law, C. L. (Eds.). (1995). *This fine place so far from home: Voices of academics from the working class*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

DiMaggio, P. (1987). Classification in art. *American Sociological Review, 52*, 440-455.

Dunk, T. W. (2003). *It's a working man's town: Male working-class culture* (2nd ed.). Montreal, Quebec, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Engle, J., Bermeo, A., & O'Brien, C. (2006). *Straight from the source: What works for first-generation college students*. Washington, DC: The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education.

Freie, C. (2007). *Class construction: White working-class student identity in the new millennium*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Gerber, T. P., & Cheung, S. Y. (2008). Horizontal stratification in postsecondary education: Forms, explanations, and implications. *Annual Review of Sociology, 34*, 299-318.

Gilbert, D. (2003). *The American class structure in an age of growing inequality* (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Goffman, E. (1959). The presentation of self in everyday life. In C. Calhoun, J. Gerteis, J. Moody, S. Pfaff & V. Indermohan (Eds.), *Contemporary sociological theory* (2nd ed., pp. 52-66). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Goldrick-Rab, S. (2006). Following their every move: An investigation of social-class differences in college pathways *Sociology of Education, 79*(1), 61-79.

Gorman, T. J. (2000). Reconsidering worlds of pain: Life in the working class(es). *Sociological Forum, 15*(4), 693-717.

Gos, M. W. (1995). Overcoming social class markers: Preparing working-class students for college. *The Clearing House, 69*(1), 30-37.

Goyette, K. A. (2008). College for some to college for all: Social background, occupational expectations, and educational expectations over time. *Social Science Research, 37*, 461-484.

Grodsky, E., Warren, J. R., & Felts, E. (2008). Testing and social stratification in American education. *Annual Review of Sociology, 4*, 385-404.

Grusky, D. (2008). *Social stratification* (3rd ed.). New York City, NY: Westview Press.

Hahs-Vaughn, D. (2004). The impact of parents' education level on college students: An analysis using the beginning postsecondary students longitudinal study 1990-92/94. *Journal of College Student Development, 45*(5), 483-500.

Hand, C., & Payne, E. M. (2008). First-generation college students: A study of Appalachian student success. *Journal of Developmental Education, 32*(1), 4-15.

Horn, L., & Nunez, A. M. (2000). *Data from U.S. department of education, NCES national education longitudinal study of 1988 8th graders third follow-up* (No. NELS: 1988/1994). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Hossler, D., Schmit, J., & Vesper, N. (1999). *Going to college: How social, economic, and educational factors influence the decisions students make*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Hurst, A. (2007). Telling tales of oppression and dysfunction: Narratives of class identity reformation. *Qualitative Sociology Review, III*(2), 82-104.

Hurst, A. L. (2009). The path to college: Stories of students from the working class. *Race, Gender & Class, 16*(1/2), 257-282.

Ingels, S. J., Dalton, B. W., & LoGerfo, L. (2008). *Trends among high school seniors 1972-2004* No. NCES 2008-320), Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Inman, W. E., & Mayes, L. (1999). The importance of being first: Unique characteristics of first generation community college studies. *Community College Review, 26*(4), 3-22.

182

Ishitani, T. T. (2006). Studying attrition and degree completion behavior among first-generation college students in the united states. *The Journal of Higher Education, 77*(5), 861-885.

Johnson, J. M. (2002). In-depth interviewing. In J. A. Holstein, & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context and method* (pp. 103-119). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Jones, S. J. (2004). A place where I belong: Working-class women's pursuit of higher education. *Race, Gender & Class, 11*(3), 74-94.

Jones, S. J. (1998). Subjectivity and class consciousness: The development of class identity. *Journal of Adult Development, 5*(3), 145-162.

Kaufman, P. (2003). Learning to NOT labor: How working-class individuals construct middle-class identities. *Sociological Quarterly, 44*(3), 481-504.

Kim, D. H., & Schneider, B. (2005). Social capital in action: Alignment of parental support in adolescents' transition to postsecondary education. *Social Forces, 84*(2), 1181-1206.

King, N., & Horrocks, C. (2010). *Interviews in qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lamont, M. (1992). *Money, morals, and manners : The culture of the French and American upper-middle class*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Langhout, R. D., Rosselli, F., & Feinstein, J. (2006). Assessing classism in academic settings. *The Review of Higher Education, 30*(2), 145-184.

Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race and family life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Lehmann, W. (2007). "I just didn't feel like I fit in": The role of habitus in university drop-out decisions. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 37*(2), 89-110.

Longwell-Grice, R. (2003). Get a job: Working-class students discuss the purpose of college. *College Student Affairs Journal, 23*(1), 40-53.

Lubrano, A. (2004). *Limbo: Blue-collar roots, white-collar dreams*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Marsden, P. V., & Swingle, J. F. (1993). *Conceptualizing and measuring culture in surveys: Values, strategies and symbols* No. 26). University of Chicago: The National Opinion Research Center.

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Morse, R. (2011). *Methodology: Undergraduate ranking criteria and weights*. Retrieved January 27, 2012, from http://www.usnews.com/education/best-

colleges/articles/2011/09/12/methodology-undergraduate-ranking-criteria-and-weights-2012

Mullen, A. L. (2010). *Degrees of inequality: Culture, class and gender in American higher education*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service. (2010). *National evaluation of student support services: Examination of student outcomes after six years*. Retrieved March 4, 2012 from http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/highered/student-support/final-report.pdf

Ostrove, J. M., & Long, S. M. (2007). Social class and belonging: Implications for college adjustment. *The Review of Higher Education, 30*(4), 363-389.

Pascarella, E. T., Person, C. T., Wolniak, G. C., & Terenzini, P. T. (2004). First-generation college students: Additional evidence on college experiences and outcomes. *The Journal of Higher Education, 75*(3), 249-285.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1980). Predicting freshman persistence and voluntary dropout decisions from a theoretical model. *Journal of Higher Education, 51*(1), 60-75.

Paulsen, M. B., & St. John, E. P. (2002). Examining the financial nexus between college choice and persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education, 73*(2), 189-236.

Peterson, R. A. (1979) Revitalizing the culture concept. *Annual review of sociology*. *5*, 137-166.

Phinney, J. S. (1989). Stages of ethnic identity development in minority group adolescents. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 9*, 34-49.

Potts, G., & Schultz, B. (2008). The freshman seminar and academic success of at-risk students. *College Student Journal, 42*(2), 647-658.

Powers, C. H. (2004). *Making sense of social theory: A practical introduction*. Lanham, MD: Roman and Littlefield.

Reay, D., Crozier, G., & Clayton, J. (2009). 'Strangers in paradise'? working-class students in elite universities. *Sociology, 43*(6), 1103-1121.

Rodger, S., & Tremblay, P. F. (2003). The effects of a peer mentoring program on academic success among first-year university students. *The American Scholar Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 33*(3), 1-18.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ryan, J., & Sackrey, C. (1996). *Strangers in paradise: Academics from the working class*. Lanham: University Press of America.

Saldana, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sherwood, J. (2010). *Wealth, whiteness, and the matrix of privilege: The view from the country club.* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Simmel, G. (1955). *Conflict* (K. H. Wolff Trans.). Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Stampnitzky, L. (2006). How does "culture" become "capital"? cultural and institutional struggles over "character and personality" at Harvard. *Sociological Perspectives, 49*(4), 461-481.

Start here go further: Federal student aid. (2010). Retrieved June 5, 2010, from http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/index.jsp

Stets, J. E., & Burke, P. J. (2000). Identity theory and social identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 63*(3), 224-237.

Strayhorn, T. L. (2006). Factors influencing the academic achievement of first-generation college students. *NASPA Journal, 43*(4), 82-111.

Stuber, J. M. (2009). Class, culture and participation in the collegiate extra-curriculum. *Sociological Forum, 24*(4), 877-900.

Swidler, A. (1986). Culture in action: Symbols and strategies. *American Sociological Review, 51*, 273-286.

Terenzini, P. T., Springer, L., Yaeger, P. M., Pascarella, E. T., & Nora, A. (1996). First-generation college studies: Characteristics, experiences, and cognitive development. *Research in Higher Education, 37*(1), 1-22.

Thompson, W., & J. Hickey. (2005). *Society in focus.* Boston, MA: Pearson, Allyn & Bacon.

Turner, R. H. (1987). Sponsored and contest mobility and the school system. In C. S. Heller (Ed.), *Structured inequality* (2nd ed., pp. 269-279). New York: MacMillan.

van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. London, Ontario, Canada: The State University of New York.

Volle, K., & Federico, A. (1997). *Missed opportunities: A new look at disadvantaged college aspirants.* Washington, DC: The Education Resources Institute and The Institute for Higher Education Policy.

Walpole, M. (2003). Socioeconomic status and college: How SES affects college experiences and outcomes. *Review of Higher Education, 27*(1), 45-73.

Walton Radford, A., Tasoff, S., & Weko, T. (2009). *Choosing a postsecondary institution: Considerations reported by students -- issue tables* (No. NCES 2009-186) Washington, DC: National Center for Educational Statistics.

Warburton, E. C., Bugarin, R., Nunez, A., & Carroll, C. D. (2001). *Bridging the gap: Academic preparation and postsecondary success of first-generation students* (No. NCES 2001-153). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Warren, C. A. B. (2002). Qualitative interviewing. In J. A. Holstein, & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context and method* (pp. 83-101). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Weber, M. (1914). The distribution of power within the political community: Class, status, party. In C. Calhoun, J. Gerteis, J. Moody, S. Pfaff & I. Virk (Eds.), *Classical sociological theory* (2nd ed., pp. 247-255). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Wells, R. (2008). Social and cultural capital, race and ethnicity, and college student retention. *Journal of College Student Retention, 10*(2), 103-128.

Wentworth, P. A., & Peterson, B. E. (2001). Crossing the line: Case studies of identity development in first-generation college women. *Journal of Adult Development, 8*(1), 9-21.

Willis, J. W. (2007). *Foundations of qualitative research: Interpretive and critical approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

York-Anderson, D. C., & Bowman, S. L. (1991). Assessing the college knowledge of first-generation and second-generation college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 32*, 116-122.

Younge, G. (2006/2007). Indulgences and influence in college admissions. Review of the price of admission: How America's ruling class buys its way into elite colleges and who gets left outside the gates. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 54*, 98-101.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Invitation to Participate in Study

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study that Brenda Bretz '95 is conducting regarding social mobility.

You have been chosen because our information indicates that you were a first generation college student (i.e., your parents did not have a college degree) and she believes that not only do you have an important story to tell but also you may have suggestions for ways in which Dickinson could provide more support for our first-generation college students.

I have agreed to participate and I hope you will as well. Please contact the Alumni Office at [insert email here] by December 1st if you are willing to participate. Your name and contact information will then be forwarded on to Brenda who will be in contact with you to schedule an interview.

Appendix B – Notice in Alumni Magazine

If you are White, first generation in your family to attend college, graduated 2004 or earlier and interested in sharing your experience of social mobility, please contact Brenda Bretz '95. She is completing research for her dissertation and would like to interview you. If you are willing to participate, contact her at: 717 249 6461 (eve) or 717 245 1587 (day) or bretz@dickinson.edu (email)

Appendix C – Follow Up to Those Who Volunteered

Thank you for your interest in this research study which is being conducted as part of my work for the dissertation at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

I will meet with you and conduct an in-depth interview as a way to understand what your experience of social mobility has been like. I believe that it is important to interview you on this subject because as a White and a first-generation college student, you have an important story to tell about your experiences with social mobility.

If you agree to this interview, I will contact you to arrange a time that is convenient to you to meet. At that time I will discuss with you the overall plan of the interview and then interview you for about four hours. The interview will consist of a number of open-ended questions on the broad subject of social mobility and your sense of belonging and identity during that process. At the conclusion of the interview, you will be asked to sign a release form, permitting me to use the interview for educational purposes. The interview, along with my analytic commentary on it, will be shared with you. It will then be submitted to my dissertation committee.

Appendix D – Guided Interview Questions

1. Questions to learn about family of origin and the values, lifestyle and behaviors associated with that social group
    a. What type of work for pay did the adults in your family do?
    b. How do you remember adults in your family spending time when they were not working at their primary job for pay? [gets at whether there was time for relaxation or if adults held 2nd jobs, etc]
    c. When your family and friends got together, what did you do?
    d. Share a family event that was particularly memorable
    e. What values would you say were important in your family? That they tried to instill in you? [Can you think of an example when you were aware of this?]
    f. What were your family's expectations for you educationally?
    g. What do you think your family expected you would do after school, ex: how much $$ you would earn, the type of job you would have, where you would live, etc?
    h. Were these expectations different from what you imagined for yourself?
    i. Were there ever situations when you felt like an outsider?
        i. if yes --- in what ways
            1. Did you ever have to pretend to be like your family to "fit in"
        ii. if no – follow up on this later when talking about current status group

2. Questions to learn about values, behaviors of current status group
    a. What type of work do you do?
    b. How do you spend your time when you are not doing that work?
    c. Who do you spend time with when not working?
        i. What types of things do you spend time doing together?
        ii. Is that different from what you remember adults doing when you were growing up?
    d. Any particular events or moments that you can share that describes the types of things you do now?
    e. What values would you say are important to those you work with? … you socialize with? [can you give an example of a situation when you were aware of these values?]
    f. Do these seem to be similar to what you described as values growing up?
        i. If yes – in what ways?
    g. Are they different in any way to those you described as values growing up?
        i. If yes
            1. Can you share a time when these differences were particularly obvious? [this will probably prompt some follow up questions as well]
            2. Have you felt conflicted internally regarding these differences?
    h. Are there ever times when you feel like at outsider now?
        i. if yes --- in what ways
            1. Do you ever have to pretend to be like them (to "fake it") to "fit in"?
            2. Are you more comfortable with group of origin

190

      ii. if no – are there any situations now that you find yourself in when you feel like an outsider?

3. Do you maintain a relationship with family and/or your friends you knew growing up? Why or why not?
    a. Do you get together with family and friends from growing up often?
        i. What kinds of things do you do?
       ii. What is that like for you? [Are you comfortable/relaxed in these settings?]
    b. What type of events do you typically attend that include people both from your current social group and your family/social group growing up
        i. If yes, what is that like for you?
       ii. If no, why do you think you don't?

4. What does it mean to you to have done what you've done – to have achieved social mobility
    a. What has it been like for you?
    b. Is there anything that could have been done to accommodate you while in college?
        i. What would you have liked to have heard? Or have recognized?
    c. Thoughts or words for others to know?

Name: _____

Year of graduation from Dickinson: _____

Gender   M   F   (circle one)

Ethnicity: _____

Profession (current and/or past):_____

Siblings (and others living in household growing up):

_____

_____

Religion of Family of origin: _____

Income of Family of Origin (if known): _____

Parent/Guardian information:

Highest level of education completed by mother: _____

Mother's occupation: _____

Highest level of education completed by father: _____

Father's occupation: _____

If other adult(s) in family of origin, please list and include highest education completed and occupation:

_____

_____

For use by B. Bretz only:

Pseudonym: _____

Personal and Social Identity Development: Experiences of Social Mobility
Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in this research study. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

You are being asked to participate in an in-depth interview to be conducted by Brenda Bretz, a student at The Indiana University of Pennsylvania, as part of her work for her dissertation. By interviewing you, Ms. Bretz seeks to understand what your experience of social mobility has been like, in particular your experience with the different behaviors, values and attitudes associated with your family of origin and that of the social group to which you currently spend your time, both professionally and socially. Ms. Bretz believes that it is important to interview you on this subject because you have an important story to tell, one that has not been told to anyone else specifically about your experiences with social mobility.

If you agree to this interview, Ms. Bretz will discuss with you the overall plan of the interview and then interview you for approximately 1 ½ - 2 hours. She will collect some demographic information and then ask you a number of open-ended questions on the broad subject of social mobility and your sense of belonging and identity during that process. The interview will be recorded on either audio or video tape and will take place at a time and place mutually convenient to you and Ms. Bretz after approval is obtained from the Institutional Review Board at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. At the conclusion of the interview, you will be asked to sign a release form, permitting Ms. Bretz to use the interview for educational purposes. The interview, along with Ms. Bretz's analytic commentary on it,

will be turned into the dissertation committee for a grade; she will also give a brief oral presentation on her interview project.

Your participation in this study is <u>voluntary</u>. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the interviewer or IUP. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time by notifying the Project Director. Upon your request to withdraw, all information pertaining to you will be destroyed. If you choose to participate, all information will be held in strict confidence and any verbatim statements by you will be identified only by a pseudonym. The information obtained in the study may be published in journals or presented at meetings but your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign one copy of this form and give to the Interviewer. The other copy is yours to keep.

Project Director: Interviewer:
Dr. Robert Heasley   Brenda Bretz
Chair, Dissertation Committee   Ph.D. Candidate
Sociology Department   Administration & Leadership Studies
102D McElhaney Hall   505 Belvedere St
Indiana, PA 15705   Carlisle, PA 17013
Phone: 724-357-3939   Phone: 717 249-6461

<u>This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724/357-7730).</u>

Appendix G – Voluntary Consent Form

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a participant in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this Informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Name (PLEASE PRINT)

Signature

Date

Phone number or location where you can be reached

Best days and times to reach you

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

_____
Date   Investigator's Signature