

Down the Rabbit Hole:
Perceptions of Identity Formation In and Through the Educative Experience of
Women from Working-Class Backgrounds

by

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ABSTRACT

There is a body of literature—albeit largely from the UK and Australia—that examines the ways in which class and gender influence life course, including educational attainment; however, much of this literature offers explanations and analyses for why individuals choose the life course they do. By assuming a cause-effect relationship between class and gender and life course, these studies perpetuate the idea that life can be predicted and controlled. Such an approach implies there is but one way of viewing—or an “official reading” of—the experience of class and gender. This silences other readings.

This study goes beneath these “interpretations” and explores the phenomenon of identity and identity making in women who grew up working-class. Included is an investigation into how these women recognize and participate in their own identity making, identifying the interpretations they created and apply to their experience and the ways in which they juxtapose their educative experience. Using semi-structured interview I interviewed 21 women with working-class habitus.

The strategy of inquiry that corresponded best to the goal of this project was heuristics, a variant of empathetic phenomenology. Heuristics distinguishes itself by including the life experience of the researcher while still showing how different people may participate in an event in their lives and how these individuals may give it radically different meanings. This has two effects: (1) the researcher recognizes that their own life experience affects their interpretations of these

stories and (2) it elucidates the researcher's own life as it relates to identity formation and educational experience. Two, heuristics encourages different ways of presenting findings through a variety of art forms meant to enhance the immediacy and impact of an experience rather than offer any explanation of it.

As a result of the research, four themes essential to locating the experience of women who grew up working class were discovered: making, paying attention, taking care, and up. These themes have pedagogic significance as women with working-class habitués navigate from this social space: the downstream effect of which is how and what these women take up as education.

DEDICATION

I am forever indebted to the women who have inspired and shaped me.
May others be blessed by your wisdom.

To my grandmother Helen who was never afraid to dance—even when she didn't know the steps—and never cared if others thought her silly. We make our own happiness. I miss you.

To my mother Patricia for her unconditional love. We must love ourselves first and as a condition of that love, forgive ourselves from time to time. I miss you.

To my daughter Zoephia for bringing light into my life and lifting my spirit.

To the women who shared their lives and made this study possible. From one woman who grew up working class to another, I am blessed to have been endowed with your stories. You spoke so that others could be heard. Thank you for your courage.

To the men who loved me. Thanks for supporting my journey.

And to the wise sage who once shared his secret to eating an elephant...Bon appétit!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
GLOSSARY	x
PREFACE	xvii
CHAPTER	
1... INTRODUCTION.....	1
a. ..Introduction	1
b. ..Problem Statement	2
c. ..Purpose of the Study.....	5
d. Research Questions	6
e. Methodology.....	7
f. Theoretical Influences	8
i. Critical Theory.....	10
ii. Identity Theories.....	13
1. Theories of Gender Identity.....	22
2. Theories of Class Identity.....	33
g. Summary.....	36
2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	38
a. Introduction	38
b. Determinants of Educational Attainment.....	39
i. Class.....	39
ii. Gender.....	43

CHAPTER	Page
iii. Acquiring Cultural Capital to Affect Educational Attainment.....	49
c. Struggles with Identity & Responses	54
i. Stories of Resistance/Oppositional Behavior	55
ii. Stories of Suppression/Cooperation	56
d. Summary.....	60
3. METHODOLOGY	63
a. Introduction	63
b. Research Method	63
c. Participants	67
d. Data Gathering.....	71
e. Data Analysis	75
f. Limitations	79
g. Summary.....	81
4. PORTRAITS.....	83
a. Introduction	83
b. Individual Descriptions: Discovering Alice.....	84
i. Morning Star	85
ii. Christine Ellison.....	93
iii. Celia Toscano	104
iv. Ursula Manders	115

CHAPTER	Page
v. Katherine Street.....	125
vi. Sylvia Butler.....	135
vii. Barb Robinson.....	142
c. Composite Depiction.....	149
5... PERCEPTIONS	150
a. Introduction	148
b. Core Themes: Mining the Rabbit Hole.....	148
i. Making	152
ii. Paying Attention.....	178
iii. Taking Care.....	212
iv. Up	224
6. CONCLUSION	266
EPILOGUE.....	270
REFERENCES.....	283
APPENDICES.....	302
A. IRB Approval	303
B. Instructions to Research Participants.....	305
C. Interview Questions	309
D. Interview Schedule	311
E. Sampling of Participant Artifacts.....	313
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.....	322

GLOSSARY

Autobiography: Literary recounting of one's life, structured by time with an emphasis on achieving accuracy.

Borderlands: Intersecting social spaces of language and culture, including race, gender and class.

Bracketing: An activity put forth by Husserl which requires the explication of beliefs about a phenomenon in order to suspend them. By addressing these suppositions and interpretations openly and firstly, the phenomenological researcher seeks to get on with the task of revealing the phenomenon's true nature, essences and meanings.

Capital: Goods with an assigned value which may be exchanged for other goods.

Class: Social designation based on distinctions of capital; the capital held by any one class is multifaceted and involves not only measures of wealth in the form of income and assets, but also, culture and symbol.

Countercrusading: Opposing and taking some action in the hindrance of an issue.

Creative Synthesis: Final phase in heuristic research which requires the researcher to create a synthesis of the core themes discovered during research, usually in narrative form.

Critical Incident: In heuristic research, a moment or experience in which the researcher is made aware of the phenomenon in a profound way. Often, some shift takes place within the researcher resulting in an “*Aha!*”

Cultural Capital: Value ascribed to an individual based on their proficiency enacting cultural habits; cultural capital may be exchanged for other kinds of capital.

Explication: Fifth phase of heuristic research during which the researcher considers what of our past experience may be the reasons why themes now revealed about the phenomenon were previously omitted.

Empathetic Phenomenology: This school of phenomenology marries traditional phenomenological aims of the researcher bracketing out commonly held views of the phenomenon as a means of revealing the “whatness” of the experience, but also the socially embedded nature of our consciousness by making known the feelings of those who have shared in a phenomenon and the sense they make of it.

Field: A multidimensional, structured social space of social forces and struggles.

False Consciousness: A Marxist term which refers to one's adoption of and operation within structures that are purely of social construction. These structures are used to guide behavior and are accepted as rational and inevitable.

Gender: A complex matrix of intersecting positions and subjectivities—i.e., one's physical appearance, demeanor, expression—that one enacts or embodies with regard to sex categorization and subsequent identification. Gender, as a construct, is always in flux, as it is both socially & historically determined.

Habitus: A system of durable and transposable “dispositions” structuring one's practices and representations: specifically, how one acts or presents themselves to the world—either consciously or subconsciously—is determined by the structures constitutive of one's environment.

Heuristics: Phenomenological research methodology concerned with finding the underlying meanings and essence of human experience. Heuristics offers both a pure description of the phenomenon as well as an examination of the social, cultural and historical contexts behind which the meaning of lived experience is hidden. Heuristics differs from other forms of phenomenological research as the experiencing person is focal and kept whole throughout.

Illumination: Fourth phase of heuristic research during which the researcher explicates the essential themes through writing.

Immersion: Second phase of heuristic research in which the researcher collects the data to be analyzed.

Inadequacy: The perception of incongruity between habitus and field.

Incubation: Third phase of heuristic research which requires the researcher to retreat from the search from the concentrated focus of the immersion phase. The purpose is to enable the researcher to discover the phenomenon's essential themes.

Initial Engagement: First phase of heuristic research during which the researcher explores and explicates assumption, suppositions and beliefs held about the phenomenon.

Memoir: Part literature, part history, a memoir reveals carefully chosen moments in the memoirist's life whilst balancing the aesthetic and rhetorical demands of the reader.

Metanarrative: A concept in poststructuralism which refers to any grand, all-encompassing story, classic text, or archetypal account of the historical record which provide a framework upon which an individual's own experiences and thoughts may be ordered and are often told for the purpose of legitimizing various versions of the “truth.” Grand narrative.

Grand Narrative: See Metanarrative.

Middle Class: Socioeconomic group marked by skilled laborers, educated professionals, and small business owners who also share ideologies of domesticity, e.g., citizenship, nation, freedom, progress, ownership, family, sacrifice and duty; also referred to as “white collar,” a social and historical referent to their work clothing.

Otherness: The perception of incongruity between habitus and field; estrangement.

Phenomenology: Philosophy and research methodology which decries all phenomena, including experience, can be known via reduction until the very essence of the “thing” is revealed.

Postmodernism: An epistemological (knowledge), ontological (truth) and axiological (beauty) response to modernism which rejected ideas such as

universality, homogeneity, hierarchies, grand narratives, legitimatization and other such notions of “rationality.”

Poststructuralism: Postmodern theorists concerned with dismantling modernist structures, particularly those within language and knowledge, i.e., textual authority and metaphorical constructions. Poststructuralists (Foucault, Derrida, Butler, Deleuze and Guattari) see language and knowledge as fragmentary.

Poverty Class: Socioeconomic group marked by their significant lack of wealth who also share ideologies of domesticity, e.g., citizenship, nation, freedom, progress, ownership, family, sacrifice and duty. Sometimes located within the working class, this term is often used to refer to single mothers, their children and the lower income strata of the working class.

Symbolic Capital: Value ascribed to an individual based on perceived prestige or status; symbolic capital may be exchanged for other kinds of capital.

Tacit Knowledge: Conceptual and sensory information and images involved in one’s attempt to make sense of something.

Vignette: Short, narrative piece which seeks to recreate one incident or an aspect of that incident, for the reader.

Working Class: Socioeconomic group marked by unskilled and semiskilled laborers who also share ideologies of domesticity, e.g., citizenship, nation, freedom, progress, ownership, family, sacrifice and duty; also referred to as “blue collar,” a social and historical referent to their work clothing.

PREFACE

A heuristic journey begins with something that calls to the researcher from within their life experience, something to which they have associations and fleeting awareness but whose nature is largely unknown (Moustakas, 1990, p.13). My journey began sitting on the floor of my office trying to formulate the questions that would guide this research. What called to me had revealed itself in one form or another throughout the years and seemed to manifest at that moment, there amongst the piles of my past writings and readings. Every step I had taken up until this point seemed to be connected to that moment on the floor of my office. It was the moment in which I knew what I really need to write about and it could have resolved no other way. It marked my experience as an academic overall and seemed fitting it should become the focus of this culminating exercise. Over the years I had tried to disguise it in theories and other academic trappings: reading and presenting others' experiences, using them to distort and hide my own. No matter how far away from it I thought I had gotten, it always seemed to resurface: this sense of being "not good enough."

I'm not sure from where this feeling came. A search of the literature for terms, phrases and binaries such as self-worth, self-valuing, feeling not good enough, adequacy/inadequacy, returned studies on drug addiction and sexual abuse, neither of which applied to me. Why then, did I feel this way, so often and for so much of my life? Sometimes, I wasn't the perpetrator. As I looked back over my life, I could recount several instances where I would attempt something

and it was someone else who told me I wasn't "good enough." I wanted to understand why I felt I wasn't good enough; were there discernible patterns or situations with particular similarities in which these feelings arose? And more importantly, what could I do to prove those sentiments wrong?

Education has always been revered in my family. As a child, I was taught that education could never be taken away from you – as if your ability to secure it, by whatever means that may be, helped establish its value, in conjunction with its promise of what it might bring. Education's value, as understood by me, was financial success and the benefits that success conferred. As my mother and father often put it, "Get an education. It will give you freedom." Over the years, I came to qualify and quantify that freedom as freedom from worry about how to pay bills, buy food, afford a "comfortable" lifestyle, to acquire "nice" things. To not be forced into a job you didn't enjoy. To not have to succumb to the dictates of someone you despised. Education gave you freedom to change your position in life. A Cinderella story, except in this version, Cinderella embodied all the characters of the traditional fairy tale. There was no need for a Prince Charming if you could do it yourself. According to my family, education made egalitarianism possible. It erased boundaries and brought equal access to life's opportunities.

However, contrary to my and my family's belief in education's capabilities, in the initial meeting of one of my first doctoral classes, a professor remarked about how females outnumbered the males in the class: "You won't find many women in a Ph.D. program, and fewer that finish." He further explained that

unless a female doctoral student was from a family of middle to upper socioeconomic status with white-collar parents, they usually did not attempt such studies. Those from working class backgrounds that did dare were quickly “disenabled” because of what he identified as their “underprivileged upbringing.” He continued that on a whole, most female students chose the Ed.D.—a degree often viewed, unofficially, by academia as a “lesser” degree and whispered discreetly amongst graduate students to be lacking in theory, heavy in practice; attainable for the teacher, an insult to the scholar. A degree jokingly referred to by a former employer of mine as the “Easy D.” Thus, for me to be female, working class and in a Ph.D. program was rare. Rarer still would be if I finished.

My professor’s words serve as my “critical incident” (Moustakas, 1990). It was then that I began to consider that all fairy tales didn’t have happy endings, regardless of how hard you worked or how much you knew. Breathless, I pulled my navel to my spine—it was a proverbial punch in the stomach to which my body responded. If I drew my shoulders forward enough, dropped my chin to my chest, maybe no one would notice that I was among them, “there,” where I shouldn’t be. Scanning the room for the easiest exit, in my mind I debated whether to leave quietly; protest, revealing my identity to prove him wrong; or just sit still and quiet and unnoticed, avoiding eye contact lest I be discovered a fraud. I interpreted my professor’s words as expressly meant for me, or people like me. I was not good enough. I should not be there. I did not belong. Words I had heard throughout my life in one form or another, but their meaning always the same. It was at this

moment that all my experiences of not believing I was “good enough” came to rest. I was from a working class family. I was female. I was what this professor, and others before him deemed uneducable and only suitable for a life of blue-collar drudgery. I was “working class, white trash” and worse, I was a “working class, white trash” woman.

I thought, I must have outwitted fate. Somehow, I had been allowed into the hallowed halls of academia and had gained access to the “white collared” world. I was in that class, in the Ph.D. program, and so I rationalized, I must belong. I steadied myself, donning the cloak of supremacy my mind knitted at that instant as I took stock of my many achievements over the years, despite being told I “could not;” despite my blue collar parents and grandparents. Again, I thought, I was not like them. Nevertheless, I came away from my professor’s remarks affected with the awareness that somehow I, and others like me, had been martyred by this “understood” economic and social predetermining of which my professor spoke. In pursuit to further discover the nature of my feelings of inadequacy, and what role gender and class had and how they intersected with my life course and education attainment, this study was born. What follows is a retelling of my journey.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

‘Dear, dear! How queer every thing is to-day! And yesterday things went on just as usual. I wonder if I’ve been changed in the night? Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I’m not the same, the next question is, Who in the world am I? Ah, *that’s* the great puzzle!’ And she began thinking over all the children she knew, that were of the same age as herself, to see if she could have been changed for any of them....’Who am I then? Tell me that first, and then, if I like being that person, I’ll come up: if not I’ll stay down here till I’m somebody else’ (Carroll, 1866, pp.19-21).

Unwittingly and seemingly overnight, Alice is transformed into someone, whom to her, is unrecognizable. Her reaction is to conceal herself until she either accepts this new identity or transforms yet again. The need to know one’s self is a universal question and for many women, answering the question, “Who am I?” is at the fore of the stories of their lives and lived experiences. This is particularly common of women from working-class backgrounds who have “achieved” more than what was “expected” of women of their social class. Often, the answer of “who they are” is not a ready one as like Alice, these women find their sense of “self” is of constant negotiation. Sometimes this negotiation is precipitated by their own conscious making—as they actively choose to challenge expectations for their social position, e.g., taking up educational pursuits which oppose working-class ideology—but most often, it is a consequence of which they did not know the

extent of or, were wholly unaware, of the ramifications of their divergent choice(s). As they move in, out, across, between and within the various social spaces, many describe their experience as that of an *other*; they and others see them as lacking the clear markers of any particular social space which leads to their stories of “not fitting in” and feelings of inadequacy (Giroux, 1994). As social transients, these women suppress or alter aspects of themselves in order to “fit” within prescribed sociocultural norms of what it means to be female from a particular social class. In the quest to find explanations for their divergent trajectories and to discover if other women from working-class backgrounds—and if so, which ones—have experienced *otherness*, the purpose of this study and subsequent research questions emerged.

Problem Statement

There is a great body of literature on the influence of gender and class on life choices, including educational attainment. Many of the women in these studies understood their choices in life to be a natural consequence of the categories within which they were located: for example, in one study, one working-class, South African woman described her decision not to teach in a middle-class school because she would have to be better than “average” (McMillan, 2004, p.118). She linked socioeconomic resources to academic potential stating she would have “prove myself all the time” (p.118). She declared this would be particularly difficult as she had not been exposed to the knowledge, background and thinking skills her middle-class counterparts had been exposed to early on in life (p.118).

Other studies gave similar explanations for their life courses: many women linked their feelings of inadequacy despite their academic success to their being daughters of working-class parents (Brine & Walker, 2004; McMillan, 2004; Adams, 2001). In another study, female working class students linked their choice to go the local, newer universities because that was where they felt they “fit in” or could afford (Reay, Davies, David & Ball, 2001). As I read through these studies looking for the reasons why I, as a working-class woman, chose college rather than another path, I was struck by how both the women of these studies and I found it natural and necessary to explain our lives via some paradigm. Were our lives simply reflections of our gender and class, nothing more? The explanations for how our lives unfolded seemed too patent, the narrative threads tied off. It was then that what was lacking in the literature and what the focus of this study should be became apparent. While the body of literature attributed the choices women from the working class make to their gender and class, they succeeded in buoying the paradigms rather than questioning their authenticity. They failed to first uncover the essence and consequently depict the phenomena of what it means to be a woman from working class leaving little room to account for how the women themselves experienced life, made divergent choices and navigated their “educational-scape.” Thus, I needed to go “back to the things themselves” (Husserl, as cited in van Manen, 1990, p.45). I needed to see more life and see it more clearly (Pinar & Grumet, 1976). Hence, I sought to discover how women

from working-class backgrounds saw themselves as negotiating the external structures that had been noted by other researchers.

By distilling the stories of our lives into categories, we are left only with interpretations: both Pinar & Grumet (1976) and Polanyi (1964) warn of such exercises. By speculating something, e.g., class, gender, is the cause of another, e.g., educational attainment, limits one's perception as these "structures" distance us from our experience (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985, p.42). When we locate ourselves within these paradigms and lose sight of our individual experience; we in essence lose sight of ourselves (Pinar & Grumet, 1976). We become someone else:

The child cannot be herself if she is to be like someone else. She must forget who she is, forget who she has forgotten, and focus on acting like the other. In order to participate in this process, the child must learn, and this learning probably occurs unconsciously, that he [sic] is unacceptable as he is, and in order to be acceptable, both to himself and to others, he must be like someone else. A duality forms: the repressed center is the Self, the externalized behavior is the not-self, or what Laing terms the false self-system. Consciousness dwells somewhere in-between (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, pp.11-12)

As we become someone else, that is, take on roles of gender and class, categories external to us, we essentially become captive of an order we created and perpetuate it as natural (Krippendorff, 1995, p.116). This is what seemed to be

lacking from the body of research: lived experiences, not just interpretations, of the phenomenon of identity and identity making of women from working-class backgrounds. The act of categorizing ourselves—as women, from a certain class—and using these categories to explain the direction of our life path, further disassociates us from who we are and consequently, what we had intended to accomplish: discovering, “Who am I?” We are in effect, reinscribed and further implicated in this false self-system of which Grumet refers. Without deepened understanding, such false consciousness persists and deepened agency will elude us (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p.vii). We will be someone else and continue to feel unacceptable, inadequate, *other-ed*, as the structures we’ve created to explain life take on a life of their own.

Purpose of the Study

Thus, the purpose of this study is to go beneath these “interpretations” of the experience and explore the phenomenon of identity and identity making in women from working-class backgrounds. Part of this includes an investigation into how these women recognize and participate in their own identity making, identifying the interpretations they create and apply to their experience and the ways in which they juxtapose their educative experience.

A definition of identity is the “kind of person” these women are recognized as being (Gee, 2000). This recognition includes both their recognition of themselves as well as others’ recognition of the gender and social class these women enact. This suggests identity recognition is part performative and

underwritten by an interpretative system which includes varying historical and cultural views of nature; norms, traditions and rules of institutions; language and its use by and between persons or the workings of group with which one closely allies (Gee, 2000, pp.107-108): Various theories have bearing on this study and each will be discussed at length; however, a hybrid of Bourdieu's notion of identity put forth by McNay (1999, 2000) and Adams (2006) which recognizes the "ambiguities and dissonances that exist in the way that men and women occupy masculine and feminine positions" will be paramount (McNay, 1999, as cited in Adams, 2006, p.518). Using heuristics, a form of phenomenology, I interviewed twenty one women in depth using a wide range of interview techniques. My goal is a critical one where I hope to increase awareness of these structures and the power we give them by using phenomenological techniques to excavate them from the identity stories these women tell. I believe this work has implications for education in two ways. One, that the ways in which education perpetuates and reinforces these structures will be illuminated and two, that these revelations will suggest ways in which education may reform and paradoxically, help us to be more critically aware.

Research Questions

With the above goal in mind, the following research questions were developed and serve as the impetus for this study:

1. What is the experience of identity and identity making for women of working-class backgrounds?

2. How do women from working-class backgrounds recognize and participate in their own identity making?
3. How does their experience, recognition and participation intersect with their educative experience?

Methodology

Given the subject matter and context of this study, I employed a qualitative approach. The research is of women from working-class backgrounds and their experience of identity and identity making as it intersects with their educative experience. In particular, I was interested in explicating those instances where these women have experienced *otherness* as a result of their recognized identity. Because I believed these to be women who have in some way attempted to alter their identity, I launched a viral campaign via university list serves. I thought women who sought a higher education were, like me, interested in stabilizing or in this case, bettering their position either socially, culturally, politically and or economically. I placed several advertisements on social networking sites. I also placed flyers in public spaces throughout one large metropolis. The response was more than I had anticipated. Out of 39 women who responded to the call for participants, 21 were interviewed. These 21 met the study's criteria and were available to interview. Because sampling was purposive and the data, open-ended, qualitative inquiry was most appropriate (Creswell, 2003). Furthermore, due to the goals, limitations and focus of this study, I used heuristic methodology as set

forth by Moustakas (1994, 1990), Clark and Moustakas (1986). This kind of qualitative framework was suitable because it brought to the fore a pure description of the phenomenon of identity and identity making for these women, but also considered the embedded nature within which interpretations of their experience had been constructed. Lastly, heuristics includes techniques for including the researcher's own lived experience with the phenomenon as data. As a woman from a working-class background, I included my experiences in both a prologue and an epilogue; a more detailed discussion of how this was accomplished is provided in this study's chapter on methodology (Patton, 2002). I chose to place my experience at the end of the study too, as I did not want to be heavy handed in my analysis, overshadow or take anything away from my participants' stories. In-depth interviews were conducted in an attempt to further understand the experience of identity and identity making in these women, including how these women perceive and participate in this phenomenon, and the degree to which, these perceptions have impacted their life course. Artifacts such as study work products, journal entries, email communications, artwork, literature and other phenomenological writings were also considered.

Theoretical Influences

Creswell (2009) recommends that qualitative researchers include a discussion of theory early in studies regarding concepts such as gender and class (p.61-66). By doing so, the researcher reveals how they are positioned in the study: that is, the perspective they use to determine what questions are asked and

why; how and what participants are selected; the means by which data is collected and analyzed; and how the “final written accounts need to be written” (p.62).

Too, how could I conduct a phenomenological study yet be akin with post-structural thinking? Most would argue the two in sharp conflict with one another: Phenomenology advocates foundational structures of consciousness can be found whereas post-structuralist accounts of mind argue that there are no foundational structures, only a social construction of mind. How then do I reconcile myself and my approach in this study? Habitus is hybridized. In my interviews, I get to the experience of these women but I know that they speak to one moment in time and my analysis suggests one interpretation. From another vantage, told in a different way on a different day, that interpretation is subject to change. Herein lies the substrate for post-structuralism as there can be change of perspective on the data as the social changes. The individual is acting against the “structure” and the “structure” is at the same time, acting against the individual. It is in this way that the habitus becomes hybrid: the essences are always there but there is potential for them to change in some way. It is not a synthesis but a constant as the women inform the structure and the structure informs the women. Post-structuralist literature provides the understanding that experience morphs and changes. Habitus is durable but not to the extent that it doesn't experience wear, stress, becoming ragged over time as we undergo new experiences, reconsider old ones and interpret from varying vantage points given our social milieu. Considering a

hybridization of habitus allows for ruptures in the social fabric and as we become aware, even if for only a moment, we can work through those spaces.

What follows is a portrait of my mind as a scholar: how I got to this preceding understanding, from where I operate in this study, i.e., the study's structure, my treatment of the data, my analysis, etcetera. By providing an overview of the respective theories of each genre, i.e., identity, gender, class, I demonstrate my knowledge of the various schools and also what underpins this study, hence supplying cause for its orientation toward identity, gender and class. Because I seek to engender a critical lens through which we can consider identity, gender and class, I begin with a discussion of critical theory; the model in which this study is conceived.

Critical Theory

Critical theory is “concerned with empowering human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class and gender” (Fay, 1987, as cited in Creswell, 2009, p.62). To understand how critical theory was applied in this study, a brief history of the theory's development is necessary.

Critical theory was established in 1920s Germany as an explanation for why the socialist revolution prophesied by Marx did not occur as expected. Members of what became known as the Frankfurt School—most notably, Adorno, Horkheimer and Habermas—sought to link economic with cultural and ideological reasons for why the “revolution” was forestalled (Agger, 1991, pp.107-108). They believed that capitalism deepened false consciousness “suggesting to people

that the existing social system is both inevitable and rational” (Agger, 1991, p.108). People go along with the existing social order because that is the world “as it is,” and hence perpetuate it by “deflating attempts to change it” (Agger, 1991, p.109). After all, “it is what it is.” In the last decade, two strands of emancipatory thought have emerged in critical theory, one traces lineage to Habermas, the other to Foucault (Brocklesby & Cummings, 1996). Although both contest subjugation and domination, the Habermasian strand is “primarily concerned with developing theoretical approaches that can be applied to collectively emancipate others from a ‘worse’ to a ‘better’ state” whereas the Foucauldian perspective is more concerned with providing tools with which individuals can use as they see fit, opening their minds to alternatives by highlighting the ways in which they are subjugated within the social order (Brocklesby & Cummings, 1996, p.741). This approach seeks to “bring into play, to make visible, the unwritten categories and rules’...’so as to enable individuals to develop responsive strategies’...’rather than collectively build shiny new systems” (Brocklesby & Cummings, 1996, p.741). Hence, the fundamental difference is in their goals: human emancipation of the former versus self emancipation of the latter (Brocklesby & Cummings, 1996, p.741).

It is the Foucauldian perspective that I brought to bear in this study. Here critical theory impresses the idea that any categories, models or frameworks and their use are subjective, contingent, without any ‘natural’ foundation. How these ‘unnatural’ categories shape us should provoke our suspicions and also free us to

question and consequently, do with these structures as we see fit. Unlike Habermas, Foucault's perspective engenders hope. Power, for Foucault, is everywhere and always. It is not possessed but rather exercised and is a dynamic of constant struggle (Brocklesby & Cummings, 1996, pp.750-753). Seen in this way, each of us has agency. That is, we have the ability to exercise power too. Being enabled to see how we are shaped by these 'unnatural' frameworks and the ways in which these structures manifest in our everyday, may provide alternatives for how to address imbalances of power (Brocklesby & Cummings, 1996, p.750). Our questioning of these structures is the sought after end as there is "freedom in knowing the game is yours to play" (Brocklesby & Cummings, 1996, pp.751-753)

Theories of Identity

"Who am I?" The process of forming an answer may be as enigmatic as the answer itself. A review of the literature reveals incongruent conceptualizations of the term "identity." For some, identity is ascribed by one's uniqueness, that is, one defines oneself in difference to others; dissimilarly, for others, one defines oneself by affinity, that is, how like they are to others (Jenkins, 2000, pp.7-8; see also, Hitlin, 2003; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995; Desrochers, Andreassi & Thompson, 2002, Stryker & Burke, 2000; Deaux & Martin, 2003; Cerulo, 1997, pp.385-386; Schachter, 2004, pp.167-172). How might these disparities be explained? It seems the emergence of "identity" in various disciplines has led to the parallel development of several theories that reflect the differences of their sources. These sources include the fields of psychology and sociology whose lack

of correspondence also admits influence of divergent philosophical paradigms. An historical research synthesis of the social sciences reveals four distinct classifications of theories regarding the formation of identity: identity, social identity, psychoanalytic and developmental identity, and reflexive or socio-structural identity theories.

Identity Theory.

Identity theory is a micro sociological theory which locates behavior in the *roles* an individual assumes (Stryker, 1968; Stryker & Burke 2000, as cited in Desrochers, et al., 2002; Hogg, et al., 1995). According to identity theorists, these roles are individual “identifications of the self as a certain kind of person” or group (Thoits & Virshup, 1997, 106). These identifications might include persons or groups such as, daughter, mother, wife, teacher, and etcetera. Individuals use their conceptualization of these roles to guide their behavior. Which identity a person “puts into action” given the social context is dependent on the role’s salience (Stryker & Burke, 2000; Hogg, et al., 1995). Salience is a measure of how embedded a role is within one’s cognitive schema; that is, whether the role is enacted appropriately and how this performance compares to the performances of others within the same role (Burke & Reitzes, 1981, as cited in Desrochers, et al., 2002). Prominent roles, i.e., those with a higher salience, are more likely to be invoked in “situations that involve different aspects of the self” (Stryker, 1968, as cited in Desrochers, et al., 2002). The higher the salience of an identity relative to

the other identities incorporated into the self, the greater the chance behaviors will be manifested in that identity (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

There are two major strands of identity theory, that of Sheldon Stryker and Peter Burke. Stryker's version emphasizes social structure and identity salience, whereas Burke's version emphasizes social-cognitive systems, identity maintenance processes and the content of identity. For both theories, the self is partially a structure of multiple identities. "Role is external; it is linked to social positions within the social structure. Identity is internal, consisting of internalized meanings and expectations associated with a role" (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

Stryker's work focuses on "the linkages of social structures with identities" (Stryker & Burke, 2000). He concentrates on examining how social structures affect the structure of the self and how structure of the self influences social behavior (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Society is seen as a "mosaic of relatively durable patterned interactions and relationships, differentiated yet organized, embedded in an array of groups, organizations, communities, and institutions, and intersected by crosscutting boundaries of class, ethnicity, age, gender, religion, and other variables" (Stryker & Burke, 2000). A person lives in networks of social relationships through roles that support their participation in such networks and their embeddedness in these patterned interactions and relationships prevents them from venturing outside these networks (Stryker & Burke, 2000). According to Stryker, how many identities a person possesses is in direct relation with the

number of groups with which they interact and their relationship with others depends on their possessing a particular identity and role.

Burke's work complements Stryker's, focusing on the internal process of self-verification, as these affect social behavior (Stryker & Burke, 2000). For Burke, a person's behavior is a function of the relationship between what they perceive in a situation and the self-meanings they hold (Burke 1997; Heise 1979; Stets 1997, as cited in Stryker & Burke, 2000). As such, a person changes behavior in order to match meanings perceived in the situation with meanings held in the standard. Proponents of identity theory believe this view gives agency to the individual as focus is on internal, cognitive identity processes (Burke and Gray, 1999, as cited in Stryker & Burke, 2000).

As a whole, identity theory locates identity within the individual. There is very little discussion on how the individual impacts social structures and these structures are seen as part of the "natural" order. A criticism of identity theory is that it fails "in elaborating the sociocognitive generative processes that underlie...identity" and appears static (Hogg, et al., 1995). Additionally, there is too much emphasis on enacting roles and not on how those roles are influenced by the individual, others and their performing within the social structure (Hogg, et al., 1995).

Social Identity Theory.

Social identity theory, attributed to Tajfel and Turner, is a social psychological attempt to explain group processes and intergroup relations (Hogg,

et al., 1995). According to social identity theory, individuals become self-conscious by comparing themselves with others and this leads to social categorization via identification with a “common culture” based on social cues (Hogg, et al., 1995; Deaux & Martin, 2003; Stryker & Burke, 2000). These category-based identities include, e.g., male or female, black or white, Christian or Jew (Stryker & Burke, 2000). A person creates their self concept based on their assessment of their position in relation to these groups (Deaux & Martin, 2002; Hogg, et al., 1995). Salience, too, is important in social identity theory as how a person thinks, feels and behaves is directed by their “repertoire” of “discrete category memberships” (Hogg, et al., 1995). Further, these “social identities are not only descriptive and prescriptive; they are also evaluative” (Hogg, et al., 1995). Each member has an interest in maintaining the social category and as such will be “motivated to adopt behavioral strategies for achieving and maintaining’ the social category ‘and thus of course the self” (Hogg, et al., 1995). Similar to identity theory, social identity theory locates identity formation within the individual. Although it is more sociocognitive generative than identity theory, a criticism of social identity theory is that it seeks to locate all behavior within social categories; in this paradigm, there are only two opposites within which to locate oneself, in essence, legitimating those distinctions as natural (West & Zimmerman, 2002). Variations different from these distinctions are ostracized as actions of an *out-group* to which the social group is motivated to diffuse (Hogg, et al., 1995).

Psychoanalytic & Developmental Identity Theories.

Psychoanalytic and developmental identity theories describe identity formation as occurring in distinct, identifiable stages that are common to all individuals (Yoder, 2000, p.95; see also, Kimmel, 2008, pp.78-81; Bem, 1993, pp.56-60; Côté & Schwartz, 2002, p.572). Additionally, these theories hold similarly that a person's identity "develops" internally as desires are shaped via the person's interaction with their external environment (Bem, 1993, pp.56-57). The work of Freud, Kohlberg and Marcia are examples of psychoanalytic and developmental identity theories (Kimmel, 2008, pp.77-85; Bem, 1993, pp.56-62; Côté & Schwartz, 2002, pp.571-573; Yoder, 2000, pp.95-96). According to Freud, children identify themselves through difference: during Freud's Oedipal crisis sons become aware of their difference to their mother and "identify" with their fathers, hence, becoming *masculine* (Kimmel, 2008, pp.78-79). Similarly, Kohlberg describes gender identification as "*cognitive*, part of the pattern of mental growth" and a pivotal point after which all things are filtered through a stable, gendered lens (Kimmel, 2008, pp. 84-85). Marcia, too, organized his theory of identity into four identity statuses in which an individual participates in an internal struggle. Through this *intrapsychic* process of exploration and commitment, and individual forms their identity (Yoder, 2000, p.96; Côté & Schwartz, 2002, pp.571-572; Schachter, 2004, p.168). Although psychoanalytic and developmental identity theories recognize the social aspects of identity formation, ultimately, they locate that formation within the individual. A criticism of these theories is they fail to attend to the "broader social-contextual factors

affecting identity development” (Côté & Schwartz, 2002, p. 572). Furthermore, they assume identity formation is a definable, universal event. This assumption has been criticized for its narrowness (Côté & Schwartz, 2002, p. 572; Mullis, Brailsford & Mullis, 2003, p.967).

Reflexivity & Socio-structural Theories.

Identity, social identity, psychoanalytic and developmental theories have been criticized for being too narrow, locating identity formation within the individual, and failing to capture the multidimensionality of the social landscape. Additionally, they assume the existence of universal principles and seem to ignore or discount variations as unnatural and or perversions. In response, two dominant schools have emerged in the sociology of identity in recent years around notions of self-reflexivity and habitus. And, more recently, a hybridization of the two has emerged in an attempt to cure the two theories’ shortcomings. These social constructivist and postmodern theories have been heralded for emphasizing the “constructed and dynamic nature of identity” (McCarthy & Moje, 2002, p.230). Unlike the previous theories which consider identity to be a “unified, cohesive essence belonging to the individual whose core unfolds or develops in stages,” these theories illustrate identity formation as an abstraction (Erikson, 1968, as cited in McCarthy & Moje, 2002, p.230). They understand identity to be “a consequence of the interaction between people, institutions and practices” and as such, focus on *macro-micro* linkages (Sarup, 1998, as cited in McCarthy & Moje, 2002, p.230; Cerulo, 1997, p.400).

In reflexivity, identity is in constant construction so that the day to day activities of an individual have global consequence: “Each of us...lives...reflexively organized in terms of flows of social and psychological information about possible ways of life...the question ‘How shall I live?’” is answered “day-to-day;” self-identity is an ongoing process (Giddens, 1991 as cited in Adams, 2006, p.513; Atkinson, 2007, p.533-534, 537-541). Giddens (1991), who first suggested what he called, the “theory of the reflexive project of the self,” believed that self-identity “takes the form of an ‘ongoing ‘story’” (as cited in Atkinson, 2007, p.537-538). Unlike identity and social identity theories, reflexivity doesn’t locate identity in a set of behaviors but rather, understands those behaviors as a consequence of one’s understanding of themselves. These behaviors, one’s understanding, etc., are all mutable (Atkinson, 2007, pp.537-538). Being open to change distinguishes this theory from the earlier ones; however, it is also a source of criticism. One critique is reflexivity fails to account for restraints or agency and their affects on these decisions; in fact, there seems to be little regard for any social structure at all. For most critics, this is where reflexivity, as an identity theory falls down. Although it closely resembles Bourdieu’s habitus, it is often criticized for lacking that crucial element of social embeddedness (Adams, 2006, p.513)

Habitus, a concept put forth by Bourdieu (1977), goes slightly farther than reflexivity by suggesting how one acts or presents themselves, either consciously or subconsciously to the world is determined by the structures constitutive of their environment (p.72). An individual develops these dispositions or habits in

response to the external conditions to which they are exposed. In turn, these “identities” help the individual navigate the various “structured space of social forces and struggles” known as *fields* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.243). This social arena is relational, e.g., gender and class, and is activated on the appropriation of capital (Bourdieu, 1984, pp.82-85; Bourdieu, 1991, pp.229-239; Andersen & Collins, 1992, as cited in West & Fenstermaker, 2002b, p.60).

Further, Bourdieu understands these fields as multi-dimensional, organized both vertically and horizontally in accordance to the relational differences of the social agents, e.g., notions of femininity, class and symbolic capital: the boundaries of a field are demarcated by where its effects end (Bourdieu, 1991, pp.230-231).

Additionally, fields can be either autonomous or interrelated, e.g., the correspondence between goods production and taste production, and how they are related to gender and class: the more complex the society, the more fields it has (Bourdieu, 1984, pp.226-256). These fields are continuously shifting, and habitus too, is constantly being mediated as constituents of a particular field enter, interact, linger or depart (Bourdieu, 1977, p.95). Constituents subscribe to a particular field not by way of explicit contract, but implicitly by their participation in the field.

And so, the relationship between habitus and field is a symbiotic one. The field exists only insofar as the constituents possess the dispositions and set of perceptual schemata that are necessary to constitute that field and imbue it with meaning. On the other hand, by participating in the field, constituents incorporate into their habitus the “proper” *savoir faire* that will allow them to constitute the field.

Habitus enacts the structures of the field, and the field mediates between habitus and practice (Bourdieu, 1984, pp.2, 226-256; Costa, 2006, pp.877-878).

Though thoroughly individualized, the habitus reflects a shared cultural context (Adams, 2006, p.514). As such, critics argue that Bourdieu's theory too, is overly deterministic: "Agency is still a bounded process" and any generative hopes one might have are dashed as habitus is inescapable. The mere mention of the concept of agency is guided by habitus (Adams, 2006, p.515). However, a third theory of identity has emerged which calls for a way to incorporate the transformative possibilities of Giddens' (1991) reflexivity with Bourdieu's habitus. This hybridization, explored by McNay (1999, 2000) contends identity, particularly gender identity, is problematic for habitus and field as Bourdieu "significantly underestimates the ambiguities and dissonances that exist in the way that men and women occupy masculine and feminine positions" (McNay, 1999, as cited in Adams, 2006, p.518). McNay suggests it is in these spaces--where habitus and field fail to align--that the generative potential of reflexivity can occur: these periods of crisis provide opportunities for the insertion of a greater variety of experiences, transforming the field (Adams, 2006, pp.517-518). In the instance of work and gender for example, the entrance of women into the workplace has "generated resistance and negotiation" in such ways as to lead to the "formal outlawing of sexual harassment" (Adams, 2006, p.518). This has both micro and macro sociocognitive generative potential as identity is continually constructed and

deconstructed in and around the linkage between the individual and the larger social structures (Janack, 1991, p.326).

Thus the various identity theories are all reducible to where they believe identity formation occurs and the constructs associated with this formation. For identity theorists, identity is constructed via social role and the individual's identification with that role; for social identity theorists, the construct is social categories—often dialectically opposed categories—such as masculine/feminine; according to psychoanalytical and developmental identity theories, the constructs of identity are universal and reducible to distinct stages; lastly, in reflexive and socio-structural theories, identity is constructed within the interrelationship between the individual and society with the understanding that they are constantly in flux. Socio-structural theories such as Bourdieu's and its hybridizations will be used to understand identity in this study.

Theories of Gender Identity

Identity Theory & Gender.

In Gender Studies, gender theorists have affected theories of identity and identity formation. One such way has been to question the construct of *role*, a concept on which identity theory relies. Role “is a set of prescriptions and proscriptions for behavior—expectations about what behaviors are appropriate for a person holding a particular position within a particular social context” (Kessler & McKenna, 1985, p.11). It follows, gender roles are the expected behaviors of females and males. However, gender theorists argue that by its very definition,

role seems to minimize gender and gendered experience (Kimmel, 2008, p.101). That is, unlike roles such as parent, doctor, dog lover, etc., gender lacks the choice and or conceptualization identity theory maintains is essential in identity formation (Kimmel, 2008, p.101). Gender is “deeper” and “less changeable” (Lopata & Thorne, as cited in Kimmel, 2008, p.101; Lorber, 1994, p.2). Because of its constancy, it denies agency, contrary to what as Burke & Stryker (2000) contend (Krais, 2006, pp.125-126; West & Zimmerman, 2002, pp.16-17; pp.106-107). It positions gender as a set of characteristics rather than constitutive of the social structure (Krais, 2006, pp.125-126).

Further, gender theorists also criticize the construct of social role as being “inadequate” in capturing “the effect of gender” (Krais, 2006, p.125-126; Kimmel, 2008, p.101). What it means to be male or female varies across time, culture and context; role theory ignores this, engendering a sense of false universalism (Kimmel, 2008, p.102; Stacy & Thorne, 1980, 1985, and Connell, 1985, as cited in West & Zimmerman, 2002, pp.16-17). Cultural ideals are compressed and depoliticized and are contrary to what Lorde (1998) and Luttrell (1989) portray in their comparison of the gendered experience of black women to white women, poor women to middle-class, and the various amalgamations in-between (pp.187-195; pp.40-42; Kimmel, 2008, p.103). Individuals experience these constructs simultaneously; ignoring this fact denies gender’s plurality (Kimmel, 2008, pp.102-103). Moreover, gender is relational. Role theory has been criticized for glossing over this point by speaking of male and female as if they are distinct and separate

entities; however, one does not make sense without the other. That is, in defining what is male, one must reference what is not male, female (Kimmel, 2008, pp.102-103).

Social Identity Theory & Gender.

In social identity theory, groups provide their members with a definition of who they are. Constructs are often deeply embedded and, as in the case of gender, are often organized along a continuum of polarized opposites: masculine/feminine (Bem, 1993, pp.80-81). A criticism of social identity theory is there is a tendency towards stereotyping (Jenkins, 2000, pp.7-9). Notions of gender are particularly susceptible to stereotyping and, as many gender theorists suggest, constrains identity (Stanley & Wise, 1983, p.103). Individuals with non-polarizing behavior are considered deviant, often ostracized or forced to conform like the tomboys of Paechter & Clark's (2007) study (p.353). Furthermore, these stereotypes are often ill-founded, locating their legitimacy in biology. R.W. Connell (1999) in "Making Gendered People" describes how the reproductive body or one's sex is often mistakenly used to mean gender (pp.449-451). Fausto-Sterling (2000) illuminates such erroneous thinking in *Sexing the Body* which opens with the story of an Olympic woman hurdler who by all indications—according to society's popularized gender markers—was a woman; genetic testing, however, said she was a man (pp.1-6). Unbeknownst to her, she had a condition called *androgen insensitivity*. Her body never detected the testosterone necessary to develop male characteristics and she grew up as a woman (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p.2). This

“anomaly” put biology and science as bringers of gender truth suspect and consequently, questioned science’s foremost premise on gender: male is opposite of female. This led theorists such as Lorber (1994) to showcase gender’s complexity by cataloguing a “whole spectrum of variation and fragments” (as cited in Connell, 1999, p.458; Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p.251). In fact, Lorber identified so many that Connell (1999) estimates there must be over “900 different situations one can be in. So much for dimorphism” (p.458).

Psychoanalytical & Developmental Identity Theories & Gender.

Psychoanalytic and developmental identity theories have also been taken up by Gender Studies. Gender theorists of this vein, often build upon existing psychoanalytic and developmental canon as a way to explain gender and gender as an experience. As a result, grand mono-causal theories emerged as explanations for the oppression of women (Stanley & Wise, 1983, p.46). This includes the work of Nancy Chodorow (1970), Luce Irigaray (1974, 1985), Juliet Mitchell (1975), and Gayle Rubin (1975). Building upon the likes of Freud, Lacan and Lévi Strauss, psychoanalytic and developmental gender theorists argue “gender is an idea of difference” whose “focus is on sexuality as a powerful cultural and ideological force that oppresses women because it is inscribed in bodies and also in the unconscious” (Lorber, 1994, pp.2-3). For example, in *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978), Chodorow examines the development of girls versus boys. For Chodorow, the self is “determined in early childhood and forever fixed in place....whose internalized representations cohere in stable patterns” (Lorraine,

1990, p.90). She argues that gender's division of labor is directly linked to the developmental difference between boys and girls and assumes mothers act as the primary parent (as cited in Connell, 1999, p.457; Connell, 1987, p.202). She claims that because girls are brought up by a parent of their own gender, they tend to have less distinct ego boundaries which in turn, she says, engenders a "stronger motivation for nurturing children" (Connell, 1999, p.457; Connell, 1987, p.202). Boys, according to Chodorow, tend to have stronger boundaries as a result of their awareness of difference to their mothers and subsequent separation (Connell, 1999, p.457). Irigaray (1977) too, locates what she views as women's problematic relationship to (masculine) logic and language in female sexuality (Jones, 1985, pp.88-89). Both see the identity development of women as universal, definable events which talk little of agency: "psychoanalytic feminism sees men's sexual domination in heterosexual relationship as rooted in their unconscious and unlikely to change unless there are radical changes in gendered parenting" (Lorber, 1999, p.418). Hence, according to psychoanalytical and developmental gender theorists, gender is embedded in the unconscious and is manifest in sexuality and its outpourings. However, this attempt to legitimize gender as natural is a point of contention for reflexive and socio-structural identity theorists.

Reflexive & Socio-structural Theories & Gender.

Several gender theorists have taken up and affected reflexive and socio-structural identity theory. For many, these theories are the only constructs which contemplate an "exchange" between the individual and the social structure. So

much so, that they consider gender as a “constitutive feature and organizing principle of collectives, social institutions, historical processes, and social practices” (Glenn, 1999, p.5). Moreover, some gender theorists who have taken up these theories as a means of defining identity and discovering its formation have analogized identity as an act of performance. Butler (1990) explicates this in her work as she believes identity “arises and is constituted through” discourse (Forbes, 2007, p.476; McNay, 1999; Moloney & Fenstermaker, 2002, pp.190-204). Unlike previous identity theories, gender is not an internal essence, but rather “manufactured through sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body” (Butler, 1990, as cited in Moloney & Fenstermaker, 2002, p.191). Taken in this way, Butler believes all discourse becomes a display of power, an outward act of male domination (Dunn, 1997; McNay, 1999, pp.183-184).

Other gender theorists, who analyze this interaction between the individual and the social structure, describe the exchange as an ongoing interactional accomplishment (West & Zimmerman, 2002; Moloney & Fenstermaker 2002). “Doing gender means creating difference between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological. Once the differences have been constructed, they are used to reinforce the ‘essentialness’ of gender” (West & Zimmerman, 2002, p.13). Public bathrooms illustrate “doing gender”: although meant for the same biological purpose—elimination and waste—the essentialness of gender is reinforced in sexual segregation and furnishing the sexes

with dimorphic equipment, e.g., urinals versus vanities (Goffman, 1977, as cited in West & Zimmerman, 2002, p.13).

Gender schema theorists take “doing” gender one step farther by widening their analysis of such essentialist behavior. According to gender schema theory, children internalize society’s “lens of gender polarization and thereby become gender polarizing (or schematic) themselves” (Bem, 1993, p.138). In doing so, they begin to evaluate all action in terms of this schema. Behavior that doesn’t match is rejected (Bem, 1993, pp.138-139). Such is the case with the *tomboys* of Paetcher & Clark’s (2007) study mentioned earlier. The teachers in the study identify tomboys based on their higher level of physical activity and determination, characteristics usually associated with males (p.345). When interviewing the children of the schools separately, researchers found the children identified the same “tomboy” girls as the teachers, but for a different reason: their refusal to wear a skirt (Paetcher & Clark, 2007, pp.345-346). Although this seems strikingly similar to social identity theory, it differs by presuppositions: “first...there are gender lenses embedded in cultural discourse and social practice that are internalized by the developing child, and second...once these gender lenses have been internalized, they predispose the child, and later the adult, to construct an identity...consistent with them” (Bem, 1993, pp.138-139). The children in the study have learned to associate femininity with skirts and passivity. This theory differs from those that precede it as there is an emphasis on the micro macro

sociological exchange between the individual and the social structure. Both are active in the creation of what it means to be masculine/feminine.

Lastly, widening analysis of gender and identity even further, enculturated-lens theory incorporates the critical insights offered by gender schema theory and combines them with situating the “individual from birth to death in a social and historical context containing the lenses of androcentrism and gender polarization” (Bem, 1993, p.138; Alcoff, 1994, as cited in Carr, 2003, p.17). Bem (1993) provides numerous examples including how the notion of self is learned in American culture. According to Bem, American parents teach their children the self has “inviolable boundaries” (1993, p.141). This gets communicated to the child through the parents’ actions like, early weaning, allowing the child to express preferences; providing it with its own room; giving it a diary to record its intimate thoughts (Bem, 1993, pp.141-142). All situate the child in “social contexts which will shape them into persons who have strong internal desires and who expect those desires to be satisfied” (Bem, 1993, p.142). Additionally, they are “communicating the shared cultural conception of a person” (Bem, 1993, p.142). With regard to gender, androcentrism is perpetuated in social contexts too. Take for example paid employment. The androcentric valuing of women is enacted and embodied in the types of jobs ascribed to women: those related to a woman’s domestic and reproductive functions, power to stimulate or satisfy men, or inferior departure from men (Bem, 1993, pp.143-144). As a result, individuals come to see such behavior as natural while also deeply implicating themselves as a

“collaborator in the social reproduction of male power” (Bem, 1993, p.139). In conclusion, it should be noted that some gender theorists also see reflexivity as a “masculine creation” as it relies on “specific techniques for knowing and telling the self” which are “more available to some than others” (Skeggs, 2002 as cited in Adams, 2006, p.517). Because reflexivity is itself a situated process, it maintains the existing social structure, particularly gender identifications (Adams, 2006, p.519).

Androcentrism and gender polarization pervade American society (Bem, 1993, p.143). These schemas are so entrenched; they not only influence behavior, but also help organize the institutions which enact them. Every time an individual is exposed to culturally significant social practice, their gender identities are recreated (Bem, 1993, 141). Using the theories explicated above, gender’s construction and deconstruction—as an experience in the process of identity formation—is located in and around an individual’s personality and body (Bem, 1993, pp.151-167).

A gendered body is “not just how people look, with and without their clothes on, but also how they function physiologically, how they move around in space, and even how they experience and express their sexual desires” (Bem, 1993, p.159). For the female body, this would entail the clothes one wears, hairstyle, makeup. Consider again the tomboys in Paechter and Clark’s (2007) study. The children learn to recognize those *masculine* girls because they refuse to wear skirts (p.346). By recognizing these notions are grounded in androcentrism—looking

sexually desirable to males—and gender polarization—what is appropriate feminine behavior—helps deconstruct them. Other examples of gendered bodies are the tomboys, again, as well as the female boxers of Mennesson’s (2000) study. Both defy polarizations of gender and the androcentric notion that women be passive and not physically active. As a result both are labeled as being odd, different, masculine. Lastly, Gill’s (2007) female rugby players assault notions of feminine sexuality and redefine gender norms by singing songs that parody a sexual assault (p.423). This behavior challenges gender categories but also the androcentric notion that women exist to satisfy the sexual desires of men. Through their androcentric, gender-polarized influenced interactions with an androcentric, gender-polarized embedded social structure, women construct and deconstruct the social structure and are themselves constructed and deconstructed as it relates to their gendered bodies. Additionally, they are learning the shared cultural conception that women’s bodies are to be mastered and controlled.

“A gendered personality is both a product and a process. It is both a particular collection of masculine or feminine traits and a way of construing reality that itself constructs those traits” (Bem, 1993, p.152). For the female personality, this would entail displaying social traits that would in turn create an environment that would reproduce those traits. In “Schooling Ophelia: Hysteria, Memory and Adolescent Femininity” Marhsall (2007) analyzes the nineties’ proliferation of Ophelia narratives which echoed long-standing “cultural narrative of fallen girls/women in need of rescue, such as fairy tales as well as late-nineteenth century

discourses that link western adolescent girlhood with hysteria” (p.711). These narratives locate hysteria and vulnerability within female adolescence. By doing so, they make female *coming of age* seems like a crisis; hysteria becomes mythologized as part of femininity and reinscribes women as victims and as the more “unstable” of the sexes (Marshall, p.724). Other female *essentializing* is uncovered in Mennesson’s (2000) study of female boxers’ entry into boxing as adults. Mennesson believes their participation is dependent on their inculcating a “competitive sporting ethos during the primary stage of socialization and involvement in traditionally masculine games and sports during childhood” (p.31). Had they not participated as a child nor had the competitive, masculine traits necessary, the more likely options, such as taking up boxing, would have been foreclosed to them. Thus, through their androcentric, gender-polarized influenced interactions with an androcentric, gender-polarized embedded social structure, women construct and deconstruct the social structure and are themselves constructed and deconstructed as it relates to their gendered personalities. Additionally, they are learning the shared cultural conception that a woman’s mental constitution is inferior to men.

Thus, gender, as is identity, is constantly in flux. One’s actions, consciously or subconsciously, influences their understanding of their own gender as well as that embedded in the social structure. Further, the social structure is inscribed and transformed via individual action. It is in these junctures, where the two meet and either converge or diverge that opportunities for resistance,

liberation and agency exist. This latter understanding of how gender identity is constructed will be used to guide this study.

Theories of Class Identity

Like gender, there are several divergent theories offered on the nature of class identity. These theorists may be separated into three broad categories. The first is a more orthodox position and includes the works of Marshall (1988) and Devine (1992, 1998); it insists on the continued salience of class identity (as cited in Savage, Bagnall & Longhurst, 2001, p.876). That is, people still recognize themselves as classed and can describe themselves in this way. From this perspective, class is very much politically charged with the various classes aligning themselves correspondingly along this spectrum: upper class with conservatism, working class with labor interests and so forth. Any inconsistencies are explained away as a consequence of the fracturing within the political sphere itself (Savage, et al., 2001, p.876).

A second group proclaims the end of class identity and takes this “to be a key aspect of the contemporary failings of class analysis” (Savage, et al., 2001, p.876). Writers in this group include Giddens (1990), Beck (1992), Bauman (1982) and Lash and Urry (1987; 1994). They argue that we are in a period of major social and cultural change and the capitalist-industrialist paradigms of a classed society are obsolete; they offer the weakness of class identities as proof (Savage, et al., 2001, p.877). An offshoot of this school is Lockwood’s (1988; 1992) work where he suggests traditional class analysis is no longer adequate as it

is not possible to reduce a class to a prescribed set of norms and values. In the past, class theorists relied on the S-C-A model to explain classed behavior. In this model, class structure gives rise to class action which in turn engenders class consciousness (Savage, et al., 2001, p.877). But with the advent of the postmodern, post-industrial society, this model no longer works (Savage, et al., 2001, p.877).

The third school of class analysis argues that class identities do exist but are ambivalent and weak. There are two variants in this strand. One is represented by the work of Goldthorpe (1996). He and others like him recognize the “fragility of class awareness” and use “rational action theory to champion a mode of class analysis that does not depend on the S-C-A model” (Savage, et al., 2001, p.877). In this theory, it presumes it is possible to link structure with action. Consciousness of one’s class is not necessary as an intermediary between the two (Savage, et al., 2001, p.877). Lastly, the second variant of this third school draws upon the work of Bourdieu. It claims the very nature and power of class make it difficult to articulate, which gives it its waning appearance. “To confront class...threatens people’s fragile sense of self-dignity and self-respect” (Savage, et al., 2001, pp.877-878). It is yet a subtle version of false consciousness (Savage, et al., 2001, p.878). It is this last perspective of class that will be used to guide this study. Additionally, in accordance with Bourdieu and other socio-structural theories, class will be understood as “more than income” (Reay, 1998, as cited in Adair, 2005, p.821). Rather, it is “a complicated mixture of the material, the

discursive, psychological predispositions and sociological dispositions' that are 'played out in interactions with others in social fields'" (Reay, 1998, as cited in Adair, 2005, p.821). Subsequently, class culture is produced and reproduced through such markings as taste, language, fashion, etc. How these markings are read and received by others within the field will determine the position one occupies within the field (Atkinson, 2007, p.544-545). Applying this understanding, I am interested in the stories the women included in this study tell of their experience with class. *Working-class* in this study will include the socioeconomic group marked by unskilled and semiskilled laborers who also share ideologies of domesticity, e.g., citizenship, nation, freedom, progress, ownership, family, sacrifice and duty. In this grouping I have included what historically have been termed "blue collar"—a social and historical referent to their work clothes—as well as low paying, low status "white collar" work like secretarial work or bookkeeping. The women interviewed for this study grew up in homes where their fathers worked outside the home while some mothers did and some did not. In the past, families with homemakers were an outward sign of middle-class status; however, over the years, this signifier has been shown to be a misnomer as many researchers have found the working-class take on the trappings of middle-class life to appear middle-class (Rubin, 1994; 1976). Some researchers choose to include educators, nurses and the like as working-class, reasoning income confers this designation (Hurst, 2003). I excluded them. While often it was enough for participants to locate themselves as working class, I too believed like those I

interviewed that educational attainment carries some cultural capital outside of the working-class. As a result, I selected only women whose parents had not gone to college or if they had, had returned after getting married, starting their family and career. Often times these parents had working class jobs before they went to college and working class jobs after as they were unable to transmute their new learning into a new, higher status career track. Often they only succeeded in getting better pay for the same low status working-class jobs. Too, the few women included who had parents who went to college while they themselves were young, were able to recount stories of what it was like for them to have a working class parent who also attended college.

Summary

To reiterate, the goal of this research was to study the phenomenon of identity and identity making in women from working-class backgrounds and how this phenomenon intersects with their educative experience. Using a heuristic design, I collected data from 21 women from working-class backgrounds. My own experience as a working-class woman is also included as data in the beginning in the prologue and at the end in an epilogue; consequently, several steps are taken to ensure validity. Several theories are brought to bear when analyzing the data. These include socio-structural views of identity, gender identity and class identity formation as presented above.

What follows is a review of the literature in Chapter Two, a discussion of the methodology used in Chapter Three, a presentation of the data in Chapter Four

and Chapter Five and conclusions, implications and suggestions for further research in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to provide an overview of the major studies that have preceded and thus guide and support this work. They provide a historical context for understanding (a) how other researchers have studied identity constructs such as gender and class and (b) their intersection with educational experience and (c) why I determined there was a need to conduct a heuristic study of the phenomenon of identity making in women of working-class backgrounds. I began my search looking for studies which explored the life choices of women from working-class backgrounds. I searched on descriptors such as women, gender, class, working-class, education, educational attainment, life course, identity, identity making, feelings of inadequacy and otherness. I also looked for narratives, memoirs, phenomenological and heuristic studies in particular. What emerged were studies that could be roughly categorized into two classes. The first examined the ways in which class and gender acted as determinants of educational attainment. The second, recounted struggles the women had with their identities and their responses.

My findings, particularly of the former class, were sparse. Surprised by the lack of studies specifically studying how class and gender impact life course, chiefly educational attainment in women from working-class backgrounds, I respond by presenting a fairly comprehensive literature review which appears here. In some instances I take strides to link studies on gender to studies on class to life

course and subsequent educational attainment. In others, I extract findings of wider studies to make them relevant here. Too, overwhelmingly, many of the studies reviewed were conducted abroad, largely in the United Kingdom and Australia. This is representative of the available literature. Few studies were undertaken in the United States; however, some make the case their findings translate to the United States. Such liberties and assertions are called out to the reader.

Class as a Determinate of Educational Attainment

Several of the studies spoke of class as a determinant of educational attainment. That is, working class students, because of their “classed” language, accoutrements, mannerisms, etcetera were destined for a working class life. Those that did attend college often chose newer, non-traditional schools. These newer schools may have appeared as a vehicle of mobility but many saw them as artifice: a way to disguise power imbalances among the classes. Often these studies included race in their analysis.

One such study was an examination of how class and race interrelate in students’ decisions to attend college (Reay, Davies, David and Ball, 2001). Six British educational institutions were surveyed: an 11-18 mixed comprehensive with a large minority working-class intake; and a comprehensive sixth-form consortium which served a socially diverse community; a tertiary college with a very large A-level population; a further education college which runs higher education Access courses; and two prestigious private schools, one single sex boys

and one single sex girls. The students, their parents and various intermediaries were divided into two cohorts. Of these cohorts, this mixed methods study combined 53 interviews and 502 questionnaires and focus groups with national quantitative data on labor market participation. The study was designed in a way so as to explore the effects of individual, peer group, familial and institutional influences and processes in choice-making (Reay, et al., 2001, p.859). A key finding in this study was that although access to higher education seemed to expand, it actually created a new hierarchy within and among the institutions themselves. That is, prestigious research universities remained predominantly white and middle-class (p.858). The working class and non-white students narratives often spoke of not fitting in or knowing one's academic place—which in their minds, were not at these "elite" schools (p.861-866). Virtually no middle class applied to the "new" universities the working and ethnic minority students did (p.868). Here, choice became a medium of both power and stratification (Giddens, 1995, as cited in Reay, et al., 2001, p.860). For many working class students, their choice of higher education further stratified them as many chose schools that were close to home, offered educational programs geared towards obtaining employment and or courses of study that were flexible enough to accommodate their need to work and earn money (pp.861-862). Many interpreted this later choice as one between "poverty or failure" (p.863). Fear of being poor figured significantly as several working-class students felt they couldn't afford both school and work and consequently left school for jobs—the same ones they had

hoped to escape. Conversely, students from middle to upper class families stressed the importance of focusing on one's academics and rarely had to contemplate the dual role of student/wage earner. Additionally, working-class students and parents noted psychological constraints as becoming educated often separated them from their families (pp.863-865). Ethnicity was found to only compound these findings as it added a dimension of one *downmanship* (p.866). Being working-class was difficult enough, but being working-class and ethnic put one at an even greater disadvantage. Additionally, the students noted that although the addition of newer, non-traditional schools seemed to provide more opportunity for social mobility they actually did the opposite. Earning a degree had become the "minimum" and a higher education no longer had the same weight in increasingly competitive job and education markets (Walkerdine, Lucey & Melody, 2001, as cited in Reay, et al., 2001, p.869). Interestingly, the study failed to address how gender might figure into the findings. In fact, the authors believe history reveals a significant reduction in gender inequality simply by the number of women now admitted to university (Reay, et al., 2001, p.855). I found this assertion quite reckless and in direct contrast to their assertions that despite the appearance of access, higher education did little to erode class boundaries.

In another study linking class and race to educational attainment, McMillan (2004) studied 19 South African "coloured," working class women participating in the final year of a preprimary teacher education program (pp.115-117). Using semi-structured interviews designed to elicit broad understandings of race, class,

gender and academic performance, McMillan obtained narratives which revealed these women believed raced identity was important to academic performance, employment and life chances. Class became important as these women felt their race was linked to their access to socioeconomic resources which in turn linked to academic potential, explaining they did not have the degree of exposure their white middle-class counterparts had to needed knowledge, background, thinking skills (p.118). Many reported feeling academically inadequate and hence, inferior and insecure (p.119). Interestingly, the women did not cite gender as shaping their academic performance (p.121). However, gender was framed as a material constraint for many of the women. Being working class was combined with an expectation that women are primary care-givers; this excluded many from higher education as they cited their inability to do as well as they wanted because they were tired, lacked childcare, etc. (p.121). Additionally, being female figured into the professional choices available to these women as they and others saw care for young children as women's natural work (p.122). Often these jobs were of low status and poor remuneration. A key theme in this study, as was found in other studies, was that women from working-class backgrounds often laid blame in themselves for their failure rather than locating it in society (p.123). Prominent among their stories were accounts of being an "other" or "other-ed" which they believed were brought on by their lack of determination (p.125). Yet, in contrast to their false consciousness, the students reported identity—who they were as a classed, raced, and gendered individual—not achievement, signaled life chances.

Their narrative accounts described what they assumed about their future life: not an exchange of cause and effect, but rather, happenstance by which they were “neither surprised by nor secure in what happened to them” (McMillan, 2004, p.126-127).

Gender as a Determinate of Educational Attainment

Other studies spoke of gender specifically as a determinant of educational attainment. In many, being female tracked students to gendered occupations. Additionally, many women found they had to make a choice between their roles as mothers and their roles as students. Those that chose the later were often stigmatized as being odd or less feminine.

Gill, Mills, Franzway & Sharp (2008) studied how school contributes to the gendering of certain professions and how those professional women are then positioned and also position themselves (pp.223-224). The first of their two national Australian studies—and most important for this study—were interviews of 51 engineers, 41 women and 10 males (Gill, et al., 2008, p.225). Using grounded theory and Foucault’s discourse analysis, they found via semi-structured interviews and storied accounts that despite having the qualifications to be an engineer, there was a higher attrition rate among the profession’s women. Much of this was attributed to the awkwardness the women felt and ascribed to their being female in a profession typically occupied by men. As a result, all of the women interviewed seemed to downplay the “female-as-different position” and insisted they were treated equally, which they interpreted as sameness, with the

men; however, almost all the women also spoke of experiencing workplace discrimination or sexual harassment (p.225). In these instances, they found fault within themselves; it was their inability to achieve “comfort in their workplace” not the workplace or its inhabitants (Gill, et al., 2008, p.226). This was partly supported by the fact that the women also saw their skill with math and science as making them stand out; they, like others, saw math and science as male disciplines and believed only unusual females could succeed, if at all. Because of this they considered it natural to endure some tension in the workplace (p.227). Although many had said they attended schools which had programs in place that emphasized math and science for girls, this emphasis promoted careers in teaching rather than engineering. In this way, schools were seen as contributing to the positioning of women. These women came by engineering because of familial connections not by their teachers and guidance counselors (p.228). Further, the women spoke of having to compromise themselves in order to be accepted, as “woman” was seen as antithetical to engineer (p.229). Some worried about appearing bullish and male, believing they must disavow womanhood in order to be taken seriously; many viewed the self they revealed at work as not their authentic self. As a result, they were in constant conflict, denying aspects of themselves in order to “fit” (p.230). Again, they laid blame on themselves for not knowing how to balance their womanhood with their workplace. Some thought learning such balance so important that they felt it should be included in the official curriculum for women wanting to become engineers (Gill, et al., 2008, p.234).

Other studies which revealed ways in which the social construction of gender acts as a determinate of education include Pillow's (1994) dissertation, *Policy Discourse and Teenage Pregnancy: The Making of Mothers*. In this study, Pillow used a case study format to examine how girls' bodies became sites of control. What began as a pilot study evolved to the investigation of 10 school sites over 18 months with a total of 100 observations of teenage girls from the GRADS program: a program designed to help pregnant teens get their high school diploma and prepare for their role as a mother. Thirty of these girls were interviewed in depth (Pillow, 1994, pp.120-131). By employing genealogy as a method of inquiry, Pillow sought to examine the construction of teenage pregnancy as a social problem (pp.301-303). What she discovered was that although girls and women are told "they can do anything," and "be anything" this message is contradicted by a strong cultural message that states their "survival in the world depends on" their "being able to find a man to marry" (Griffin, 1981, p.211 as cited in Pillow, 1994, pp.252-253). By analyzing discourse, one can see how the way we speak of something constitutes it and in the practice of doing so, "conceals" its "own invention" (Foucault, 1974, as cited in Pillow, 1994, p.55). What Pillow found was that many of these girls could not imagine being anything other than a mother. Much of this was reinforced by the school. As a result, they were resigned to their fate as mothers and foreclosed any thoughts of pursuing those opportunities available to their non-pregnant peers. Rather, these girls were consumed by their need to find a man to support them in some fashion (p.241). It

was the best they and faculty believed they could hope for. “The girls were very aware of the stigma of ‘illegitimacy’ for themselves and for their babies...these girls were desperate to ‘do right’” (Pillow, 1994, p.254).

Andres, Adamuti-Trache, Yoon, Pidgeon and Thomsen (2007) conducted a ten year longitudinal study on the correspondence between gender, socioeconomic background of parents and educational attainment by gathering data at one, five and ten years after graduation from their British Columbia high school. Like other studies, they found parental socioeconomic background to be significant but they also found gender to be critical (p.136). Like Reay, et al. (2001), these researchers also believed expectations for higher education were gender neutral and the labor market had expanded women’s choice of work; however, in this study, researchers felt gender was significant in the determination of educational attainment and choice of educational and occupational path (p.138). In this way, gender is interrelated with class locations: Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) found that female students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were more concerned with practical disciplines and institutions, which would lead to future economic security as opposed to those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds who had more opportunities to select their preferred fields of study and thus the types of higher education institution without worrying about the occupational value of their studies (p.138). These were supported by the findings of Andres, et al. (2007) as women of lower socioeconomic backgrounds were underrepresented in the universities, but overrepresented in the non-university

types of postsecondary institutions (p.139). Other interesting findings were the impact of stated educational expectations and aspirations and how they were found to be significant intervening variables that explained education attainment (Bidwell & Friedkin, 1988; Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989, as cited in Andres, 2007, et al.). Girls that aspired to obtain a higher education and stated as much, often did. However, these women were still at a disadvantage in relation to class as middle-class students were found to have the “cultural capital in forms of habits, attitudes, and practices in their everyday interactions with family and associates,” and found “themselves more comfortable in formal educational settings than those from families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. As a result, certain traditional values and linguistic vestiges are maintained selectively in schools” (pp.136-137). In fact, it was found that families play a critical role in shaping children’s expectations and higher socioeconomic families were more likely to encourage their daughters to cross gender boundaries and venture into traditionally male-dominated academic and occupational fields (pp.137-139). Another finding the researchers found significant—although I thought imprudent—regarding gender was low income females make it to the university more often than low-income males (p.139). Out of the low income students who attended university, females accounted for 60% in 2000 up one percent from 1990 (p.139). Although, it should be remembered that a gendered division of labor still figured prominently for these women who often chose careers that comported with balancing reproductive roles, family responsibilities and career (p.140). Hence, “choices are

strongly associated with one's class and gender locations among other factors" (p.140). However, using correspondence analysis and looking for subsequent patterns across the data, the researchers also found that the more education students had, the more their expectations of themselves changed (pp.142-148). It was believed that the labor market may have compelled those with the lowest expectations to pursue some higher education (p.150). That is, as students found themselves in the workforce, they often wanted to better their lot and despite stating they did not intend to pursue higher education after secondary school, found it necessary to remain competitive: "class inequality and class exclusion are continuing realities, and remain formative influences on education" (Connell, 2003, as cited in Andres, 2007, p.154). This included working-class women although it was subservient to their roles as wives and mothers. Andres, et al., (2007) also found the highest academic credentials were likely to be those with high SES parents because these parents possessed timely information, actively nurtured high expectation, and provided necessary social capital. They also had the skills to communicate with teachers & counselors and multiplex social networks, that is, they were able to link to other "professionals" such as the authorities at the school, in more than one context (p.155). These findings reinforced Bourdieu and Passeron's (1979) theory of reproduction:

that through lowered educational expectations students engage in a process of self-elimination from further study or relegation to less valuable levels of postsecondary study. Conversely, students with high SES parents develop

a 'sense of one's place' ensuring them in their path to postsecondary studies (p.156).

One weakness of the study was in the recommendation to educators. The researchers felt that much of the perpetuation of social structure could be offset with some intervention. They felt that if educators were to identify academically talented youth and nurture them, they could thwart cultural reproduction; however, the researchers failed to identify what was meant by "academically talented" (p.156). The dilemma here is that educators might be unaware or ambivalent of the role they play in shaping lives. Further, this recommendation does not account for any biases or predispositions the educators might hold that would influence their determination. Additionally, although programs might be expanded, there is still the predicament of the value of credentials depreciating. How can one make the "right" choice if what is important is constantly changing? (p.157). Lastly, there is danger in no longer viewing class and other constructs as overt structures or as structures that could be overcome in this way (p.157). It seems an easy and well-worn path to once again lay blame within the individual for their failures as opposed to recognizing the culpability of our own false consciousness.

Acquiring Cultural Capital to Effect Educational Attainment

Some studies spoke of the importance of cultural capital to educational attainment. Cultural capital is the value ascribed to an individual based on their proficiency enacting cultural habits; cultural capital may be exchanged for other

kinds of capital. Participants in these studies often cited an influential person or access to learning habits outside their class or gender as the reason for their educational attainment.

Sullivan (2001) tested Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction in her quantitative study, "Cultural Capital and Educational Attainment." After studying four British schools' eleventh year classes—the last compulsory year of school, primarily comprised of sixteen year olds—Sullivan found significant correlation between one's cultural capital and one's educational attainment. In particular, of the 500 plus students surveyed, Sullivan determined that parental educational success significantly correlated to higher social class and hence, better paying jobs. Additionally, these accoutrements have a direct impact on student cultural capital and educational attainment; hence, her findings support the hypothesis that cultural capital is communicated in the home. Further, reading and television watching also had an impact on perceived cultural capital; it was concluded both activities engendered linguistic competence as these activities transmit "information and may introduce an individual to new vocabulary and styles of expression" (p.909). Interestingly, Sullivan further concluded that gender and participating in cultural activities, such as going to the museum or playing a musical instrument seemed to have little or no impact. However, Sullivan is hesitant to attribute all educational attainment to one's possession of cultural capital stating that the theory does not provide a complete account for all differentials such as material resources or educational aspirations (p.910). One weakness of the study was that Sullivan ruled

out the influence teachers' prejudice toward working class students because of their lack of cultural capital might have, stating, that because the status of the teaching profession had declined, it seemed "odd to portray teachers as an elite (cultural or otherwise) who are prejudiced against non-elite pupils" (p.910). Sullivan ignores the possibility that teachers are suspect in their own and working class students' domination. Lastly, home life was seen to be the strongest purveyor of cultural capital; however, schools were noted as having a bias towards high culture in the curriculum, which is consistent "with Bourdieu's claim that the school fails to give explicitly to everyone that which it implicitly demands of everyone. In this case, pupils from backgrounds poor in cultural capital may suffer most from a curriculum that is designed to avoid content and styles that are associated with the dominant culture" (Sullivan, 2001, p.910).

David Hursh (2003), in his auto-ethnographic article, "Imagining the Future: Growing Up Working Class; Teaching in the University" reflects on how he became a teacher despite coming from a working class background. According to Hursh, his gender, race and class identity changed as a result of testing into a gifted track while in high school. He believes test scores correlate to social class and it is here that he makes friends with students from upper middle class professional families which encourage him to apply to college. However, even in college, his working class habits belie him. Hursh laments,

While I might have had the ability to initially succeed in college, my unfamiliarity with college culture undermined my efforts. I nearly failed my

courses that first year. But I learned that success in college depended in part on what you knew but how you presented yourself in class. I came to understand that academic and economic success depended on more than merit (p.59).

Hursh cites his reason for becoming an educator not because he wanted to deny his working class background, but rather, to “Examine and transform the social and school structures and practices that reproduce inequality” (p.66). The weakness here being you only have Hursh’s account of his life, which often, smacks of self-righteousness. Additionally, Hursh fails to recognize that his motivations for teaching may be inscribed by the field as well.

DeMirjyn’s (2005) qualitative dissertation “Surviving the System: Narratives of Chicana/Latina Undergraduates,” explores the ways in which Chicana/Latina women perceive campus climate as members of a marginalized ethnic/racial student population; and (b) which strategies are used as ways of “surviving the system.” Using a confluence of methods—including grounded theory, phenomenology and Chicana epistemology—and education narratives and life stories as data, the study was specifically focused on the forms of social/cultural capital the women employed to maintain a sense of “other” throughout their college experiences and how this was employed as a strategy for academic achievement. What DeMirjyn found was that the assimilation model, that is, that the Chicana/Latina women try to fit in, did not aid their academic achievement. Rather, a better motivator was employing their ethnic/racial identity.

Through 12 open ended interviews of Chicana female undergraduate students between the ages of 20 to 22 years in an open format, DeMirjyn uncovered four themes the girls had in common regarding their educative experience: transformational, representational, Chicana-centered and generational, that is, their mothers, social networks, families, food, spirituality, icons, ethnic campus organizations and university coursework, and community outreach and modeling for younger family members figured prominently in their narratives. These areas often operated as support networks for the women as they tried to navigate the university system. Several of the women talked of how they and their families thought school would give them a better life (p.100). One technical flaw in this study which was identified by the author and later corrected was her distancing herself and denying her identity as a member of the group she was researching. She felt she hampered her research and had “difficulty in obtaining substantive data” by not acknowledging her Chicana/Latina heritage to her study’s participants (p.7). In this respect she ignored the importance of her own cultural capital in gaining access to these women’s stories.

Madsen (2007), in her study of the childhoods of women university presidents wanted to know what these high achieving women leaders held in common and what if any factors influenced their life course. Using phenomenological methodology and in-depth, qualitative interviews of ten women university presidents, Madsen found that the women often reported having an influential woman, such as a grandmother, aunt or elementary school teacher, in

addition to their parents, prominent early in life (pp.110-112). Additionally, these women often experienced a significant life event, such as illness, relocation, fear, which were viewed as opportunities to practice one's skills in responding to difficult and challenging situations with the sixth grade year, 11-13 years of age, being the most formative (pp.112-114). Furthermore, these women all spoke of "behaving" in school: they were "respectful, reflective, observant, smart, somewhat self-directed, competitive, and self-confident" (p.114). As with all studies relying on memory, Madsen also cautions the reader to note that the reflections and meaning the women ascribed to their experience may shift as they try to locate and create coherent "stories" of their experiences (Madsen, 2007, p.116). That is, the women may have crafted and shaped their stories to "fit" their preconceived reasons for what influenced them to be university presidents in a largely male profession and overall, such high achieving women.

Struggles with Identity & Responses

The majority of studies focused on the struggles women had with identity as it relates to their educative experience and their responses. Responses often took the form of (a) resistance and or oppositional behavior and or (b) suppression and or cooperation. Resistance and oppositional behavior are distinct behaviors as discussed in the "Introduction" of this proposal. Resistance and oppositional behavior includes such actions as those which question, reject or seek to sabotage long held views, mores, and etcetera of consequence. Activities of suppression

and or cooperation include instances where women have suppressed or altered some aspect of themselves in order to “fit” within prescribed socio-cultural norms.

Resistance/Oppositional Behavior

Guided by poststructural feminist theory, Hardenbrook (2001) questions the ways gender influences and continues to influence the literacy and teaching practices of three women who teach high school English. By conducting oral interviews and collecting written communications, Hardenbrook constructed each woman’s personal narrative and then a larger narrative which illuminated the themes which crosscut the three (pp.40-48). Relying on Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) “three-dimensional narrative inquiry” (as cited in Hardenbrook, 2001, p.6), her analysis treated experience as interactive, continuous, and situational (p.6). Her purpose was to “access the way their thoughts and feelings have shaped their actions” (p. 6). Additionally, she included her own literacy narrative as a means to disclose her own subjectivities (pp.48-50). From her literacy life history research, Hardenbrook concluded “gender as a construct is complex and cannot be examined separately from age, race, class, and other influences” (p. 167). The women in Hardenbrook’s study reported struggling with constructions of subjectivity and often used literacy as an implement of “countercrusading” (pp.158-161). Countercrusading is opposing and taking some action in the hindrance of an issue. Through reading and writing these women were able to resist some of the androcentric, gender-polarized assumptions shaping their life course.

St. Pierre (1995) explores the construction of subjectivity in older Southern women in her dissertation, *Arts of Existence: The Construction of Subjectivity in Older White Southern Women*. A blend of ethnography and interview, this poststructural feminist study explores the ways in which the older women of Essex County are constructed by their communities' *codes* as well as how they in turn, influence these *codes* (St. Pierre, 1995). "They have created their own ethos in a private sphere which, in turn, has had a rhizomatic, unexpected, and uncontrollable influence on their culture" (St. Pierre, 1995, p.303). St. Pierre terms this, the white southern woman's code (p.302). It is a stylized space which allows them to both accept and resist the formal conventions of Christianity, race and patriarchy (p.302). St. Pierre is concerned throughout her dissertation about her appearance in the study. Should she be in the data? How can she not be? If she is, in what ways will she limit her research, that is, what are all the things she did not see and excluded? "I will always be limited by what I have not been able to imagine" (Spivak, 1993, as cited in St. Pierre, 1995, p.304). She concludes that it isn't ethical for her to hide as "all writing is dangerous, and the poem can inscribe just as heavily as science writing (St. Pierre, 1995, pp.306-308).

Suppression/Cooperation

Sharma-Brymer and Fox (2008) conducted a hermeneutic phenomenological study of what it means to be an educated woman in India. These women too spoke of their *otherness*, and "not' being 'herself" (p.330). The study involved ten women with a bachelor's degree and the phenomenological

question, ““what is your experience of being an educated woman” guided each interview” (p.324). Each interview consisted of two sessions with a space of a month in between each and total interview time averaged four hours. Key themes that dominated their narratives were the need to compromise and adjust despite believing their education set them free (p.330). Often, although the women thought being educated was the “ideal,” they often challenged this notion, juxtaposing social and traditional ideal woman against themselves and pointing out their shortcomings (p.330). Rather than gaining freedom through education, the women appeared to be more restricted (p.330).

In Hurst’s (2008) phenomenological study of 21 working class students and the meaning and operation of their mobility through education, working class students saw themselves as different from others in the campus culture (pp.334-336). A working-class researcher herself, Hurst found she was unable to separate class, race, ethnicity and gender, or at least, only separate in the abstract sense as the students’ expressions of identity were always in flux (pp.337-338; 341-344). However, common among all those interviewed was the belief that education was a tool by which they, particularly the women could gain power (334). However, what the students reported was that it gave them very little as many cited instances of feeling not smart enough (p.342). Many felt as if education made them leave everyone behind (335). They had to “reject friends, family, past selves, long-standing values, and embrace new norms and behaviors. What kept many of them going was their belief that hard work and academic achievement would pay off

otherwise, these students would be “left in limbo, without a home in either camp (culturally speaking)” (p.339).

Brine & Walker (2004) found suppression and cooperation in their study of eight women students who shared educational and occupational histories, aspirations and enrollment in an Access course. Through the use of semi-structured interviews held on a term basis throughout the one year course, the researchers sought to examine how identity corresponds to developing educational histories. That is, as the women gained more education, and hence changed their learner identity, would that in turn precipitate a change in class identity? What they found was that many of the women, despite their education would still chose jobs that reflected their class position. That is, rather than find a graduate job directly corresponding to their degree; they would often choose non-graduate jobs where they felt their skills applied (p.98). These women often reported a fear of “not being good enough” among their middle-class university peers yet, they were unable to share their university experiences with family and friends as many, upon choosing to pursue a higher education, immediately distanced themselves from their families, friends and communities (p.104). As a result, a few gave up because of the pressures of being alone, forsaking traditional femininities, compounding debt and risking academic failure (pp.104-109).

Pamphilon’s (2005) study used the life histories of 9 aged Australian women to explore the convergence of life-wide and life-long learning (p.283). “life wide learning,” refers to all learning settings including home, family,

community life and paid work, (Pamphilon, 2005, p.283). Pamphilon's interest was in how "each woman would tell the story of her life, what she would select, and what she would deem as not relevant:" for these working class women, the issue was life-long "earning" as opposed to learning (Pamphilon, 2005, pp.284-287). Jobs and making sure one could support herself became paramount. Although, all of the women reported that they had missed out on something in their school education; however, each was able to acknowledge some part of schooling as a basis for later pursuit of life-long learning: "...when I came in top in cooking...I don't think I realized I was good at doing things. At the end of that time I sort of felt, I've been to the wrong place. I would have liked to have gone on to further education" (p.288). Despite their successes, many of the working-class women still did not consider themselves "real" learners (p.289). They could not name what they believed they missed out on but believed it was determined by what they saw themselves as not, "real" learners (p.289). They deemed learning from non-formal settings as "lesser" learning which was muted in the presence of other, "speakable" formal learning (pp.290-297).

Evelyn's (2004) study of three Australian working-class women who participated in a special access program used poetic forms to display data in feminist stories of education and the educative experience (p.86). In these narratives, the women expressed suppression/cooperation strategies including avoiding the "male" curriculum (math) because of their difficulty with it. Instead, they spoke of choosing careers in childcare as they felt it was naturally

corresponding to their roles as wives and mothers (p. 97). Other reoccurring themes included “not understanding” and a lack of self esteem (pp.96-97). Many of the women reported they wanted to be more assertive and aggressive but could not. Too, they were surprised by their success in school particularly because they had not expected it of themselves—not good enough—and of the difficulty with combining family, working and school (pp.95-96).

Summary

Overall, there were several key findings that emerged from the literature. First, gender often seemed to be taken for granted as discussion of the experience of gender was often minimal or absent. That is, because the participants had gender in common, it was not explored; gender was treated as if it were a universal experience by the majority of participants and some researchers. Along those same lines, it would be insufficient to discuss gender, separate and distinct from other subjectivities, such as class and race. There is much literature on the importance of considering the various subjectivities that comprise one’s identity. The experience of race and class are essential; however, in valuing these constructs, gender must also stay in view. Failure to appreciate the *mélange* of all one’s subjectivities lends support to the development of grand narratives.

Sometimes gender was waved away, under the guise of “equality.” This happened often as participants in particular, spoke of gender as a nonissue, citing that women had, for the most part, achieved equality with men. This raises several concerns. First, the very notion of “equality” suggests a hierarchy and hence,

reinforces what it attempts to dismiss: gender, class, and race and ethnic binaries: e.g., male/female, middle/working, black/white. It also fails to account for the ways the women had to deny a part of themselves and or the struggle they needed to go through to attain equality. Often, women had to give up something, such as, getting married, having children, their perceived femininity, etc.; all experiences their male counterparts, by in large, were spared.

Additionally, equality is a dangerous term in that when the women failed to succeed, they laid blame on themselves. How could fault be found anywhere else but in the individual if everything is “equal”? In instances of success and subsequent “girl power” discourse, gender was all but forgotten (Ringrose, 2007). That is, there was no need to focus on gender any longer as women were “perceived” as powerful. Now, they were not only equal, but in some instances, perceived as an oppressor, at fault for the failings of men (Ringrose, 2007). Class and ethnicity, although called out in the research, were often treated similarly to gender by the participants. That is, rather than laying blame on the structures which perpetuated myths of meritocracy and consequent inadequacy, they faulted themselves.

Furthermore, with regard to class, participants were often hesitant to locate themselves within working-class. Most would admit they came from working-class backgrounds but had escaped and now belonged to the middle-class. The few that identified themselves as working-class shared pride in such a designation. Class too was thought to be “overcome” as an impediment to educational

attainment provided these students had experienced some intervening event or influential individual early in life. Working-class women, however, often had a harder time “escaping” as they were often tracked to professions which kept them “working-class” and tied to their economic worth as females.

Lastly, most of the studies revealed that both researchers and participants thought greater access to higher education leveled both gendered and classed playing fields. Contrarily, as some studies showed, this was not accurate as credentialing was occurring among degrees and institutions. Students now needed to go to the “right” university and earn the “right” degree. In instances where students, including working-class women, chose paths other than what was considered “right,” they experienced feelings of inadequacy and often struggled with their identity. This included responding with various coping strategies such as resistance and oppositional behavior and or suppressing some aspect of themselves in order to cooperate with the larger socio-cultural order.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to go beneath the everyday “interpretations” of what we experience and explore the relationship between identity, identity making and educational experience in women from working-class backgrounds. In particular, I was interested in excavating those instances of self-described *otherness* where these women (1) noted disparity between their perceptions of “who they are” and how they are recognized by others and (2) the ways in which this disparity was or was not connected with their educative experience. The design and method chosen for this search was heuristics, a form of empathetic phenomenology. Although first noted by Douglass and Moustakas (1985), I opted to use the design described by Moustakas in his later works (1990, 1994) as it is an expanded, more comprehensive and systematic version of the original.

Research Method

The research design selected for this study was a qualitative one. There are several factors to consider when selecting a research design: these include the philosophical assumptions of the researcher and topic to be explored, the strategy of inquiry corresponding to these assumptions and the specific methods or procedures of research that “translate the approach into practice” (Creswell, 2009, pp.3-4).

This project was most closely aligned with what Creswell (2009) terms the “advocacy and participatory worldview” (pp.9-10). The key tenets of this type of project are the research

1. Focus on bringing about a change in action and as such, offer an action plan for bringing about this change.
2. Be concerned with empowering the disenfranchised.
3. Be emancipatory by making people aware of the constraints of “structures that limit self-development and self-determination” (p.10).
4. Engage participants as active collaborators in the study (Creswell, 2009, pp.9-10).

As put forth in the “Problem Statement” in the “Introduction,” there is a body of literature—albeit largely from the UK and Australia—that examined the ways in which class and gender influence life course, including educational attainment; however, much of this literature concerns itself with explanations and analyses for why individuals choose the life course they do. By assuming there is a cause-effect relationship between class and gender and life course, these studies perpetuate the idea that life and our experiences are something that can be predicted and controlled. Such an approach implies there is but one way of viewing—or an “official reading” of—the experience of class and gender for these women (Willis, 2004, p.4; Pinar & Grumet, 1976; Krippendorff, 1985; Polyani, 1964). Such an implication silences other readings. What was lacking and was the crux of this

study was a depiction of the experience of identity/identity making as experienced by these women from working class backgrounds: that is, what was their experience like as told by them and what meaning did they give their experience as opposed to superimposing other's interpretations and explanations for their life choices? Such a depiction was believed to be best achieved through qualitative means, particularly, the semi-structured interview.

The strategy of inquiry that best corresponded to the goal of this project was phenomenology. Phenomenology is both a philosophy and a research method which seeks to understand lived experience (Creswell, 2009, p.13). As a philosophy, phenomenology does not assert that the world can be known in the same way "a photographic plate takes in an image" but rather, that all knowledge is subjective in that it always relates to and is constructed by the person engaged in the knowing (Willis, 2004, p.2). Hence, phenomenological research seeks to engender a level of understanding in us as onlookers, similar to those that have had the experience themselves, directly. Such knowledge allows us to be more sensitive and appreciative of those involved in the experience (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Texts on research methodology and design distinguish between classic or intuitive phenomenology and its newer variants, termed empathetic phenomenology. In classic/intuitive phenomenology, the researcher seeks to suspend commonly held views of the phenomenon as a means of revealing an "essential" description of the phenomenon: essential in the sense that we

recognize the experience as a possible experience we or others have had or could have had (Willis, 2004, p.4; van Manen, 1990, p.41). This form is most interested in answering the question: What was a particular experience like? Its answer would depict a particular phenomenon in a way that the reader could imagine the experience as their own.

Empathetic models on the other hand, seek to not only describe the experience in this way, but to make known the feelings of those who have shared in a phenomenon and the sense they make of it (Willis, 2004, p.4). By asking questions such as “How did you feel and what did you make of the experience?,” empathetic phenomenology protects and values the contributions of its participants (Willis, 2004, p.4). Hence, the empathetic phenomenological text shows different people participating in an event in their lives and how these individuals may give it radically different meanings (Willis, 2004, pp.3-4).

Heuristics, a form of empathetic phenomenology, distinguishes itself as its own methodology in two ways. One, it includes the life experience of the researcher. This has two effects: the researcher recognizes that their own life experience affects their interpretations of these stories and it elucidates the researcher’s own life as it relates to identity formation and educational experience. Two, heuristics encourages different ways of presenting findings. The thought here is that the use of an artistic form, such as poetry, does more to further the “immediacy and impact of an experience rather than any explanation of it” (Willis, 2004, p.8).

Participants

As a starting place for enlisting participants I sent out a call for participants using list-servs, social networks, electronic bulletin boards, and printed flyers. The call to action read,

Women Wanted

I am looking for adult women, thirty years or older, who grew up in a working-class family to participate in a research study about how growing up working-class influences your educational experiences and life choices. If you are interested in sharing your story or for more information, please contact Shannon Decker at xxx.xxx.xxxx or xxx@xxx.xxx.

Initial interviews were held to determine appropriate participants; these screening interviews were conversational in nature and conducted via email and or telephone. The primary criteria for determining participants was that these women self-identified themselves as from a working-class background or that they met the criteria of “working-class” put forth in this study’s “Introduction.” I did not require participants to have attained any degrees or diplomas.

In addition to the above, snowball sampling was used. That is, I asked members to suggest other participants who were willing to participate and were appropriate for the study (Morse, 2003). Several women mentioned friends they thought I should interview. I did not solicit these women directly, as I thought that would be intrusive and in conflict with research ethics; rather, I told the

participants if they knew someone who would be appropriate, to mention the study to them and share my contact information. One referral did seek me out to be included; however, because she was a British national, I chose to exclude her. My decision was based on the lack of studies done in the United States. Recall the existing body of literature surveyed British and Australian society. I wanted to see if there was anything distinct in being “American.” I thought this particularly important given our culture prides itself on social class fluidity—a.k.a, the American Dream—and education as a vehicle for that social mobility. By excluding this one British woman in this study about class and gender where the rest of the participants were United States citizens, preserved this as a depiction of the educative experience of being an American female, from a working class background.

Although I considered offering incentives, I found eliciting participants easy: women wanted to share their stories. Thirty-nine women responded to my call for participants. Out of the 39, I collected the experiences of 21 women from working-class backgrounds. These 21 were chosen because they met the criteria of “working class” as put forth in this study and or because they self-identified as working class. Further, they were available to meet during the interview period. At the outset of the study I had committed to interview a minimum of ten women from working-class backgrounds with the stipulation that I would continue interviews until the themes, details, ways in which they told their stories and the patterns of metaphors within their stories became repetitive. Repetition, I

reasoned, would be achieved when as the stories of three or more of the women interviewed intersected in three or more ways. This showed relatively early but I chose to continue to interview all eligible participants to ensure I had exhausted the ways in which the phenomenon of identity and identity making was depicted by women from working-class backgrounds. This agreed with renowned texts on research design which recommended phenomenological studies involve the in depth interview of ten to fifteen participants (Patton, 2002, p.363). Other than managing the volume of data, I did not see any disadvantage to having a few more participants. Of the 21 women surveyed, 14 responded to flyers posted at places where I had interviewed others or had purposely placed them. The locations spanned the large metropolis within which I live, yielding a diverse range in age, socioeconomic status and ethnicity. Six of the 21 women were referred through electronic means, i.e., list serves, electronic bulletin boards. One applied via an anonymous advertisement I had placed on a popular social networking site.

Of the 21 interviews, 16 interviews were conducted in person, five were telephonic. The telephonic interviews spanned coast to coast, corner to corner. One participant lived in Florida, another New Jersey, another Wyoming, others, southern and northern California. Demography spanned major cities to suburbs to retirement communities. I conducted interviews over a three month period: April through June, 2009. Prior to meeting, the women were asked to bring an object to our interview that would help me to know them better or something that they thought represented them in some way from some point in their lives. I also asked

that they select a pseudonym. At the start of each interview, participants were advised of their rights and responsibilities as a research participant and as to the manner in which their stories would be used. Interviews varied in length. The shortest was an hour, the longest, six, with the average being an hour and a half to two hours. Three women were contacted for second interviews to elaborate on or continue their first. I began each interview asking them to tell me about themselves and remained an interested listener as long as they chose to continue. I allowed the conversation to flow with little interruption save laughter, a “yes,” or similar gesticulation encouraging them to continue. I used the questions I developed, but only as a guide. Many of the women got around to answering them in their interview without me having to inquire. When I felt we hadn’t discussed something, I would return and ask them as closing questions or for additional clarification at the end of our interview.

Other important supplements, such as race and or ethnicity and age were discussed during the interviews and became an additional component of analysis. I included my own experience in addition to these women as a means for disclosing myself and laying bare any biases. This appears in the prologue and epilogue of this study. Several women mentioned and attributed experiences in their lives to being of European (Czech, German, Italian) or Mexican heritage. Religion figured prominently as well as the women in the studies talked of believing in God or having spirituality of some kind (God or not). Among those faiths claimed were Catholic, “Christian” (“Born Again”), Seven Day Adventist and Pentecostal: all

have a significant degree of formal doctrine attached. Two of the women claimed to have incorporeal powers. Their spirituality extended in such a way that they saw themselves as possessing a heightened sense of intuitiveness, particularly when it came to interpreting others: a sort of metaphysical consciousness.

Data Gathering

Because heuristics requires the researcher investigate the phenomenon of working-class identity as it is lived, I conducted semi-structured interviews of women who grew up working-class (Moustakas, 1990, p.28; van Manen, 1990, p.35). Questions asked during the interview included,

1. Where were you born/where did you grow up?
2. What was it like living there?
3. What was school like?
4. How did your family feel about education?
5. How did your friends feel about education?
6. Did you grow up in one place or move around a lot? If so, did this change with your new situation? In what ways?
7. What was life like in general?
8. Describe something from your childhood.
9. Have you always seen yourself as someone getting a college degree?
 - a. If so, where did you get this idea? If not, how did you get this idea?

- b. What did you hope or believe getting an education would accomplish?
10. What did your family (birth) feel about your getting a college education?
 11. How does your present family feel?
 12. Have you experience any change in your life since making this decision?
 13. Has your being a women made a difference?
 - a. If yes, in what ways?
 - b. If no, in what ways?
 14. What is something I should know about you?
 15. Is there anything else I need to or should know about you?

While the interview was semi-structured in that I ensured each question was addressed, I allowed the interview to follow the course each participant set. I began each interview asking the participant to tell me about themselves and ended each explaining what the study was about, offering the participant to add or amend what they told me based on that knowledge. At the end of each interview I also made myself available to the participants should anything occur to them that they thought worth mentioning once leaving our interview session. Four women sought to contact me in the days and months following for this purpose. I included this additional information in my analysis.

Other than the guidance at the beginning and end I added little as discussion seemed to flow without hindrance. Most stories took on an episodic plot structure. That is, the women told stories within stories as opposed to a chronological account as some might suppose natural to such a telling. Interviews were captured via a digital recorder and stored as an MP3 file. I also asked each participant to bring at least one object/artifact to the interview that represented them, their life growing up or held some significance for who they are and how they identified themselves. These items were used as a discussion prompt within the interview as (1) a way to get them to open up and discuss the object and its significance for them but also (2) to provide a different “in” not afforded by conventional interview. Items were amassed when permitted; this included photographing, digitally scanning, sharing as email attachment and or acquiring reproductions via a textual description. I do not interpret these items as part of this study as any such interpretation would be contrary to the goals of phenomenology and this study. My interpretation would require categorization and classification based on descriptions suppliant of external forces. Rather, I defer to the women to supply the meaning for these items and subsequently, for their lives. Instead, I have included for illustrative purposes textual descriptions of these items in the portraits and where appropriate, in the analysis, as well as some exhibits in the appendix (see Appendix E). It is in these textual descriptions that I include the meaning the women ascribed to the items they chose to share. Every woman shared an item if not in physical presence, then by verbal description.

Some shared more than one item. Items were varied and included things such as photographs, postcards, whiskey bottles turned candle holders, rolling pins, quilts, journals to jewelry; to illustrate the gamut, one woman chose to share her preserved uterus.

As stated previously, interviews ranged in length: the shortest was one hour, the longest six. On average interviews lasted one and a half to two hours. Sixteen interviews were in person, five were telephonic. Locations for the in-person interviews varied. Several were conducted in local coffeehouses or other public meeting spaces. A few were carried out in reserved library study rooms. One was done after hours in the conference room of the office building in which one participant worked. Another was completed in a participant's home. One of the in-person interviews required a second, follow up interview. Two of the telephonic interviews required the same. These follow up interviews were used to continue and or elaborate on the first interview when I felt more experience needed to be excavated and or explored. Four women sought me out in the days and months after the interview to share additional information or musings they thought pertinent to the study. I included them in my analysis and did not hold them out separate from their initial interview. I realize some would make the argument that further thought on the participants' part might corrupt the genuineness of their first interview. I disagree. Any further concentration and resultant remarks would only add to my assemble of the phenomena of what it means to be a women from a working class background.

I employed a professional transcription service to transcribe all my interviews. My requirements for transcription included the capturing of pauses, laughter and other seemingly typical utterances. Everything was to be considered important and hence included. To ensure accuracy I reviewed each transcript against their respective recording and my field notes. Where quality lagged, I requested correction. Materials were reworked until the tape and transcription agreed. During the interview I made it known that transcripts were available for review should the participant request it. Heuristic research encourages such reflective activities as “affirmation of its comprehensiveness and accuracy” (Moustakas, 1990, pp.50-51). Two women asked for a review and I obliged. No changes were requested.

Data Analysis

I started my analysis by looking for themes within the data. Generally, there are three approaches one can take to elicit theme: (a) the wholistic or sententious approach; (b) the selective or highlighting approach; or (c) the detailed or line-by-line approach. The wholistic/sententious approach required me to look over each description as a whole and ask, “What phrase captures the fundamental meaning as a whole?” The formulation of such a statement expresses the theme (van Manen, 1990, pp.92-94; Moustakas, 1994, pp.120-133). Using the selective/highlighting approach I looked for phrases, sentences and or part-sentences that stood out and seemed to be “thematic of the experience” of identity, identity making and any subsequent estrangement (van Manen, 1990, pp.92-94;

Moustakas, 1994, pp.120-133). These were highlighted and used to isolate the themes. Finally, using the detailed/line-by-line approach I read each sentence or sentence cluster carefully to determine if it revealed anything about the phenomenon or experience of identity and identity making (van Manen, 1990, pp.92-95; Moustakas, 1994, pp.120-133).

Using these three techniques I read within each story and then across the collection, for reoccurring parts of stories, patterns of metaphor, details and narrative architecture in common to determine which themes deserved a “full-fledged” textural description (van Manen, 1990, p.106; Moustakas, 1994, p.133). I knew these essential themes because without them, the phenomenon would lose its fundamental meaning (van Manen, 1990, pp.106-109). van Manen (1990) describes the process of determining when a theme is essential as opposed to incidental to an experience by having the researcher ask, “is this phenomenon still the same if we imaginatively change or delete this theme from the phenomenon?” (1990, p.107). The example he uses to illustrate the process of determining if a theme is essential or incidental is the experience of parenting and if having children is essential to the experience of being a parent. To demonstrate, the researcher would try to imagine instances where the experience of parenting does not include children. The researcher would then turn this question around and ask, is it enough to have children to be a parent or is something other required? In this instance, van Manen concludes that having a mothering/fathering relationship to a child and being present in the child’s life is an essential theme of parenting (1990,

pp.107-109). I followed this same process in excavating the four themes I uncovered. I found that “making,” “taking care,” “paying attention,” and “up,” were essential to the experience of being a women from a working class background. A detailed discussion of each occurs in Chapter 5. These themes in turn influenced how these women took up education and any corresponding educative experience. I also discovered rhetorical nuances such as the use of above/below metaphorical structuring, laughter, repetition and episodic plot; these contributed to the overall architecture of their narratives.

In this process of determining the essential themes, I returned several times to the original data to ensure my analysis fit with the experience (Moustakas, 1990, p.51). Any account that omitted or contradicted these qualities and themes were examined and compared to gain affirmation of the account’s “comprehensiveness and accuracy and for suggested deletions and additions” (Moustakas, 1990, p.51). Another technique that was used during the study to affirm my findings was “Interpretation through Conversation” (van Manen, 1990, pp.97-100). This technique requires me to share my preliminary themes with the participant. The intent is to encourage a conversation during which I ask the interviewee to indicate what of their stories they think is most important in the light of the research topic (van Manen, 1990, p.99). At the end of each interview, I gave each participant a chance to ask questions of me while I shared the focus of the study. I also shared some of my findings up until the time. I then asked the women if there was anything they wanted to add or anything the reader should know about them given

their knowledge of the study's focus. I included their interpretations as part of the interview transcript. I repeated this same process of organization and analysis for each participant. Once all the individual themes had been gathered, I took these experiences as a whole and repeated the same process in order to discover, internalize and understand those qualities and themes of the experience necessary for depicting what the experience of identity/identity making is like for women from working class backgrounds, how this experiences intersects with their educative experience, if at all, and what they make of it (Moustakas, 1990, p.52).

I elucidate these qualities and themes and present different ways of thinking about the phenomenon through a variety of writing activities, the products of which appear in Chapters 4 and 5. These activities included creating (a) individual textual descriptions of each participant's experience; (b) descriptions of the core themes discovered from the interviews; (c) and a composite description which synthesizes the experiences of all the participants. In these exercises, I captured memories of their experiences and present them in a way that they may be taken to be the experience or possible experience of others. To keep the individual ever present in these writings, I included "narratives, descriptive accounts, conversations, illustrations, and verbatim excerpts" (Moustakas, 1990, pp.51-52; Moustakas, 1994). By ensuring these writings incorporate thick, rich description garnered from the interviews, I strengthen this study's validity.

In concluding the study, I also review what has emerged from these interviews in juxtaposition with my own consciousness (Moustakas, 1990, p.31).

Through this additional writing exercise, I sought to understand why the themes I uncovered during the interviews had been overlooked until now and what, of personal experience, may have contributed to its omission. This reflection is captured and included in my analysis.

As a final step, I created a *Creative Synthesis* of the experience. This type of rendering often takes the form of a narrative depiction which incorporates some of the actual data. Acceptable forms include poetry, story, drawing, painting, or other creative forms (Moustakas, 1990, p.52). Given the complexity of the various subjectivities brought to bear, I thought a memoir-inspired poem was best suited as a mode of response and another way of understanding the experience of identity, identity making and related feelings of otherness in women from working-class backgrounds. As such, I chose works like those by Sandra Cisneros' *House of Mango Street* and Ntozake Shange's *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf* as a guide for my response. Both works display the intricacy of one's subjectivities and allow space for conversation and departure. By working in and through the data in these ways, I create a multifaceted depiction of the phenomenon of identity and identity-making via the educative experiences of women from working-class backgrounds. I have included this synthesis in the study's conclusion, Chapter 6.

Limitations

While I made reasonable efforts to anticipate potential issues in the process of conducting this study, there are still limitations present in this project. The

research was conducted using qualitative methodology with a limited number of study participants. As a result, the responses of the women who participated are to be applied judiciously; “phenomenology always addresses any phenomenon as a possible human experience” (van Manen, 1990, p.58). It is in this way that phenomenology achieves universal, intersubjective, significance (van Manen, 1990, p.58).

In addition, I am present in the research as a participant. There has been much debate over whether a researcher should include herself as a site for research (St. Pierre, 1995; Glesne & Peskin, 1992). The researcher’s presence is integral in heuristics and I hope to deter argument, as by making such declarations, I acknowledge the limits of what can be known. Further, the systematic method of heuristics, the inclusion of other women from working-class backgrounds, the use of thick, rich description and explication—where I deliberately work to recognize my own bias—helps address issues of validity and reliability as a result of my inclusion.

Last, the data are dependent on memory and there are sociocultural limits to memory. Research shows autobiographical memory begins around three years of age and is directly related to developments in language, narrative, understanding of self and other, by culture and by gender (Fivush & Nelson, 2004, p.573; Nelson & Fivush, 2004, pp.486-487). This is important as it may dictate whose stories get told if they get told at all (Couser, as cited in Adams, 2008, p.181). In this way, these types of genres fictionalize life as by granting some stories text, others’

stories may be hurt or never heard (Adams, 2008, p.181). Continuing along this line, how these stories “get told” will also be impacted as narrative is situated within a culture’s language structure and social norms (Sewell, 1992, p.483; Rodden, 2008, p.151; Adams, 2008, p.182; Fivush, Haden, & Reese, 2006, p.1569; Fivush, 1998, p.486). That is, the telling of one’s story is never truly one’s own as it is always influenced by these larger cultural constructs (Fivush & Nelson, 2004, p.574-577; Williams, 2006). Too, one has to wonder if the call for participants doesn’t appeal to certain women over others. I do not think that the case here as participants were diverse in age, experience, educational attainment, family structure, employment, religious affiliation, heritage, demography, etcetera.

Summary

Using heuristics, this study explores the relationship between identity/identity making and educational experience in women from working-class backgrounds. It involves interviews with women from working-class backgrounds. Among these interviews my own experiences as a woman from a working-class background are included. These interviews led to a phenomenological account of the women’s experiences with identity. This account includes a depiction of what identity/identity making is like for these women as well as how they feel about their experience and what they make of it. This depiction has implications for women from working-class backgrounds as it seeks to illuminate the ways in which these women are constrained by class and gender (Fay, 1987, as cited in Creswell, 2009, p.62). This has implications for educators

and education as well as this study explores the ways in which these women discuss education and its influence on how they are identified and their life choices. Artistic forms for portraying the data are explored as means of simultaneously maintaining and creating verisimilitude of the experience for the women participants and the reader.

CHAPTER 4: PORTRAITS

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to recount the narratives of the women interviewed by presenting their stories through individual textual descriptions; such a rendition provides another vantage point from which to view the experience of growing up as a working class female. I am purposeful in my refrain of citing the literature in this section because I believe doing so would obscure the lives of those that have lived as women with a working class habitus. I save inclusion of the literature for Chapter 5 where I discuss in depth the core themes that emerged in these interviews and where the literature and I agree and diverge given my research. By presenting my findings in this way, I believe I keep the individuals and hence the reader, connected to the experience. In heuristics, this is key as to disassociate these women from their stories would return us to our fabled structures and not reflect of the experience of being a female from a working class background (Moustakas, 1990). Individual portraits collected and comprised in this way reflect the descriptive meanings that are characteristic of the experience of navigating the world as a female of working class heritage, particularly the educational space. They also present “the ambiguities and conflicting qualities that distinguish’ growing up as a working class female ‘from other human experiences” (Moustakas, 1989, p.61). To keep the women present in their stories, the descriptions include “narratives, descriptive accounts, conversations, illustrations, and verbatim excerpts” (Moustakas, 1990, pp.51-52; Moustakas, 1994).

Individual Descriptions: Discovering Alice

What follows are detailed summaries of seven of the twenty-one interviews. While I worried sharing only seven out of the 21 interviews would do violence to the women whose stories I didn't tell, I knew telling them all could yield similar cruelty: twenty-one individual narratives would do little to illuminate the experience of being female and working-class; rather, the reader and any single story would be awash in the deluge of so much data. Instead, I reconcile myself knowing that I do my best to present all their stories by incorporating them throughout the various modes of response, that is, in the discussions of the core themes, the composite depiction, and so on. Choosing the seven whose portraits appear here was difficult. Rather than "type" the women as that would be counterintuitive to the study's purpose, I chose seven women who span and thus reflect the diversity of my sample: educational attainment ranges from high school graduate to technical school, to holding Associates, Bachelors, Masters and or Doctorates; some are married, others are single, divorced and or widowed; some have children, others do not; some have careers outside the home, others are retired or are homemakers, ages of the seven chosen range from 30 to late sixties with every decade represented in between. Hence, my intent and what results concur; a conglomeration of distinct yet harmonizing narratives that add to our understanding of what it is like female from the working class.

My recreation and effort to stay true to the text and words of these seven women is purposeful. Keeping with the spirit of heuristics, I have an obligation to

these women to maintain the integrity of their stories by reproducing them in a way that reflects how they shared them with me. To use my words to describe their experiences and or critique their accounts would defeat the purpose of this study and reduce them and their lives to the “structures” and “categories” spoke of in Chapter One would defeat the goal of heuristics: to lay bare our experience without qualification. You will note I attempt to avoid both; however, to avoid redundancy with what will be relayed as part of the core themes, I have organized these individual textual descriptions to relay who they are and how we met, the artifact they shared, the meanings they make of these items, their lives and how gender and class intersect with their educative experience, attainment and aspirations. This should give the reader an ample depiction of these women, their stories and the time, place and mind of which they were told and received.

Morning Star

Morning Star and I talked by phone one late April evening. Morning Star—her given American Indian Yaqui name—is 50% Mexican American, 50% American Indian. Morning Star spent much of her formative years in East Los Angeles with her 2 younger brothers, her maternal grandparents and her mother. Morning Star’s parents divorced when she was only two so she identifies her mom as a single mother. Her mother was diabetic which had a profound impact on the family. The disease led to many hospitalizations, blindness and eventually her mother’s early death. It and her mother’s single mother status forced the family to be split much of the time. Morning Star stayed with her maternal grandparents

more than she did with her mother while her middle brother stayed with their mom; her youngest brother went to live with their great grandmother.

Despite her illness, Morning Star describes her mother as “very fun” and “active.” She loved to dance and sometimes Morning Star and her brothers would wake to men serenading their mother complete with “a whole band.” She told me stories of when her mother would take them driving. Her mother would drive the car “really fast until the car was like lifting us off the street”—a “roller coaster ride:”

I’m, like, ‘We can’t mommy.’ She turned around and...back then there were no seatbelts. Oh my god! Yeah. It wasn’t a good idea, but oh my gosh we had, you know? She was that kind of mom. She was just like a fun kind of mom.

Sometimes for entertainment they would drive around and look at “really pretty homes”—there was one she recalls with a “lit-up waterfall...at the stairway.”

Morning Star tells me she had the best of both worlds growing up: the balance of a fun-loving, free-spirited mother and “very old fashioned, very strict Catholic” grandparents. She remembers her grandmother praying a lot and was the one she credits with teaching her to clean and instilling her with morals. At one time, Morning Star considered becoming a nun and didn’t abandon the idea until, as a high school sophomore, she thought she might like children of her own one day. She also tells me that although she met him a few times, growing up she had no

need to know her father and never did; a sentiment she still holds today. In her estimation, her grandfather had fulfilled that role in every way and did it well.

Morning Star's grandfather worked as a carpenter for the movie studios building sets for popular seventies' TV shows. Morning Star recalls spending much of her childhood on movie lots. Her grandmother worked in banking and succeeded as an executive assistant to one of the bank's vice presidents. Her mother worked in the "medical field" as an office worker, unit secretary and then a pharmacy technician at the local hospital. She got Morning Star a job at that same hospital and eventually in her department where Morning Star also trained and then worked as a pharmacy technician.

Morning Star attended and graduated from the Catholic school system. She attended a co-ed elementary school until the eighth grade and then an all-girls high school for grades 9-12. She graduated high school at 17 and attended a junior college—LACC, Los Angeles Community College—with the dreams of becoming an x-ray technician. Soon after graduating high school, Morning Star's mother remarried and moved to Riverside. For a short time, Morning Star followed. Here, she met her now ex-husband, whom she married at 19 and consequently dropped out of her community college program. She spent some time telling me about him and how she came to marry him. Before they had married, she had meant to leave him: for another love, to return to college, and to return to Los Angeles where she found comfort with her grandparents and enjoyed

the vibrancy the “city” had to offer. However, a night of broken resolve led to an unplanned pregnancy:

He came down one time and me like a dummy, I slept with him but one time—you know what I mean? I slept with him that one time I got pregnant...and...in the 70s [you can't] just [get] pregnant and not get married. We were talking it was '76...I got pregnant. I cannot believe I was pregnant. Just one time and I got...It wasn't the first time we had sex...but I hadn't seen him in months, you know what I mean? With the one time that I gave in, he came down and I gave in and had sex with him, I got pregnant...So yeah and that's how...I ended up going back and marrying him. I didn't even want to get married, but because of our background and it was a thing to do back then... you didn't raise a child by yourself and out of wedlock. So...I moved back and I got married. And then I ended up being married for almost 20 years. I can't [sic] stand anymore and I left.

Hearing she married her husband out of social pressure and wanting to do “right”, I confirmed her mother and aunt were single mothers and asked how they existed given the time period and its social pressures? She told me what made them different is that they had married and then divorced. In fact both had remarried and divorced many times. She had also felt compelled to marry because of her grandparents:

...I think they wanted more for me, you know. My grandparents were really hoping that I was the one....that was going to school...they did so much for and then that happened....I know I really broke their hearts...but...it was like “Yeah, you’re going to get married” type of thing. It was expected that I was going to get married.

Morning Star tried to return to school once her three children entered elementary school but her husband discouraged it. He made it very difficult for her to attend classes and would accuse her of having an affair. She blamed this on his own lack of education and worldliness: he had never graduated high school, never moved from the town where they lived and disagreed with the notion of paying for an education. Hence, she had to pay the tuition for their own children to have the same private school education she had been afforded: “He was...very controlling and very jealous, and I think he was scared. He didn’t want me to better myself....I think he felt that if I bettered myself I will [sic] leave him, which I did anyway.” Fed up with her husband’s verbal abuse, she left him when she was 39.

She returned to Los Angeles and reenrolled in a pharmacy tech program at 40. Now in her late 50s, she has completed the AA she began many years before as well as a BS in e-Business and recently, just finished her MBA from the University of Phoenix. She had wanted to pursue a degree in one of the newer psychologies but since the program was no longer accredited thought it better to pursue a degree that would have greater acceptance. I asked her what her grandparents thought about her educational attainment since leaving her husband.

Only her grandmother had lived long enough to see her earn her Bachelor's, but she confided on the whole that they were proud of her and they, like her, saw education as a means for getting ahead, making an income and taking better care of oneself. I asked her if she felt this was the reality of what she had done. She told me she thought so, but more importantly that she had earned respect at her workplace; she is a Product Manager at a large managed care organization. The company she worked for had recently suffered layoffs and she was "kept." She thought this and her latest assignments were a result of her MBA:

I would say definitely I'm getting the respect...they kept saying 'Oh she got her Bachelor's' [and I'm like] 'No, I got my MBA.' And they were like 'What?'...I think they were shocked...I noticed that they started giving me different kinds of projects...Different...more financial ones...I think because they realized I could do more and now...I know even my VP—I think he knows. I think they told him because he's telling me to read like the...from other competitors and do an analysis...he knows that I'm capable of doing a little bit deeper type of thinking...opposed to...the others that are there. So...I know, I think it has earned me some respect.

I asked Morning Star why she thought earning a degree cultivated respect. She explained,

I think because they see that you started something and you completed it, and you've just chosen to educate yourself because there's a lot of people who never just want to educate themselves. They're very happy with

where they're at, so they don't seek out to learn anymore, better themselves, and you know, that's fine. That's what they choose to do but...then there's a certain...there are individuals who feel...you need to keep learning; no matter how old you are, you need to keep learning...even though I'm done with my Master's I'm trying to think of what's my next adventure? What do I want to start next?...I think it's just who you are as a person that you have that drive in you, and that not everybody has that same drive to learn or desire to learn and I just do. I just love to read and to see what else is out there to learn. And I don't think everybody has that drive in them.

Towards the end of our interview Morning Star returned to this desire for lifelong learning when I inquired as to what was the one thing she thought would be most important to tell people about her. She told me she's arrived at a point in her life where she is "striving to figure out...where God is going to lead me next...what does He have in mind for me to do next?" After attending a spiritual convention in Las Vegas where she felt a lot of energy in her hands and had her "aura" picture taken—the picture was blue and green, reflecting the communication and healing energies she tells me she has within her, respectively—she believes her future may be as a healer and thinks her next venture will be healing with her hands. This coincides with the object she chose to share for our interview: a picture of a flower with its aura. She believes that while she didn't know her father or his parents very well—progenitors of her Yaqui heritage—the picture reinforced her

connection to her “Indian roots spiritually and intuitively” and connected her thoughts on angels (See Appendix E1).

Our interview concluded with my asking her if she thought gender, ethnicity or class had influenced her life course. She dismissed ethnicity stating she never felt discriminated against because of her heritage. She did feel gender was significant and explained she had always associated herself with “learners” and that women were now realizing the innate power they had through education and would soon surpass men in the corporate world. She felt women made better CEOs because they are flexible, better-rounded and “know how to interact with people.” I asked if anyone influenced her growing up and she again recalled the nuns who she described as beautiful, independent women who figured out their calling very early and were at peace with their decision. I asked her if there was a nun in particular and she told me of Sister Rosalie. Rosalie was a good friend of Morning Star’s mother’s and had been a surrogate parent for many of the girls at the Catholic high school Morning Star attended. Sister Rosalie had since left the nunnery—not to get married and have children as one might think, Morning Star explained, but— to pursue what’s she’s doing now and what she wasn’t able to do as a nun: a counselor for imprisoned teens. As for class, she felt being working-class was a benefit as education, particularly private education and its importance for the future had been stressed by her working-class upbringing. If you were willing to work hard enough—a quality she didn’t think her middle class friends had—you would be successful.

Christine Ellison

Christine and I met one midday afternoon in mid-May at a fast food restaurant in the downtown of a large metropolitan area. She chose the location so her three year old son could play in the restaurant's play area while I interviewed her. He visited the table for an occasional French fry and sip of his drink while we spoke. In her phone call responding to my ad, she was sure to assert she was the person for whom I was looking for my study. She told me, "I need to tell you my story" as if my study would not be complete without it. She began our meeting telling me about her husband who teaches at the elementary level at an upscale private school; the two had had a conversation about what it took to go back to school to get an advanced degree. She had wanted him to return to school. After asking me about my experiences, she relayed their conclusion: "He's like 'I just have no time for that.'" She returns to her husband's conclusion about schooling later on but then confides it is different than her own.

Christine is a 40 year-old Mexican American woman, wife and mother of two boys, 7 and 3. She works as a unit secretary in a local hospital and has been in healthcare for 20 years. She grew up Catholic but left in her 20s to become "Christian." Her "born again" spirituality comes early in her interview and is peppered throughout as is her descent.

Christine's earliest memories of her parents are of their work as migrant workers. Her mother worked summers in a packing house doing seasonal work;

her father, eventually took on “blue collar jobs,” working as a welder, etcetera, until now 40 years later, he holds the same position as a heavy equipment operator for a largely agricultural city in California. Christine describes it to me as a place to “pass through.” This sentiment of “passing through” or being passed by is echoed throughout her story:

Well it was not a city life, but yet it wasn't country life either. I think people often think of it as right in the middle of LA and San Francisco. So people pass right through it to get to different cities. They usually think it's more of agricultural, which it is; it's pretty big agricultural area. So I felt like growing up—grew up more in the rural areas, and outside of the city limits you might say not too far out, but a little outside the city limit. So obviously we grew up with more agriculture and things like that.

Her family's work had an impact on Christine. She tells me about the “vacations” she and her family would take:

...it was really hot, like the summer times, like we would actually go—my dad would take us out to go work out in the fields; just train us. It wasn't really that we needed to, but he would...[take a] six-week vacation, usually take a six-week break in the summer from his job, and so what we would do is he would take us out to work out in the fields to do what he used to do...it was definitely hard work picking grapes. That's what we did. And it was hard work but he would always tell us afterwards, “This is not what

you want to do for the rest of your life. You want to graduate high school and get a job in a building” [laughs].

For Christine, these “trainings” were the times she felt her family was the closest and what kept them close; she points to a picture—the object she has brought me to describe her is a collage of PowerPoint clipart she’s put together for our interview—of a woman in kerchief picking grapes (see Appendix E2). This, she tells me, reminds her of her mother. She proceeds to tell me about the other pictures she has chosen--a saluting soldier against a flag backdrop for her father--but relates the image back to her mother’s strength: she was young, married, pregnant and alone. Christine’s father was at war and did not see Christine until she was 8 months old.

...that’s always something they talk about often in my family; just about...my mom and what she went through at the time with her...a young married woman having a baby and not having a husband there. So she talks about—she’s definitely a strong woman. That’s what I see my mom as.

She continues telling me how her grandparents were older and her mother also took care of them.

She then begins to tell me about her relationship with her father but prefaces it with her mother’s qualification that Vietnam had changed him. He returned an alcoholic, which Christine first tells me didn’t affect them, then says it did, but only emotionally as if this is of lesser consequence; besides, “he was a very

hard worker, so we were always provided for. We always have things. He was always there, but emotionally, he wasn't there." When pressed for an example of what that meant, Christine told me,

...I think it was more like he was never a hugger or never really said "I love you," but he would buy us things to show us that he loved us. Like, he would work hard. Like, okay here's—we have groceries, we have things, you know, new TV, anything like that...he provided for us, so that's how he showed his love and he still does that to date. But he's a little more affectionate...especially with his grandchildren. He's very affectionate with our boys.

I proceeded to ask Christine if her father's lesson had had the desired effect on her. It did but she didn't feel school had provided the resources she needed to get out beyond the "fields:" "school just didn't really provide much...I just didn't see like they really wanted to help the students go above and beyond. It was just get through. That's how I always felt through school." I asked Christine if this was located at any one point in her life. She tells me elementary school was tough. She worked hard, got good grades and was picked on by the older, less successful girls. High school was a time when she just didn't care much about school. At this juncture, Christine felt she was on her own. Her father had only gone as far as the eighth grade and her mother had never graduated high school. Neither could help her with homework; this was coupled with many of the girls in her community—as early as the eighth grade—getting pregnant. Her father did

recognize the risk and as Christine tells me, “protected” her. He prevented her from wearing black, gang symbols or “certain ways” that suggested the “teen parent lifestyle.” Still, she continued to drift toward the “wrong crowd.” Christine tells me she continued to recede during adolescence partly because her inability to measure up in her parent’s estimation to her “gifted” sister and partly because of her loner status in high school. She had one friend who she credits introducing her to the party scene. This friend was two years older than her but had stayed back a couple of grades. Then, in 11th grade, Christine tells me something “clicked.” She attended summer school, made up necessary credits to graduate on time. Christine was the first in her family to graduate from high school. At this point in the interview, she begins to cry. I asked her why it was she has become emotional. She tells me it’s from her wanting her family to be proud of her and her having to work harder than “some other people” as “a minority and a woman.” I asked her to recall specific instances in her life where she remembers feeling this way. Her recollections takes me to her meeting with her counselor when they started to ask her what she wanted to do after high school, around the 10-11th grade. Note this time period corresponds with when she told me she became disengaged. She tells me she had always wanted to help women: “well my dream was always to be—I always wanted to help women in some ways. So I always wanted to be a doctor but I never thought that was possible, or a psychiatrist.” She had no role models and the only women she knew who went on to college became nurses or teachers.

When she met with her counselor's about her future they never offered college as an option:

...when I sat down with the counselor, it was like "So what vocational school do you want to go to after high school? Like technical program would you like to go to?" There was never...they never even gave me the opportunity like 'Where do you like to go to college?' like try to encourage me. "Where do you like to go to college? If you do, this is what you need to do." I never really had that.

Christine's school was overcrowded; many kids sat on the floor until students began to "drop out." She didn't see many of her schoolmates go on to college. Those that did entered the city community college—a junior college—which she tells me was too much like high school and she dropped out after a couple of semesters to work part-time at a rental agency and MacDonald's. Christine's dropping out was in line with her father's belief that anything beyond high school was unnecessary: this message was reinforced as she had to pay the tuition for the classes she took. Her father felt she should not aspire to go any farther in her education and should stay in her job. After working for two years, Christine entered a 9 month secretarial training program where she learned medical terminology so she could get a job she "would enjoy." This new skill set translated into a job at the local children's hospital—a field she stayed with. It was here where she first reported seeing women who had four years degrees and her befriending of one was what motivated her to continue on and earn her AA:

I had a friend—really good friend. She was my age and she had a four-year degree. She was an RN and I really believed she influenced me...she believed in me...I would talk to her about maybe I would become a psychologist and I already have my, you know, thoughts of a dissertation of what I would do and I felt like she really believed in me, like she really believed I could do that; like she never gave up on me and she would always encourage me, and she was there at my graduation too with my two-year degree.

While she's lost touch with this woman some seven years ago now, she tells me she has other positive role models who have diverse educational experiences that she has interactions with through her church.

I went on to press her more about her families' stance on education. Her gifted sister earned her AA in Business Accounting. Her son, Christine's nephew is the second from the family expected to graduate. While her sister is encouraging him to go on to college, Christine's father thinks it should be second to a job:

...he actually did have a talk with her about my nephew like "He needs to get a job. Why does he have to go to school?" It's okay to go to school, but that should be like something in addition to working. You shouldn't just go to school. So that's kind of how it's always been even whenever I took classes. My two year degree, it took me a long time because I work full time to go to school and pay for it the whole time.

I asked Christine what her mother thought of her schooling. She told me her mother just wanted her to be happy. She tells me her husband is supportive of her going to school but wasn't when they were first married:

I think he grew up pretty much with his mom—a stay-at-home mom—and I think that's what he kind of figured but at that time he was going to school as well to finish his teaching credential. So it just wasn't the right timing for me. But I think I remember that day I was kind of not happy when he said, "Well it's not the right timing. You're not going to go back to school yet."

It took five years of marriage and working full time to make her way back into school. Her education had starts and stops from then on as she balanced family life, pregnancy, moves from one state to another and a full time job. Now she attends school but does so online. She knows she could do better if she had the chance to focus on school but relinquishes her chance at success for the opportunity to go:

"Well I'm taking online classes. So that's...it helps I think...It works around my schedule, but I don't—I feel like I'm not—I could do better. I'm still averaging Bs but I know I could do better if I didn't work or didn't have the responsibility."

Most of the people she works with are pursuing their RN and only remark on their surprise of her pursuing a BA in Health Administration. She has plans to pursue her Masters in non-profits next as she would really "love to work...in healthcare, non-profits, hospice, maybe?" She is still hesitant to enroll: she considers how she will juggle schedule come fall semester—"I should be working part-time and my

little one would be in pre-school and so [I would] have more time on my hands.”

But she also remarks that she need to do some volunteer work and to “get her hands in other things” to try to get her to the “level” she wants “to be at.”

I asked Christine what it was that kept her going despite all the stops and starts and lack of support from her family. She originally thought her life was destined for the ministry, but no longer. She is meant to help more people than what she can affect in her small church. Doing so requires more of an education than what she has now. She believes it will give her the confidence she needs,

“...maybe it’s confidence, it’s knowing that I could make a difference, or I—maybe that’s what it is. I really don’t know...my husband and I had this conversation yesterday at the dinner table. He’s a school teacher but he has his Bachelor’s and for him it was just—college was not an option; it was basically you had it. The way he [his dad] was a military officer and in the coastguard. So he grew up very differently than I did. And so it was—that’s just what he did after high school; he went to college, and for him he loves his job and he says, “I’m not going to just get a degree just to get a degree. Why work, do the work when it’s not going to change anything in my life?”...Like he loves his job; he’s going to stay there. He doesn’t want to pursue administration or anything. So we’re just both a little different I guess. Maybe I’m just, I don’t know. We’re just different. He’s usually pretty easy-going and just goes with the flow. I’m just different.

I ask her where she got her drive and she tells me her family; especially her parents whom she describes as “very, very hard workers.” She bases it in class and believes if she works hard, she’ll achieve the American dream: “houses, the cars, you know, savings or retirement. My dad, he’s going to be 62 and he’s going to—he’s 60 actually, he’s going to retire already at 60.” Her mom too taught her early about choices and the “life” she could choose: one being teen motherhood like that of her aunt, cousins and the other girls in her neighborhood. When finding the right guy and marriage didn’t work out, Christine saw school as a way of “choosing her own destiny.” Christine is the first and only in her family to go as far as she has academically. I ask her if she has any regrets for the choices she’s made thus far, particularly those involving her education:

I think once I got into the working world, I got stuck because of the money I was making at such a young age and I couldn’t let that go even though I still continue to go to school, but that was secondary. It was never first. And so my job was always first. I had to keep my job and work hard. And so I think I regret getting stuck in a job and I’m still doing the same thing after 20 years. And I do love it; I enjoy it. But it’s not—I don’t feel like it’s making a difference especially now that I’m getting older and start to see why I haven’t really—I know I have, you know, I’d make a difference, you know?....I want to make a difference in society.

She believes a Masters is essential to letting her go to where she wants to go next: either start her own non-profit, a business or working at the executive level. She’ll

stay in the medical field she tells me because it has been a part of her life for so long now.

I ask her again about her inspiration and she tells me of another woman friend, a single mother with whom she consulted on how to balance her responsibilities as a mother and work with school. Christine has found the hardest thing has been “not having enough time to really...studying and...working on projects: things like that. I would love to have more time.” I ask her if she sees other ways in which gender has influenced her life course and educational attainment: she notes her school experience of mostly women occupying elementary teaching positions and men, middle and high school. Her mother reinforced the notion of women staying home to care for children by never really holding a fulltime job nor finishing school herself. She cites class and being a minority as influences too. Class reinforced the message she should finish high school for the purpose of getting a better job than one without that educational success. When I ask about ethnicity she exclaims how excited she was that a minority was elected president. This she believes is evidence that you can do anything if you work hard. This is the same belief she hopes to instill in her boys by introducing them early to the importance of a good education. A benefit of his husband’s job includes a tuition waiver for her two boys to school where they might not otherwise have access. Throughout her narrative and here too, she makes her definition of a “good” education known: only that which can be got by attending a private institution:

I know my 7 year old talks about being a basketball player, but I usually tell him...we talk a lot about different college. I do talk to him about like MIT, different...Harvard, things like that like to get him to believe he could go. Like that's where an Ivy League school that's my dream for him, but I don't know what's his dream but he loves obviously computers and video games, and I try to encourage him that he could do something with that.

Christine is determined to equip her sons in ways similar to her experience—working hard—and ways in which she was not by providing “practical” guidance for her sons’ futures.

Celia Toscano

Celia learned of the study via a list serv and invited me to her home for home cooked Italian lunch on an early May afternoon. It is Friday and only Celia and her pets are at home. Celia house is spacious, meticulous and decorated in a way that communicates a life of affluence but not overreaching opulence. The house, located in a well-heeled neighborhood, is carpeted, furnished and painted white. It's where she, her dog, cat and husband of more than fifty years have lived for more than thirty years. As she shows me around her house I am struck by the many artistic pieces or varying media displayed, stacked along walls and or tucked behind furniture: there are photographs, pencil sketches and oils all of which she composed. She shows me all of the pieces and as she does, narrates telling me their subject, impetus and or what she would like to change. She takes a lot of art

classes at the local senior center but longs to have private instruction where she can grow her skills. In the spare bedroom she locates a journal which she shares with me; within is a selection of poems she wrote in her early thirties as a young mother returning to college (see Appendix E7b-e). Some are on the original scrap paper on which they were originally penned; others are rewritten on the journal's pages (see Appendix E7 c-e). She began writing poetry as part of a creative writing class she attended and continues writing today. This and a picture of her smiling as a young girl are the items Celia chose to share with me to help illustrate her life (see Appendix E7a).

Celia is a 68 year old Italian American transplant from large industrial city in New York. She is first generation American. Her mother and father are from Sicily. Her heritage figures prominently into her background and although she never says it explicitly, I glean from her interview that her father has some connection to organized crime. Both her parents are now deceased; her father shot at an early age by the "union people." I tell her I too am from New York and knew people in construction. She confirms my suspicion with, "you understand." The picture she shares with me is of a 3 year old Celia (see Appendix E7a). I ask why she chose this picture and she tells me,

...the reason why I took it out is because it is the foundation, and I personally believe that people are born with innate qualities of their own—their individual; had nothing to do with your parent or the environment you're going to grow in. It's just something that you're born with.

Everybody has their own. You can call it a soul, whatever you want to call it. And you're either one of these that takes life very seriously and views life seriously and is very sensitive to everything around you or, you're a happy-go-lucky person. You're either one way or the other and I know because I have uh children and I could say one was born so absolutely carefree and what made the difference? He has the same parents. He was raised the same way. And the other one—the middle one was very serious and always worried about things and, you know, with those eyebrows together? We call it the one, uno—was a uno....”unibrow.”

Believing selfhood is somewhat predetermined; she continues to explain what happens after that “really molds you” and the person most responsible for that molding is your mother. Celia had a strained relationship with her mother and like some of the other women I interviewed, tells me her mother had “mental problems.” This theme was common among the other participants and manifested in their mothers “not mothering” or taking care of their families as the daughters thought they should.

So I know that you're born individual, but what happens to you after that point is what really molds you; that you have a loving mother—the most important person in your whole life is that person that takes care of you from the moment you come out of the womb. And the way you're held, the way you're talked to, the way you're picked up when you're in distress, the way, you know, you're fed and all your needs are taken care of—those

are the primal needs. If you don't have that, it establishes...a mistrust that you don't trust whatever—whoever's watching you is going to be providing for you, keep you safe, keep you warm, keep you fed. So I think that from that time on when you begin to realize a lot of your environmental things, you know? I don't know. Maybe it's--maybe it is from infancy and starting from then. I don't know when it starts. I'm not sure. But I do know by the age of three you've got it figured out.

Celia tells me what is special about this picture is she is smiling and this is the last time she remembers the smile being truly genuine. I asked her why she stopped smiling at this age. She tells me there were “too many...things going on that were not nurturing” but she couldn't remember all the incidences enough to tell me anything specific. All she remembers is that there wasn't much “joy” from an early age so she didn't have “much of a reason to smile:” “It was more...built-in apprehension of what's going to happen next to me.” Uncertainty for the future and mistrust of others are common in the narratives of these women.

Celia recalls her mother as a “sick person” and she now diagnoses her manic depressive. She excuses her mother's behavior partially too by her mother's upbringing. She omits details but suggests her mother's childhood, heritage and extended family had a part to play in her mother's mental illness. Her mother could be good one day and the next, would do something “shocking” like run away from home. I asked her to elaborate and provide an example of her mother's “shocking” behavior:

...my father used to put us in the car crying because we didn't know what was going on. He had to go out look for her, or throw herself down the stairs to kind of get the attention. You know people like that cry out for attention to get help, but unfortunately you're living with ignorant people. They want to keep it secret because it's an embarrassment. It's a shame. And in those days it was much more of a stigma to have someone that had uh manic depression or whatever because then people thought you were crazy and you can't be trusted, so they weren't inclined to tell or get help. So that my father had to live with. So a lot of times his way of dealing with this was to go off with his friends so he wasn't around.

While "taking care" is explored later as a core theme—it occurred in every narrative—it's important to note here too as Celia reasons her not having a "normal family" as why she always felt like she had yet to find out where she belonged. In the following excerpt she relayed her walking to school with a girlfriend and how she used to admire how her friend's mother would give her daughter fresh bread, warm milk and a clean, homemade "hanky" every morning before school. Celia had none of this "nurturing" growing up.

And I always admire that because I didn't have that. I had to get up and take care of myself. So if I ate or didn't eat, who cared? And so I used to envy the way they had. I was enthralled by what I'd see. It's like being on the outside watching the family dynamics in the inside, and I'll tell you that followed me through my life. And so I used to watch and say "This is what

a normal family...” although I couldn’t emotionally admit that I was not normal. I wasn’t living a normal life. So it’s always like something missing. Always like feeling that you belong somewhere but don’t know where, and that’s what happens to you when you don’t have the nurturing. You see what I mean....it must be like people who are born and uh throw them out in the streets and they don’t know who they are, where they belong, or nobody cares.

Celia was adrift at an early age and while she didn’t talk about school creating the same experiences for her, she didn’t talk about their hindering them. Her primary years did little to contest her experience at home where she told me she was always nervous:

...the more you start to feel that the world is unsafe and who can you trust and what can you do, you know? And I didn’t—at that age when you’re a child, you do not know you have choices. You do not know that eventually you’ll get older and make choices. You don’t know. So I used to get very nervous because I was always apprehensive about what’s happening next.

Once her nervousness caused her to stop menstruating—thinking her pregnant, Celia’s mother to spit in her face: “she...condemned me....and I swore I would never tell her a thing again, and I never did.” Isolated and taught from the beginning that her body was not hers but for having children in the “right” way, with the “right” man, Celia knew from an early age that she was destined to be

married, and married young. Her father reasoned, what good was an education for a girl? A girl should aspire to marry as well as she could. As Celia tells it, “he didn’t think [college] was necessary because all you’re going to do is get married.” Further evidence that her body was not her own, her Italian culture and strict working class father determined who she would marry and when. At this juncture, school became subordinate and Celia notes her grades began to decline.

I started to fail. I went from a B+ student, perhaps maybe even more because I skipped a grade when I was in grammar. I could’ve done more and I didn’t because I was starting to get preoccupied with uh while everything was going on and saw my life as so totally controlled that I started to lose interest in school. And long about that time my husband came into my life.

Celia’s marriage was arranged. Her father had hoped Nick—the beau he selected for Celia—could provide a better life for her as opposed to the boy she was interested in who came from a family who worked construction liked her father. Nick’s family owned the neighborhood store: “He thought...he’s got a little money to pay for her.” Celia’s father forced the marriage to the extent that her threatened to kick her in the stomach until “she wouldn’t be good for anybody” if she refused to marry his choice for her husband. After a failed suicide attempt, Celia acquiesced and was married soon after she turned 16. At this time she quit school.

When she was 18, Celia convinced her husband to allow her to earn her GED and take a class here and there. Her husband didn't want her to go to school as he saw it as a "big threat." I pressed Celia to tell me more and she explained, he thought I was getting restless and that I wouldn't stay home. You know, "stay home" was the keyword and don't forget it came from the same kind of family; the father was the dominant factor and whatever he learned in the parenting and...husband roles, he learned from his father and his own situation. And so he wasn't happy about it but he took me down there. I took the test. I got it. So I said to him, "All I want to do is go back a little at a time. I'll take one class and see how I do." [I took] one class. By that time I had children. I started having children"

It took Celia nine years to earn her BA in Social Work with an emphasis in Gerontology; she struggled every one of those nine years to finish. Nick didn't concede to Celia taking classes until she threatened to leave him and take their two year old son and the baby with which she was seven months pregnant with her. Fed up with being lonely and living in the apartment they rented upstairs from his meddling parents and his parent's store, she called her sister-in-law to sit with the kids while she went to the movies: "He didn't want to listen to me about being independent." I asked why she didn't leave then. She tells me she almost left him three times during their marriage but always, like in this instance, stayed for the kids as she "didn't feel confident enough to be able to do it." I asked her why she felt that way and she situated it as a circumstance of her earning potential: "At the

time I didn't have my degree yet. I was working on it. Took me nine years to get it...I didn't think I'd get a good enough paying job to support...myself...and three kids. It's not so easy." Celia also explained that her marriage commitment made her husband come first. She on the other hand didn't enjoy the same status as he, like the other men she knew—his father, her father—put others, not their wives, first,

I'd have to consider his feelings above all, and it was what marriage vow is. That's what I understood it to be....I just felt as though it was going nowhere...I was living a kind of separate life than him and I got used to it, and I never expected him to understand that...things I wanted or felt in my heart were not things he understood. You know, and I think you could get very lonely and that's what probably happened.

She saw a psychiatrist but as he was not female, working class and Italian, he couldn't understand her life and what she battled. She had a lot of rage, she tells me, because someone could "control everything you do and feel." She continued to press her wanting to get an education and with this, Nick allowed her to return to school; nevertheless, he made her pursuit very difficult. She took night classes until the kids were all of school age and she could attend in the day. Often he would come home late from work knowing she would have to rush to be on time for class; sometimes he'd be so late she'd worry she'd make it at all:

he'd come home late and I'd be running out that door...he would...make belittling remarks like "You can't even wait. Your hand is on the

doorknob. You can't wait to get out of this house"...he did everything he could to break me down and my spirit, so I'd say, "Oh, I'm not going to go." But I used to cry on the way to school and I was going, and that's what kept me going. It was defying the fact that they didn't want me to become a person, and that's when I first learned that you had choices. And I also learned how to say the "F" word.

She was expected not to let any of her responsibilities as a mother lapse. Kids needed to be fed, bathed, etcetera all before she could leave the house:

Nothing interfered with the family. I was there for the meals. I did the shopping. I took care of my house. I did the laundry. Took care of my children. If the kids were home sick, I stayed home. I did my papers home. If I had research, I did them while the kids were in school. I did it all around the family, and so...I made sure he had no complaint.

She told me how she worked to ensure the kids wanted for nothing. She was determined not to be her mother, nurture her children, give them a childhood and still have an education. Even still, her father offered to pay her to stop when he couldn't understand why Nick couldn't order her to stop. The men reasoned she was stubborn. Celia tells me it was always her desire to learn things as she had a natural curiosity. She also felt school would quell the loneliness she felt:

This little spot that I was in in this house can't be the whole world. There must be more....when you're isolated, you stop thinking and you start feeling everything, and you can't be just feeling everything. You have to

have something going on intellectually to stimulate thoughts, and that's why I went to school.

She tells me too that school and the friends she made there filled her "empty spaces." Conversely, in the same breath, she tells me she was lucky to stay home with her kids. She and Nick lived separate lives: he working at the family store, she at home with the kids. Much of this she reasons is to blame for why she thinks she inherited some of her mother's craziness; the craziness she feels balancing being a wife, mother and person. She describes her dislocation as,

I used to describe it like people walking in your head in high-heeled shoes...walking back and forth...crazy as hell, but I wasn't going to show it. I was going to be normal and I was. They didn't even know I was nuts. So when I looked at things and didn't look to people in the eye always looked and said "You really don't know me. You can't see me behind my eyes because you don't know me" and "I can't tell you."

At 40, Celia and Nick gave up the family business—he was unable to compete with the larger supermarkets—and moved to the Southwest. Celia worked outside the home for the first time. Eventually disenchanted with social work she continued her education, taking some classes in art—recall all the art work stacked against the walls that I saw when I first arrived—and yoga which she appreciates for its physicality. Admiring her cooking I ask if she has taken cooking classes as she had told me earlier her mother did not teach her how to do anything; she had always been on her own. She reaches to the top shelf of the bookcase in

her kitchen and pulls down a cookbook held together by rubber bands. “It is more than 50 years old,” she exclaims. I mention this cookbook because it is symbolic of other life excerpts Celia shares with me regarding her approach to learning. Throughout her life she credits what she sees as her break from a traditional path because she was always looking to try new things and was brave enough to learn them on her own. In the fifth grade she selected a book on child psychology from the public library. She wore many hats in the social work arena too, from establishing Alcoholics Anonymous programs to running nursing homes: all things she tells me that require her to be flexible and practical. Taking risks and following natural curiosity is how she taught herself to cook; she applied this same directive throughout life.

Ursula Manders

Ursula responded to an advertisement I posted on the bulletin board of the coffee shop she frequents on her way into work. She is the 52 year-old daughter of an ex-marine turned loading dock worker and a homemaker. She is the last of three children and as she tells it, was a surprise. Her father was 45, her mother 40, when she was born. She attributes her parents advanced age as the reason for their strained relationship with her. Our in-person interview lasts two and a half hours; it’s an afternoon in the middle of May and we sip coffee as we talk in the shop she frequents every day. Ursula is one of the participants who contacted me in the days following our time together and submitted thoughts in continuance of our interview. While she didn’t bring her artifact with her, she sends it along with the

aforementioned additional fodder in an email a few days after our interview. The image, called “common bond” is “‘common’ brick laid up in running bond” (see Appendix E3). It is a traditional bricklaying pattern. I ask why she chose this as her artifact. She explains,

I saw a whole lotta bricks as a kid. My elementary school (now demolished) was a late Victorian brick building, with big double-hung windows, oak flooring and gobs of lead paint. The factories near our home were also big brick monsters (now demolished...there seems to be a pattern here...). Anyway, I’ve always felt ordinary, prosaic and expected to be dependable...like hard-fired clay.

She spoke a lot about architecture and noticing buildings well before she went to school for urban planning and architecture. She describes them in such detail that it’s easy to reconcile her current occupation.

Ursula, once a registered nurse, now works with her husband. Together, they own a small architectural firm; further significance of the object she shares. Although she never divulges a title, her description of what she does leads me to believe she is an office/project manager/draftsman. She handles client accounts, manages the other architect they employ, some sketching, etc.: “I do drawings, I do design. I do reports. We do a lot of...reports. I do the bookkeeping because you know, it’s a small firm. The wife always does the bookkeeping. Yeah. I empty the wastebaskets. I mean...I clean the bathrooms.” While she has advanced degrees in urban planning and architecture, she is not a practicing

architect. She explains to practice as an architect, one needs to register which entails sitting for an exam. I ask many times throughout the interview if she will ever sit for the exam and she waves it off as taking too much time, costing too much money, and not really worth the effort, but someday she'll take it. It's been more than twenty years since Ursula completed her academic program.

Ursula grew up in Milwaukee and her family has a complete cast of colorful characters. Her mother and her mother's siblings were "farmed out" to various relatives after her mother, Ursula's grandmother, and then alcoholic father abandoned them. As Ursula tells it, her grandfather was "one of the more stable members" of the family and "he was a truck driver for the mob." She attributes her mother's clouded childhood as the reason for what she recognizes as her mother's bipolarity. In one part of the interview she tells me her mother was both physically and emotionally "abusive" and a "borderline personality." While she was a stay-at-home mom she was more a maid than anything else: doing laundry, cooking, cleaning house but was only slightly better at it than the mothering she provided—which in Ursula's estimation was nonexistent. Ursula describes her mother as smart; smarter than her father and she thought she could've done more with her life if she had not been limited in her ambitions. She often "pawned" Ursula and her older brother off on her older sister: an aunt who Ursula recalls as eccentric in her own way and "voracious for any sort of whack amole theory out there"..."she wasn't a stupid woman but she, she wanted to believe so much." This aunt would take them by train into Chicago for a day of shopping and lunch;

she often shared her theories and issues of the National Enquirer with young Ursula.

Ursula's dad, a Marine turned loading dock worker, "didn't have a lot of emotional depth" and Ursula offers this as the reason he withdrew from the family: "it would've taken a lot of something to deal with my mother." He also didn't take risks and would have been "absolutely content to have been hired on to a job right after the Marine Corps and died in the job." I ask her for any specific memories of him and rather than recall an incident she recalls something of his nature: "...he wasn't a big sharer, but he believed in the predictability and certainty and stability and—which is strange because his childhood was anything but...certain." Her father really doesn't resurface in her narrative until much later when she talked about his shepherding her across country when she moved:

I was under the impression that I was going to be driving off alone. It had never occurred to me that this would be a problem for my parents. I just didn't think about this being a problem that this 21-year-old woman would be driving cross country by herself.

While he occupied the seat, he didn't do much more and she was surprised even then by his lack of connection: "we were in the car...for like three days and ...sharing a hotel room for like two nights...you would think in a moment like this...in a healthy father-daughter relationship that maybe there would have been some conversations about life."

Our interview includes her memories of childhood which for Ursula are sparse. She relies on her one and only friend from high school to recount her high school years: “I don’t remember interactions with people very much, probably because they weren’t terribly satisfying.” The memories she does have are more about places and the one she can recall and does relay to me is a time when she went into the woods looking for the “little fairy city” her brother told her about. I asked why she chose this memory to share with me:

I spent so much time there...I was intently focused on what I was doing...that I was really, really looking at these trees and rocks and that dirt and those leaves and those...because I thought...it’s the emotional excitement of, “Ooh”....”Ah!”...sooner or later, I’m going to find the little fairy city.

I ask if she can localize this feeling of excitement to any other aspects of her life and she connects it with her current profession:

Occasionally if I’m really lucky...what I’m doing now is at least close to what I want to do. If I’m trying to find the—a solution to a little problem, what we do is mostly find solutions to problems in given constraints, and then you have to find something that works, you know. But if you—If you do that, then you really get into it; and you start playing with things; you start moving them around. Sometimes that feels like that. If you’re lucky.

I press Ursula further because I’ve heard from all of the women interviewed that they too experience this sort of lose yourself excitement when they take up things

to learn. I'm curious to know what drives them. Few women I interview can attribute this trait to a particular person but Ursula does and it is to her eccentric aunt. She's "the only person who ever shared...the sort of childlike" "glee" Ursula does:

...she...loved...we used to go to the Museum of Science and Industry; and even though she was at this time...a woman in her 50s, she would still have this glee...making the plastic dinosaur; or seeing what new exhibit was; or turning a little wheel and seeing the ball bearings...bounce around....I don't know if she really did or is she was doing that for my benefit"

She saw little of her aunt after her move away from home at 21. She shares other memories, particularly school and learning experiences. Teachers didn't like her as she says, she had a "bad attitude" but some really hated her and she couldn't understand why. She talks of an Advanced Placement Math class, where, coming from a "working class neighborhood...it didn't take much to be in the smart class." Math and school came easy; so much so that she often did her homework in her room the day it was due. She also would be caught not paying attention, doodling, reading "trashy" books her aunt had given her. The instance she recalls for me involves her being called to the board to solve a problem. Despite not paying attention, she gets the problem correct and irritates the teacher "because I could at least have looked guilty...but just seeming flippant and like, 'No, I don't have to pay attention to you because I know how to do this shit.'" This same teacher is the Honor Society advisor. She recounts another story where she rips

up the application form and with him watching, throws it into the wastebasket near his desk to make the statement that she wasn't a "grade-grubbing, club-joining, glee-club-singing, pom-pom waving tool." It's important to note the memory is not her own but one told to her years later by her friend who remembers the incident: the same friend who served as memory for her elsewhere: "Sherrie said that she was like, 'Ah! I can't believe you did that'...." "I can't believe I did it either, but I don't think she would've lied."

There is one teacher she did get along with and she credits him with understanding "kids better than most teachers;" interestingly enough, he is also the only teacher that ever gave her a C which she admits she deserves. She recounts her conversation with him when she learned of the grade:

"Ah, okay, I got a C. Okay yeah, that's fair. I screwed up on the test...I just wish I didn't have to go home and drag through my report card."

Because if I'd gotten a B, I could've lied and said, "Oh, I just missed an A." But a C, you're kind of screwed.

This memorable class—Educational Participation in the Community, or EPIC—taught life skills like how to get an apartment, how to buy a used car, things her parents never talked about at home:

...it was fascinating. Like, "What's it like to get an apartment? What's it like to...date?" I remember him talkin' about, "Oh God, I got a lousy job, and a lousy car, and a lousy apartment and women don't want me. So go

to school, get an education. Get a good car. Get a good apartment or you're never going to find a woman."

Other lessons she learned at school were darker. She recounts an incident where a popular girl rebuffed a teacher's criticisms: "...if you keep abusing me, I'm just going to...go kill myself." The teacher's response was unexpected by all, and appreciated by Ursula and the popular girl:

No. People like you never kill themselves...You want somebody who's in danger of killing themselves...You know Ursula here is the sort of person who could kill herself," and I thought, "How did I get in this conversation?"

Ursula then remarks to me of how the popular girl reacted as being one of her clearest memories:

I remember this clearly. Sherrie didn't even have to remind me, but um I remember the look in her eye was sort of like respect. Sort of like, "Wow, I didn't realize you were like a tortured soul"...it's bizarre because this person had never noticed me before but suddenly I was a person of interest...this made me—lifted me in their estimation because no longer was I just this quiet strange person, but I was this "interesting" quiet strange person.

Ursula graduated high school in "74...and that was not a good year economically." As a result she and her classmates had their view of the world colored: they needed to find a career that could guarantee employment. This

drive, the lack of money and the need to make money led Ursula to scoff at an offer Wellesley extended to her to attend in the fall for being a National Merit Scholar.

...I got a letter from Wellesley. I remember this. Saved it. Because my mother couldn't believe it. I got this letter from Wellesley inviting me to attend the fall, you know, 1974 or whatever class...and I...had to look up Wellesley and I – I looked up how much the tuition was, and where it was, and I, I thought, “This is like inviting me to go to Mars and have a sex change operation.” It's like the most absurd thing in the world because the tuition then it was like three times what my father made in a year, and I remember thinking, “Why the fuck do they do things like this when they know,” I mean, ah, ah, ah, ah....It's like yeah send me the cash and I'll think about it.

It's here where Ursula learns of her mother's professional choice for her daughter. The state and county in which she lived heavily subsidized a three-year vocational public program for nursing:

It was a free ride, essentially because it was a job training program to supply worker bees for the county hospital...they...were so incredibly generous...it's just tantalizing...easy way out...for...the kids who didn't have money. You couldn't resist it because it was so easy...this low-hanging fruit.

She didn't want to be a nurse but reasons her plan to be an astronaut didn't work either as she said; she was "lacking the Y chromosome." In fact, she talks often about male and female identities. When talking of how she played as a child, she had definite notions of what is masculine and what is feminine. Too, she preferred to play with the boys rather than the girls as they were much more interesting. Boys played with bugs as girls only talked about boys. Other gendered discussion around play included her playing with Barbie dolls: "I...quickly decided...Ken was gay...and I had a G.I. Joe, and that's the one that Barbie preferred...they would go on missions together...that involved...throwing them off the roof with parachutes, like I would do on a regular basis." Regardless of her aspiration or inclination, her mother pressured her as she thought her daughter would always have a job if she was a nurse; however, even then, Ursula knew nursing wasn't for her. To afford school she participated in a work study program. While others did rotations she worked in the AV room cleaning the machines. Even later, she chose non-social jobs like assisting in the operating room where patients were sedated and she wouldn't have to talk with them. She rejected the "touchy-feely stuff" and didn't "interact well with humans." She explains her feelings about the ill fit:

...my mother determined...I needed to go to nursing school...because you can always get a job as a nurse. Every time I hear somebody say that to some young person, I want to go up there and slap them hard across the head. It's like, "You can always get a job as a hotel maid." You can always get a job shoveling shit in a barn, but that doesn't mean you should

do that. Um, that and also because it would make me a better person, you see that whole...I don't know why she thought this. It's sort of like, "Okay, you're going to take this square peg, stick it in a round hole but yeah, that's going to improve things. That's good for everybody...."Ah, well, okay, I guess it would enable me to get a job and move the hell away from home."

After graduating with her nursing degree, she was required to work for a period of time in the county hospital to which she was indebted. After, she used her skills to secure a position half way across the country. She used these nursing jobs to pay the bills and her tuition for her BA in architecture and her MA in urban planning. Ursula received her MA in her 30's while married. "It was hell" is how she described driving more than three hours to spend three days away from her husband living in a dorm room with another older female.

Katherine Street

Katherine and I met at a locally owned coffee shop close to a large university campus. Katherine is a thirty-three year-old doctoral student who learned of my study via a list serv. She is originally from the southeastern United States and her Southern heritage surfaces throughout her narrative when describing her family. It first appears in the item she chose to share with me. It is a picture of a quilt her mother made for her when she was a young girl. The quilt and a stuffed bear adorn her bed today (see Appendix E5). The quilt is special to her for a few reasons: (1) her mother included her in its making by taking her

shopping for the pieces; (2) it demonstrated how her mother always wanted to “learn things and sort of experiment” as it was the first and only time her mother quilted; (3) it’s making was a Southern expression of love for one’s daughter.

Katherine grew up between two households. Her parents divorced when she was young and her mother remarried by the time she was two. She lived her entire life in what she describes as a small, “one...caution light town” north of a medium sized city in the southeast. Her father and his family were farmers and on the weekends when visitation was allotted to her father she remembers spending time with her grandfather “Pop-Pop” doing farm chores and quiet times by herself shooting hoops on the dirt into a wire hoop her grandfather fashioned to the side of the barn. Her relationship with her father was limited as he’d pick her up every other Friday and drop her off at the family farm under the care of her grandparents: “I’d see him at meals, and then at night when I slept in the house, but that was really it.” At weekend-end she’d return to her mother and stepfather. She describes her father as functionally literate as while she thinks he graduated high school, he does little more than read the local paper, checking obituaries: “I think he could probably write some; but it’s pretty elementary.” Her father was twelve years older than her mother when they married.

Her mother did office work in the county extension office. This office assisted the local farmers by teaching growing techniques and other services that supported area horticulture. Her mother, at the urging of her mother, married Katherine’s father when she was only nineteen. Katherine’s maternal grandmother

was dying of ovarian cancer and concerned Katherine's mother would have no one to take care of her, pressed her to marry:

...her mom had cancer at the same time...her dad was leaving her mom and was with someone else. So my mom's mother...told my mom...she should get married because she needed to be taken care of and she wasn't. I guess my grandmother wasn't sure that my mom would be taken care of otherwise...

Katherine credits their twelve year difference in age as the reason the marriage broke up. An interesting note, a few of the women cited large—ten years of more—difference in age between their parents with their fathers always being the elder parent (Katherine, Amelia, Chloe, Celia, Lily, Lydia, Anne; Anne, Celia and Anna Maria noted marrying men older than themselves, too). Katherine's mother married a second time shortly after the failing of her first. Katherine reasons her mother married him to conceal her single motherhood status—nineteen with a child in tow—and for the financial security marriage affords.

she had me really early in the marriage, like right away and then she was divorced. So she was on her own, like 19 with a kid, moving to a new town...that's a pretty tough situation to be in, and so he if he was nice to her at all...I think...she felt desperate...some of it might have been financial...she'd already made, like what – I mean divorce is.... not something that somebody would, that our family would condone

doing...she had already made...one... mistake. She wouldn't want to make another one.

Katherine and her half-sister Laura thought for sure her mother would leave him when Laura graduated but she has yet to leave. Katherine was very close to her mother and this, she tells me, was often a source of jealousy for her stepfather who was "really, really abuse" "like everyway abusive" towards Katherine.

Katherine attended private school more out of Southern practice to protect her from "racially charged situations" and it was the reason her parents sued her father for child support to afford the tuition. She found it ironic to pay for a school where, as she describes it, the students were nothing more than rich kids on drugs but it was here, Katherine began to play basketball. Her team's lack of skill caused her to be a stand out and in turn, offered her a way out:

...other coaches in the city started noticing... recruiting me to go to their schools...as I was talking to them I realized, "Like oh my gosh...I could have a way out here,"...so I started, I mean I made good grades and stuff. So I just started putting two and two together and realizing...okay, I got to get out one way or the other, and basketball and grades like offered me, sort of, some, some like hope for freedom; some independence. So I...worked really hard, and I ended up getting a scholarship.

Katherine, an exceptional student and basketball player, was offered a scholarship to the naval Academy but turned it down for a smaller school. Much of this had to

do with stories female plebes told her about hazing and harassment as it was around the time of Tailhook:

I had a lot of offers and one of them was the Naval Academy, and yeah it was a really great opportunity, and I loved the school. I loved the academic excellence of it...I loved everything about it. Except that I – they sent me on two visits there, and on the second visit, I got to talk to some female plebes, first year students. I talked to them – this was right around the time of Tailhook – and so I talked to them...about harassment and hazing... they said it was pretty bad, and...I couldn't handle any more of that. So I was like, "I'm not going there." So I ended up going to a small school...But it was basically just to get, to get out. That was my...initial thought...I needed to just get away.

Katherine received a B.S. in Communication after transferring credits from the English degree she originally was pursuing. While she always wanted to teach English at a university, her mother convinced her to switch because of the degree's impracticality. In her mother's words, she couldn't do anything with an English degree unless she wanted to teach and what if she didn't want to teach? Her degree would be pretty much useless as a guarantor of a career:

I wanted to teach English like at a University for a long time. I mean, since I was 16. But my mom, my mom asked me, she was like, "What are you going to do if you get this English degree and then you decide you don't want to teach? You can't do anything with an English degree." And so I

was like, “Uh, alright.” So I... transferred all my credits to communication. That’s what it would transfer to most easily and so I got this sort of nothing Bachelor of Science in Communication degree and did like marketing for I don’t know, three, three years and then ended up deciding, “No I really want to teach.”

With a degree in Communications, Katherine taught middle school English for six years. She taught classes that focused on reading and writing. It was here that she had an epiphany which caused her to return to school for her M.A. in Professional Writing and eventually to the English Education doctoral program within which she is enrolled in today. She is a first year student taking classes in language and literacy.

I started realizing...the way that I was teaching writing wasn’t the way I wrote myself, and, so I just started experimenting...I started...writing more...it was...cathartic for me...I started sharing it with my students and... the more I did... the more like a sense of voice became important to me...not only for me, I mean I felt silenced for a long time...But it...was important for my students too, and so I went and got my masters in professional writing because I wanted to write more and I wanted to learn. I wanted to...learn from the inside out so that I could teach my students...that’s what become more important to me than anything else... just that people wouldn’t feel or be silenced. That they...would always have a voice...no matter what situation they’re in

This is important to Katherine and comes up several times throughout her life in both her family and in school. She often felt stifled by the abuse she suffered. I asked her to elaborate on the abuse she experienced at the hands of her stepfather. She told me her mother didn't acknowledge it until a few years ago—much too late in her estimation—and her stepfather has never acknowledged let alone, apologized for his cruelty. Since she used school as a mechanism of escape I ask how her parents feel about her educational accomplishments and pursuing her doctorate. Her father doesn't understand why she has left home as he believes her role is to stay at home and take care of him. Her stepfather, worried his daughter, Katherine's half-sister, Laura might visit Katherine, has threatened Laura with disinheritance if she visits. Katherine is the first in her family to go to college and one in a handful of family members who has finished. The women in her family are proud of her accomplishments and several have come to visit but her relationship with her mother is strained. Her mother has yet to visit her at school. While her mother is proud of her, Katherine is upset her mother has taken so long to express her pride at her daughter's achievements. She doubts her mother will come to her doctoral graduation as she believes her mother will be too afraid to leave her stepfather even if only for a few days.

...she's proud of me. Which is weird to say, but...it's funny to me.

Like...for a long...for most of my life, I've felt like everything that

I've...with academics and athletics...I got...lots of recognition at lots of different levels, and none of it was ever good enough...I needed them, I

needed them to say, “That it was good enough,” and then they didn’t. So, now – now as an adult, and like when they, when my, like my mom will go out of her way sometimes to say...that she’s...proud of me or if I talk to her about being...stressed about a presentation or something, and she’ll just, she’ll talk about...oh how great I’m going to be. But it, I don’t know, it’s weird. It feels off almost... just because it’s like it, like it wasn’t, I mean and I, and, like and I know that my mom loves me. But it’s almost like...I don’t need to hear it from her now. I needed it then...

She talks about being driven—many of the women interviewed did; however, unlike the other participants, while they spoke of wanting to please, few made the connection between drive and need to please as Katherine does. Further, she locates her drive in wanting to please her parents: “I always wanted to please them, you know. And I never could. And I kept trying. And I think part of it is just probably just sort of my, like my personality.” To add further illustration, Katherine compares herself to her Aunt Nancy. She describes Aunt Nancy at length throughout her narrative. Aunt Nancy is one of Katherine’s mentors and a supportive female family member. Not all the women interviewed had them; Katherine did in Aunt Nancy and in an English teacher, Betty P. in high school: “My aunt, my Aunt Nancy is...like a go-getter and like sort of a free spirit too...she does her thing...I like her a lot.” Katherine also found solace in her educational pursuits and her spirituality. Both provided a way out of her abusive

home life. She always wanted to go to college but it really didn't seem a reality until she saw she could earn basketball scholarships if only she kept her grades up:

I needed out...I needed to be independent...I needed to be financially independent. And so I needed the scholarships...high school education...was about that...

Once in college she found her passion. For Katherine, like many of the women, they experience a "high" with learning. This excitement is coupled with their desire to help people. Katherine found this connection and meaning making in college when she chose to take up English and teaching:

in college, there were really things...that I loved and wanted...like English and teaching. I mean some of that I think was probably...left over from high school and maybe before that...there was a sense of...this is really what I want to do...because I enjoyed it and because I want...to help other people and I want to work with them...sounds really corny...I really do love...I don't know anybody that doesn't love learning...the discovery process is...pretty incredible... the more that I get in...the further I go...the more I love it...the more that I realize...I think it's part of the whole doctoral process, right? The more where you realize, I know nothing and there's so much to know...there's a whole world out there.

I ask if she if she can recall an earlier incident in her life where the thrill of learning overtook her. Despite her 8:30 bedtime as a senior and her abusive stepfather

disallowing anything in her room, she would risk getting in trouble and potentially more abuse if she got caught.

...the first time... when I was growing up...I was like a senior with...I'm talking like eight, 8:30 bedtime. It was, it was bad. It was bad. It's still light outside, at 8:30 you know...I couldn't have anything in my room. I remember...trying to take the towel and... put it over the door so they couldn't see the light...I'd try to like turn on, I had a little TV and I'd try to turn that on. Or I'd try to turn like a little flashlight on and read a book or write in a journal...all of that stuff ended up...getting taken...I couldn't really write in a journal or anything... in college, in that Sylvia Plath class, once I started reading her poetry...the darkness...really...resonated with me and... with the abusive situations that I've been in...it was...just something...where the stuff...I was reading about and writing about really got under my skin. And in a way that mattered in my life, in a way that I needed.

The experience was one that spoke to Katherine in the place she occupied. She spoke of her spirituality similarly. It provided a different look at fatherhood than what she had experienced; it spoke to her and gave her that ah-ha moment when one sees differently than they had before:

I was just floored that there...would be a father like that. Somebody that...I might cry...I just couldn't believe that there would be a dad like that...somebody...like when, you know when the prodigal son... runs

away and he sort of shames the family...that the dad would like go...chasing after him...if that's what... God was like, then...I knew I needed God...in some way it...helps me make sense of the stuff...that happened to me.

Her belief in God helps her place the arbitrariness of her abuse. Many of the women interviewed expressed the sentiment that the universe was unpredictable and unfeeling and they were merely swept along in its capriciousness.

Sylvia Butler

Sylvia and I met at a popular coffee house in the downtown business district of a large metropolitan area. She saw my advertisement on the shop's bulletin board. She recently withdrew from her Ph.D. program in Linguistics and is working as an administrative assistant for an attorney. Sylvia, who recently turned 30, has only lived in the city in which she now resides for a year. She has bounced back and forth between Northern Minnesota and Colorado. Her extended family still lives in Minnesota. She was born and raised there until her family moved at 12. She returned to Minnesota for graduate school. She lived in Colorado from 12 until she graduated high school and prior to moving for her current job as an AA, worked as an adjunct at the Colorado School of Mines. The attorney she works for was her high school debate coach.

Sylvia's mom was a hairdresser for 22 years and changed professions in juxtaposition with the family's move to Colorado. At 57, she still works as a teacher's aide for handicapped kids. Sylvia's father worked in a furniture and

countertop manufacturing plant. Her pride is evident as she tells me he makes furniture for hotels and made the countertops for Starbucks. Once he spent a week in the office doing some drafting which he still talks about to this day. He now spends his days on the loading docks and has worked his way up to manager, in charge of shipping. They have a strained relationship in which Sylvia tells me her mother “would be like totally mean” and describes her as critical of her father. When they fight, Sylvia would get pulled into the middle as mediator. After one of these volatile bouts, Sylvia’s dad would leave and be absent for several days. While Sylvia recounts her parents’ marriage and those days, she begins to cry. “They were just really unhappy... my mom was lost and feeling unappreciated...and away from her family.”

Both Sylvia’s mom and dad were farm children. Her parents, Sylvia’s maternal grandparents still have a large working farm. Her paternal grandmother had a “hobby farm” with chickens and the like. Her maternal grandfather worked for the railroad union and some of her most memorable times are spending time with him and the boyfriend of her mother’s sister: “[he] was so much like my uncle...from the time I was seven of eight...he always ...building decks and...doing all this manly...Minnesota stuff when I was a little girl...hanging with the...men a lot.” While her extended family still resides in northern Minnesota she hasn’t had much contact with them since moving away at twelve. She’s not sure but she thinks her father might have suffered abuse or perhaps there was alcoholism in the family. She knows he wanted to get out of the lifestyle—part of

the reason for their move. I ask her to tell me more about her extended family and this illuminates their deviancy: “They’re troublemakers...trashy...been arrested for drugs and DUIs...gotten girls pregnant....the oldest son...who would be over 60...lives in the woods with all these junked-up cars around him...probably buries his money in the ground...they’re weird.”

Sylvia is an only child and she reckons that’s why she “got a lot of attention, usually.” At this place, still early in her interview, she comments she would have noticed her family’s lack of money if she had other siblings.” She got to do lots of things like take swimming and gymnastics lessons, but noticed finances in other ways as going on a road trip or going camping as family vacation was “a really big deal.” She claims they never went out to eat save the Tuesdays her mother worked late and her father took her to Taco John’s for 25¢ tacos. While her family didn’t have a lot of money she remarked the “farm kids” with whom she rode the bus were poorer than she. I asked what led her to that conclusion and she shared a memory of an invention contest she competed in. A farm kid invented “some type of hay bailer” while Sylvia created a roller skate holder. She recognized them too through their clothing—they were “drabby” and once she recalls one of those farm kids wearing an old coat of hers her family had donated to a local charity.

She describes her family life as stable in that her parents have remained married and she has been afforded many opportunities despite her parents’ meager income. She attended youth groups and other church related activities but wasn’t

religious. She attributes her attendance in these activities to living in a predominantly Mormon community at the time. She tells me she feels like she had this “idyllic childhood that doesn’t happen anymore. It was safe to ride bikes and run the neighborhood and play outside all day.” Sylvia believes kids’ lives these days are far more structured than hers, as she was allowed to be a kid. Sylvia had two close connections growing up, her mother’s sister, the aunt referenced above and her friend Rose whom she befriended when she was six. She is still close with them today. While few of the women talked of having friends, when they did, they seemed to be an alter ego for these women. Sylvia and Rose’s relationship was similar to that of Ursula and Sherrie. She describes Rose as “hustle bustle all the time” whereas Sylvia was “a lot more calm” and liked her “alone space.”

Sylvia loved school and likened it to her “job.” She didn’t talk much with her parents about their jobs and so, she reasons, they didn’t ask her about hers. She does nevertheless credit them with helping her with homework and getting her good teachers up to a point. She had an influential teacher in the second grade who recalls as “awesome.” School was tough and the discipline strict. They had piano time and would sing songs every morning gathered round the piano. She and her friends coveted the “Super Bee Award” that two students could earn at the end of every week. They were challenged to read books and crafted a caterpillar that lapped their classroom multiple times—each body segment represented a book they had completed. Sylvia was “among all these really, really smart kids.” They were “competitive” and “willing to learn anything” and “work hard.” Her teacher

would keep her afterschool to work on math not because she wasn't good, but so she could be "challenged and even better." Her mom had a hand in her schooling too as her mom was "handpicking" her teachers all the way. Her mother would learn who the best teacher at Sylvia's grade by grilling her clients as they sat while getting coiffed in her hairdressing chair. School was valued and she remembers her parents helping with homework until it got over their heads with algebra in the eighth grade. Sylvia recounts too that the kids in her school were so cared for that another classmate was in her Ph.D. program, many states away from their home. The fact that they had run into one another after all those years was a "one in a million kind of small world" and testament to the way she was taught, particularly because it was a "small, working-class" community. She thought it rare such a community would produce one "scholar;" two was extraordinary.

Consequently, life changed for Sylvia when her family moved to Colorado. After a particularly harsh winter of tires continually going flat from the cold and not wanting to "be stuck in small town America forever," Sylvia's dad decided to move the family. They were the first of the family to do so and the years before they saw improvement in their lives, "those years in between, were particularly rough." From then on, her parents' arguments got worse and Sylvia "shut down." She describes herself as becoming "more shy" and "awkward" because everything seemed "huge" in Colorado. Junior high was awful. Teachers seemed disconnected and she no longer felt challenged. Despite these difficulties, she earned all As in high school, save one B.

She reflects back on the “good” teachers that she had and now, years later wonders what kept them teaching, much like she feels now. She describes herself as self-driven and has been grade obsessed much of her life. I ask if there have been any influential people that inspired her in her educational pursuits. She attributes no one but thanks one high school teacher for telling her not to be so grade obsessed. It wasn’t successful she laments as she proclaims herself a perfectionist who “really wasn’t good at anything, except getting good grades.” She returned to Minnesota to attend a Catholic college yet she wasn’t Catholic. She admires the community but “the religious part of it” wasn’t there for Sylvia. She received a lot of financial aid to pay the tuition and was drawn to English classes despite being “really good at math and science in high school.” She earned her B.A. in English but saw no practical use for it. Feeling like she wasn’t “done,” she returned, taking up a graduate program in Letters and Competition. Her parents didn’t see the use in such a degree. She thought it was better than some of the “English-y” choices and still thinks so as “studying literature is really pointless:” “how many Shakespearean scholars, you know, how many jobs are there when you’re done? Not very many.” She thought about law school but the thought of the \$100K tuition bill foreclosed any further consideration as it was an “impossibility.” Sylvia then claims she “lost” her way as the “practicality” of it all eluded her. Her studies had her delving into “bigger questions” like “Who am I?,” “What am I?,” while she barely subsisted doing “slave-labor” as a TA making 14,000 a year. For seven years she “lived on a graduate student’s salary.”

Focused on co-authoring a book, the loss of her advisor, teaching class, sitting reading and taking notes for her dissertation with no real project to work on—she utters she wouldn't have had the time even if there was one—she came to the realization that graduate life and academia had been totally romanticized. She was sick of being poor and of professors with the “assumption that everything's hunky dory...you can go to school for the rest of your life if that's what you're really passionate about.” What they had forgotten, coupled with her losing her way, left her feeling like “there's a point where it's just like, you're not really contributing anything to the world by studying these obscure things that no one understands.” She now finds herself disparaged, with no degree, unable to stomach the university politics and unable to translate her pedigree into a job. She has neither the “in” knowledge for these jobs nor the connections.

This had led her to the administrative assistant position she now holds. She likes that she can “turn off” her “brain when” she “goes home at the end of the day.” Too, that it is just her and her boss as she works by herself most of the time and couldn't tolerate a big firm and being around all the “pretty,” “judgmental” people who would comment on what she was wearing. She might try to pick up a few classes teaching as an adjunct. Looking back, we joke as she tells me, if she had to do it all over again, she “would've taken the blue pill” and erased her life as she regrets “not creating...the stable life...you're supposed to...go to college...get married...have kids.” She tells me she had been “resisting” all those traditional trappings all her life and now feels as if she's missed out. We close our

interview talking about how she feels out of place as she can't find people interested in the high theory and other things she has been taught over her graduate career. She misses those intellectual conversations. She shares the item she brought to further illustrate her life story. It is her high school class ring. I ask her why she chose this item and she proceeds to tell me how her dad wanted her to have a class ring: for him, "graduating from high school was a big deal...I think about how many years I was in high school...lame...not even a milestone...but really it is...for my parents, it was." She regrets her parents not seeing her graduate—she's never participated in any of her graduations and so they have never been able to celebrate that together. In closing, I ask what her parents thought about all her degrees: "I don't think they really understood it. I think they wanted me to graduate from college and move to Colorado and have a job...I don't think they were happy about me...taking off and going to graduate school." They are happy she finally has a job and is working.

Barb Robinson

Barb saw my posting at a popular coffee shop. We met at said coffee shop on a Sunday morning where we sat outside sipping coffee and talking over her life. She responded to my advertisement she tells me as she was interested in the research, and women and careers in general. Barb is a veterinarian. She is one of two women out of the 21 who has completed her doctorate. She splits her time between working in the veterinarian industry, consulting for pharmaceutical companies—she no longer practices and sold her clinic—and volunteering for a

large benevolent organization that supports the advancement of women in her field. Currently women average 80% of all veterinarians; this wasn't so just a few years ago she remarks. I ask what she attributes to the change. She mentions pioneer women and then asks did I know that veterinarians make nowhere near the money medical doctors and dentists do? Did I know too that those professions are occupied largely by men? It seems animals lack capital too as more women than men are drawn to caring for them. But it's also a cultural thing Barb explains. It's more than caring for the family pet. You have to see yourself doing this job in the field and caring for the animals' whole well-being. She treats all animals, horses, cows, cats, exotics, she goads me, "you name it." Growing up Barb raised the family dog, chickens and rabbits.

Barb is originally from Minnesota. She was adopted when she was two weeks old and shares her parents with an adopted brother who they've raised since he was about five months. Barb knows her birth mother. Growing up, there were distinct differences between the expectations her parents held for her and those they held for her brother. She was expected to clean the house, he to care for the yard. But as school was esteemed, she often used homework as an excuse to get out of her domestic chores. She hated cleaning.

Barb's adoptive parents were both custodians. Her father "was head custodial engineer of a high school" and Barb "thought he had a very prestigious job." I ask why she thought that and she tells me whenever there was a break-in at the high school, by vandals mainly, he would go in the middle of the night "to

board up the windows,” “clean up things” and “check things out.” On the first day of school they would always introduce the principal and the teachers with some applause, but when they introduced her father, “the kids would raise it up. This was the guy that kept things going.” Barb tells me she has total respect for people who clean up and “keep things going” (yet she confesses she doesn’t ever really see the people she hired to clean her office). Too, her father was always there, interacting with the students. Her mother was a “janitress” at the local grade school: she chuckles and tells me her mother’s job wasn’t nearly as stressful as she didn’t get called out at night as there wasn’t much vandalism at the grade school level. Her dad would talk of boiler rooms and maintenance stuff, her mother of how messy the kids were and cleaning dirty toilets. In Barb’s mind, her mother’s job didn’t seem nearly as glamorous; plus she only worked part-time: “Well, she was part-time too....I knew the difference between part-time and full-time.” It wasn’t until the middle of high school, beginning of college that Barb realized her social class.

Barb’s “parents were very adamant about the importance of education.” They thought it would grant her better opportunities than what they had. Her parents were both Catholic: her mother a convert to the faith. She went to Catholic grade school, high school and college because of her parents’ faith and because “they knew what public schools and public school kids were like.” To her disappointment, her school “mixed” and became coed when she was in eighth grade. She was bullied in school mainly by boys she recalls because of her name,

their uniforms and for being “pretty good in school.” She had many friends but none that she singles out by name. She also participated in Girl Scouts and the school and church choir. She would have “participated in sports if they only had swimming.”

Barb was the first in her family to go to college. In fact she knew of only one cousin who earned her Associates in nursing and her brother, who also earned an Associates. She, like most of the women I interview, always knew they were going to college. While some say they’ve always known, Barb has known since the eighth grade that she would attend college:

I was really good in school...and I like to please people...it seemed to please my teachers immensely, and pleased my folks that I was in school.

And I thought, “Why, this is something I can do. I’ll just keep doing this. In high school she was placed in honors classes but missed her friends, some of which were in the general class for kids who “were not very bright.” She felt bad about leaving them behind but made new friends in her new classes. Barb excelled in math and science but she tells me she doesn’t think it unusual her being a female as many researchers have said women were scarce in science and math, particularly from Barb’s generation. She is in her late 50s. There were other girls good at math and science too and in her class. She was also good at writing, languages and memorization. Her favorite assignment she recalls in high school was creating a budget in which she had to live on \$100 per month. Her brother excelled at sports; she did not. She also wasn’t good at the “artsy-craftsy” things. She

corrected her brother's homework; her mother expected it of her. Sometimes she got into trouble because she would let errors slip because she didn't feel she should have to do her homework and his. Too, realizing she would need scholarships and grants to go to school, she began applying in high school and in her last year, worked part-time through to college graduation. In her early college career, Barb had really wanted to be a Marine biologist but thought that would require more schooling and hence more money, there weren't many job prospects—particularly considering she lived in Minnesota. It's an interesting career aspiration too as many of the women interviewed aspired to be a marine biologist when they were young.

Barb participated and won ribbons at science fairs throughout her schooling. In fact the family chickens were leavings of one such event, embryos she raised for one of her projects. Her father got her the embryos; being the janitor, he had access to the science lab and had taken the school's supply. I ask if her parents have ever supported her in her education in other ways as she lived at home while attending college. They helped as they could, but didn't really understand the work she was doing. They also didn't understand her need to study. They would have a bedtime for her but she would have to stay up. They never seemed to understand that in college, you're "never done" studying:

at college...there is this whole concept of studying for a test. And my parents got that okay...you get it done, they're done. They had no concept of what it takes for studying for long term. Really, you're never done...I

lived at home during college...they had ideas of when my bedtime should be, and I wasn't done studying. And I said, "Well, I have to study." "Well, aren't you done studying?" "Actually, I'm never done"...I realized they didn't have that concept.

Barb found college difficult. It was the first time schooling didn't come easy and she had to study. She even had to retake some classes like physics as she knew GPA was important to earn gaining acceptance into veterinary school.

In between her Bachelor's and her veterinary program Barb took time off to earn money to pay for the program she was about to undertake. She also worked throughout college for animal clinics, various veterinarians and the university itself. She made friends with the janitors there and they often supplied her with the leftovers from university events so she'd have something to eat.

After practicing as a vet for four years, Barb decided to return to college and get her MBA. She wanted more opportunities than what the discipline itself offered. She wanted to do research, work with pharmaceutical companies and other veterinarians: things that could impact millions of animals, not just the few she could work on in her practice. In fact, she relocated to the state she lives in now as a result of a national chinchilla re-habitation project she participated in. She also serves on several national advisory boards including the philanthropic organization I recounted earlier.

Barb is married but wonders whether or not her husband really appreciates her. He only finished high school. He is currently on disability and while he

manages some family farms back in the Midwest, could do more to contribute to their marriage. She suggests he could clean more as she supports him fully. She even gives him an allowance. It's a strain on their marriage. Another excerpt from her life that she shares with me is the book she brought as the artifact to help describe her. It is a book her father gave her during her embryo project when she was in middle school. While she had discarded the original book her father gave her, she brings me a later edition, the actual book she used in college:

And he found -- not this particular book, but an older edition. He found that in the high school where he worked. And he gave that to me and he says, "Well, you can use this for your display, you know, to make a display about, you know, the chickens and everything else." Now, I'm sure he had no he had no -- I'm sure he didn't even look at it. This is a college text. And me being eighth grade without the basic knowledge of what a cell was...

I found this interesting, especially as we segue into a discussion of her choice to not have children. Barb told me she didn't like children and knew early on; as such, she elected to undergo a hysterectomy at 37. Her husband, too not wanting children, had a vasectomy before they were married. She had to lobby for the hysterectomy as she had no medical condition that required it. She also asked that it be returned to her—something else she had to fight for and kept it many years on a shelf in her closet, preserved in formaldehyde. She attended a hysterectomy support group two times since and confides she couldn't understand why women would lament something that has caused so much pain and trouble. Too she is

surprised the women don't know what it looks like. In show and tell fashion she brought it to the second meeting she attended and gave lessons on its anatomy.

Barb's adoptive parents are deceased but they knew she had become a vet. Her adoptive parents were extremely proud. Her father would shadow her on appointments and help when he could. Since their death she has also found her birth parents and several biological siblings. Most live in the state in which she now resides. They too know of her career and are very proud. Her biological parents were working-class as well, working in machinery. She has one sister who teaches and has earned an advanced degree in Linguistics.

Composite Depiction: A Mosaic of Alice

Above are seven narratives of seven of the women interviewed for this study; however, together, they and the 14 other narratives hang together to create an overall picture of a women who grew up working class. That women looks like this.

CHAPTER 5: PERCEPTIONS

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to examine the themes that bubbled up from the twenty one interviews. The themes uncovered and thus essential to understanding the phenomena of identity/identity making for women with working class habitués include “Making,” “Paying Attention,” “Taking Care,” and “Up.” A discussion of each and how they intersect with life course and the taking up of education by these women follows.

Core Themes: Mining the Rabbit Hole

According to van Manen (1990) essential themes are those, which if removed, would deny the illustration of the phenomena. van Manen (1990) writes about researching lived experience and how to create from that research a phenomenological text. I used the three approaches he suggests to uncover the themes central to the experience of being female from a working-class background: “(1) the wholistic or sententious approach, (2) the selective or highlighting approach; and (3) the detailed of line-by-line approach” (van Manen, 1990, pp.92-93). I read through and across transcripts several times for over a year. During and after readings I would sketch and record my thoughts as Moustakas (1990; 1994) suggests. In my search, I uncovered fifteen topics that appeared important to the women I interviewed because more than one woman spoke of it or because it was so prominent it became a focal point in their narrative and remained my main memory of them. The topics included, (1) making and consumption; (2)

vacation; (3) place/spatiality; (4) mothers/motherhood; (5) fathers; (6) feelings of not fitting in; (7) competition; (8) curiosity, self-development, self-propelled learning; (9) alcoholism/drug abuse; (10) physical, emotional and mental abuse; (11) sexual abuse; (12) frugality and self-deprivation; (13) sexuality/promiscuity; (14) spirituality and past lives; and (15) food. Using this list alongside the transcripts I looked for words around which these topics seemed to congeal. The women too talked about these topics in a very specific way and used verb phrases such as “taking care” and “paying attention” or a phrase with a similar meaning. These words pointed to experiences which recurred in the narratives and were “commonalities or possible commonalities in all the various descriptions’ I ‘had gathered (van Manen, 1990, p.93). It’s from here that I derived the themes. The themes evolved from the ways the women had in common for talking about topics that they had in common. It’s important to note that the topics and the themes are not exhaustive of nor exclusive to the experience of women from working class backgrounds with identity and identity making, how that experience intersected with class and gender and thus, influenced their life course, including education. The themes that emerged were “Making,” “Paying Attention,” “Taking Care,” and “Up.” My listing of them in this order is purposeful as I interpret the first three as their being acted upon by class and gender and the latter one as their reaction to such acts. A discussion of each theme follows. For each I begin with a discussion of the theme, what it means, and then follow with how it appeared and the ways in which it is essential to knowing the experience of these women. My analysis first

looks at how the theme manifests in their life course on the whole and then how it impacted their educational pursuits. I end each noting the implications for and the parallel recommendations for additional research related to the field of education.

Making

“Making” or the ability to “make” something was a prominent narrative thread in the stories of the women who were interviewed. For them, the ability to make something was valued. They spoke of their and others’ ability to make things as a kind of cultural capital: “My grandpa was a master carpenter. He can make anything” and “my grandparents were—the men anyway, were, you know, made things. His father was a—grandfather’s father was a ship builder. And they always built things...or a farmer” (Lydia). “Making” wasn’t only reserved for the men as women were often noted as “making” in the stories. Their making was often discussed as a means of providing directly for the family in the form(s) of food, clothes and or shelter.

While “making” wasn’t a theme in the existing literature on class and gender, it manifested in those studies in other ways. Studies on class often pointed to participants’ consumption and the need to acquire things as acquisition of “things,” they said, was requisite of the middle class and a marker to which the working-class aspired (Nenga, 2003; Richardson, Lawrence-Brown & Paige, 2004; Tomlinson, 2003; Yodanis, 2002; Esposito, 2011). Others talked about the value of hard work and using one’s hands as noble (Rubin, 1976, 1994; Willis, 1977; Sennett & Cobb, 1972; Brine & Walker, 2004; Savage, Bagnall &

Longhurst, 2001). Class became mediated through gender as what one acquired and the types of things one produced with their hands and for what purpose was guided by whether or not the participant was male or female. For example, Rubin (1976, 1994) spoke at length about the division of labor in the working-class household. The women of Esposito's (2011) and Nenga's study (2003) enacted their social class by the clothes they wore. Yodanis' (2002) working-class women found it important to not only do physical work but to "emphasize the physical aspects of the work;" they took care of the children of the upper class female citizens, cleaned their houses, etcetera while the upper class women volunteered and participated in non-paying civic-minded activities (Yodanis, 2002, p.337). If they were not tired and did not carry visible markings of the physical tolls of that work on their bodies—blisters, callouses and the like—they thought they had not worked (Yodanis, 2002).

The 21 interviewed for this study spoke similarly; but to reduce their stories to classifications of the work they did or the clothes they wore would deny their experience of being female from working-class and would do little to direct pedagogy. By going beneath these interpretations; the theme of "making" emerged. These were stories of how the women experienced being female from working-class and how through that experience they in turn identified themselves and their families as working-class. The working-class childhoods of these women were marked by struggle and sacrifice, of always needing something, of going without; a life of never enough. To compensate, working class mothers "made"

things for their families and themselves. They passed this on to their daughters who—while they might have more symbolic capital, that is, the jeans they always wanted or the careers their mother’s didn’t—structured their stories as if they were still working against these gaps. These stories differentiated them from all other classes with what Bourdieu (1984) described as the pursuit of the practical and a culture of necessity. In this culture, even when the necessity of something was removed, the ideology persisted. That is, these women reveled in their and their mother’s frugality and their abilities to sacrifice and to go without: “Having a million does not in itself make one able to live like a millionaire; and parvenus generally take a long time to learn that what they see as culpable prodigality is, in their new condition, expenditure of basic necessity” (Bourdieu, 1984, p.374). Meaning the expenditures to be a member of the higher social class are no longer seen as luxuries but, rather, as the necessary cost of membership. They are no longer wants but, rather, needs. There are other accoutrements besides capital that dictate class membership. Unable to escape their working-class upbringing, they talked about making use and the importance of the practicality of things; this carried over as to how they took up education. Education too, must be practical.

For the 21 women interviewed, “making” was enacted in the following ways in their narratives: (1) making or the ability to make things meant they could transpose seemingly useless pieces when alone, into something of use; (2) making was a way to confer love, it was an outward sign of “taking care;” (3) making granted access to capital, that is, they could acquire things by means other than

money and acquiring them as the means of production was revered as their toil became a part of the finished product. Sometimes these enactments overlapped as the women would talk about practicing practicality as an outward sign of “taking care.” In the discussion that follows, note some examples would be appropriate as demonstrations of all three displays. It’s just further evidence of how entrenched is class. Overall, “making” and its valuing have implications for education as education that was deemed impractical, lacked empathy or was facile was dismissed.

(1) Making or the ability to make things meant they could transpose seemingly useless pieces when alone, into something of use

Many of the women spoke of their mothers making their clothes. Chloe was one such woman: “My mom made all of our clothes that weren’t, you know, hand-me downs from my sisters, all of my dresses and things she made.” Chloe explained the reason why her mother made their clothes was because she couldn’t afford to buy them from a store: “She would go down and buy, like, bolts of fabric on whatever was the cheapest, and you know, save up in little things here and there, and—and make our clothes for us.” Katherine, Lydia, Lily and Anne spoke of their mothers’ ability to take scraps of fabric and fashion clothes and quilts. When Katherine’s mother made her a quilt—her one and only experience quilting—she used what in Katherine’s estimation were ugly scraps of fabric to fashion what became a beautiful quilt:

Like all the colors; and I had no idea what this was going to end up looking like; and she, I mean, there, you can, some of the colors, it's like I had, I was like, "This is going to be hideous." But it ended up being great.

Some of the women learned later to make their own clothes. Lily took Home Economics and starting making her own clothes at 16. The theme of "making" carried over into the education the women took up. Sometimes this "making" was urged by family, other times it was internal and interestingly enough, many times it was promulgated by the schools they attended.

Many families urged their daughters to get a job where they would always be "making" a living. Ursula's mother urged her to go to nursing school rather than Wellesley as one, they couldn't afford such a thing, and two, nursing would always guarantee she had a job, particularly in the tough economic times of the year in which she graduated, 1974. Amelia and Amanda's moms always wanted their daughters to be teachers and groomed them to be such from a young age. In some ways, families urged educational tracks that promised work but also were worth their investment. It was at this juncture where the women started to associate their need to "make" something with "use."

Analyzing the use of a word and its associations can sometimes yield greater significance, including additional meanings that may be in play for the speaker and her audience. Dictionaries after all are a compilation of the recognized social use of a word. By engaging in such analyses grants the researcher vantage from which to assess how a word might be used and any

consequent meanings. At first glance, it might seem enough to understand “making” as creating something; however a deeper probe illustrates that the use of the term “making” by these women may have a deeper significance and one very connected to class. “Making” or the ability to “make” is more than (1) “to cause to exist or happen; bring about; create” (American Heritage, 2003). It also means (2) “To change from one form or function to another;” (3) “To cause to assume a specified function or role;” and (4) “To get ready or set in order for use” (American Heritage, 2003). Hence, production is tied to a purpose. That is, the bringing together of materials—whatever they might be—is to change them over into something else. Recognition of that something else occurs when that new creation takes on a new form, function, role or use. By considering the word in this way, “making” takes on additionally coloring in that, it goes beyond creation; that creation is further qualified as it will have purpose or “use” tied to it. I include this here because, while it may be easy to accept bringing pieces of fabric together as making a quilt, it is important to understand it is done so for a purpose. Connected to “use” is how I found the theme of “making” embodying many of the women’s stories: How they took up education was directly affected by their making use of that education so that—in their minds—they might live a life with purpose.

Vivienne was one such woman. Her father wanted her to pursue more practical endeavors rather than the degree in psychology she wanted to obtain. A degree in psychology wouldn’t be very useful her father thought. How would she

take care of herself her father reasoned when she had a good chance like all women of getting divorced? She might make a life for herself but it wouldn't have much use in the working-class estimation because it wasn't guaranteed to provide. Christine shared with me that she won't go for her doctorate, even though she'd secretly like to, because her husband doesn't see much value in it. Sometimes the need for "making" something of "use" was self-imposed by the women. Anna Maria works hard to pitch her ideas to her domineering husband, in attempting to gain his support for her business ventures. Her access to education is limited—her husband doesn't want her to go to school, she reckons because he's threatened—but has found ways to grow despite being denied a formal curricula as exemplified in her latest aspiration. She says she's manipulative but has to be as her husband requires practicality in all things, particularly business:

He doesn't see me as – I might just sit here and say, "You know, I think this is a really good idea and what do you think?" and you might say, "Oh my gosh, that's fantastic." But he's a show me type of guy. Well, what kind of good is it to me?

As a result, Anna Maria put together a proposal to persuade her husband of the usefulness of her last aspiration: she needs money to build a website in support of a children's book she's written that lauds the importance of family tradition, and the importance of family and culture. The women found like Richardson, Lawrence-Brown & Paige (2004) that family tension was created when spending money for further education didn't mean a considerable financial reward: (p.46).

Morning Star gave up her aspirations to get a Masters in spiritual counseling and chose an MBA instead although she aspires to be a professional healer.

Katherine's mother encouraged her daughter to take up Communication and transfer out of her English degree program. In her mom's mind, an English degree meant you could only teach and while Katherine knew that was what she wanted to do at a young age, she gave in because as her mother put it, what if she found out she didn't want to teach? The women interviewed were constantly looking for ways that they could draw together the experiences of their lives and transmute them into something practical.

Schools were also instrumental in directing the women toward practical occupations, where they could make something of themselves. Sarah was advised by her counselor to forgo her plan to become a Math teacher. Her practicality of choosing the disciplines of Math and German—thinking she'd be more marketable—was met with his—thinking she wouldn't have the time to focus on both.

It was -- really it was at a time when the...buzz was that there was a shortage of good Math teachers...I went in and I said, "I would like to get a minor in German and a major in Math"...that way, I can be certified to teach both and make myself a little more marketable in schools when I go to apply for a job.

And he said, "You know, you're really not going to have enough time to study both areas. I would recommend if you get a minor, that you

get one in Math or perhaps Science.” And I thought -- I walked out of there thinking, well and the other things he said was, “And this is a really, really tough field to get into. It is really difficult to be a Math major. And it’s difficult to --“And whatever, you know. His words were not, “Hey, this is a great market. It’s a great time.” I think I got easily swayed by people who were my supposed experts that I went to.

Despite their desires, they were shuttled into occupations that did little more than guarantee industry and salary. There was no promise of their ensuing happiness. Karri gave up a music scholarship and put off pursuing a career in music to pursue a degree in math and elementary education. The importance of “making” and the attention it was given by the women interviewed indicated it was key to how the women shaped their life course and allowed their life course to be shaped. In this way, “making” was essential to the experience of identity and identity making in these women. It impacted how they took up education. The experience was performance as their experience and the necessity of making informed them and they in turn made sense of their experiences requiring or at least understanding the requisite of finding practicality in their endeavors.

Some women pursued degrees only to find later what some of their peers feared: they were unable to “make” them into something. Kerstin earned a degree in Film from a well-respected, private, New England university. She moved to California only to discover her work as a production assistant required little more than fetching coffee and delivering scripts. Many of her peers didn’t have her

pedigree. She then decided to try another field and sought a Masters in Linguistics. She tells me she'd like to work in the courts and analyze transcripts; however, jobs of this kind are limited. She only knows of one company that performs such work and they aren't currently hiring. To date, she continues working two jobs, one in the day as an administrative assistant for a government-run legal organization and the second, in the evening as a waitress. Many women experienced disconnects such as this. Brine and Walker (2004) found that despite their access to education, the women in their study also chose non-graduate positions where their skills could be used as opposed to graduate level jobs; a bastion of their working-class habitus (p.98). Amelia tells me why she chose teaching out of all other professions was because she had no experience with other jobs that were available:

...at first I had a really vague and I think a lot of this comes from the fact that I didn't have within my immediate family job models that were like doctor, lawyer, teacher. I mean I didn't have that. I had cannery worker, and I had...a student who wanted to be a teacher but it wasn't completely done, and instead did domestic work. So I mean of course those were not things I was saying I want to be...I think I had very little idea of what jobs really entailed, and I don't think I had a clear – looking back on high school – I really had no idea. So when I had mentioned before that I went to a school where a lot of girls did go to Harvard, Yale, I mean it was really interesting. A number of them did not...I had no sense of kind of

what was in between the community college, and Harvard, and Yale. And so funny story I applied to all of those schools.

She laughs, suggesting she's aware of some structuring to which she is constrained, and recounts for me her Harvard application and how she thought she had a chance, not knowing how things at schools like that worked. Other women such as Sylvia dropped out of her doctoral program when she no longer felt the investment worth her effort:

...I had gotten sick of, of people romanticizing the life of a poor graduate student who had trust funds or who had their parents' money...I was actually living on \$15,000 a year...they...just kind of think, like, "Oh, that's, that's cute."...Whatever—and don't really know what you—what it's like if the, the bottom fell out or your world fell apart or...what if I got really ill? What if I had some injury? There's no backup plan and I—I didn't want to live like that anymore...and professors, too, I had—I'm—I'm—am still really close to this one professor who's just great...down-to-earth and awesome, but even she just kind of—I don't even know how to explain it....she just kind of lives with this assumption that everything's hunky dory, and you can go to school for the rest of your life if that's what you're really passionate about and, and I don't—I don't mean to...look down on, on any of the work that anyone does. But there's a point where it's just like, you're not really contributing anything to the world by studying these obscure things that no one understands...

Sylvia, a published researcher and T.A. had quit her Ph.D. program just prior to starting her dissertation for a job as an administrative assistant for an attorney. After investing four years into her doctoral work, she failed to see any “practical use for it.” Luttrell (1989) found this valuing in her study too as the working-class participants distinguished between common sense or “real intelligence” and that which was taught in school (p.37). Although, Sylvia did admit her job as an assistant was lonely and she was going to see if she could “pick up an adjunct class or something at one of the community colleges because you know, there’s a lot of skills that I’m not using—because I’m just sitting in front of the computer and answering the phone all day.” Hence, education and the high theory of her degree became a hobby, a distraction from the necessity of her every day. Even then, it is still located in “making.” Even though she’s given up her degree, she believes she should still make something of her unused skill set.

(2) Making was a way to confer love, it was an outward sign of “taking care”

“Taking Care” is a theme of its own and surfaced when women spoke of their identity in relation to their roles as working-class daughters and mothers. While “taking care” is explored in its own section, it overlapped with making in that “making” was a way one could confer love or “take care.” For many of the women interviewed, their mothers’ engagement in “making” was an outward expression of their affection and care of their daughters. Mothers that failed to “make” often failed to “take care” and hence, were seen as non-nurturing. While the practicality that’s associated with “making” appeared in the literature,

“making” as an expression of love or “taking care,” did not. Nevertheless, it does have implications for education as education that seemed disconnected or lacked caring was often abandoned by these women. Instances like these did appear in the literature—that is where the women felt disconnected on an empathetic level with what they were doing. In essence, it wasn’t enough for education to be practical; it had to be meaningful too (Clegg, 2008; Maguire, 2008; Van Galen, 2000). Too, education that was empathetic was praised by these women as having influenced identity formation and subsequent educational pursuits. Few mentioned a caring female authority that nurtured and inspired them.

While the ability to “make” was revered, it was also a way to comfort and communicate love. Recall the discussion on the making of clothing. Not only was the skill prized as something of use, Chloe continued to talk about how she thought other kids who didn’t have clothes made for them, didn’t have moms who were talented enough—but also, didn’t love them enough. Making was also a way to express one’s love:

And my mom had this wonderful way of explaining things where I always felt sorry for the kids who had to have store-bought clothes because their moms didn’t love them enough to make them or their moms weren’t talented enough....And I just always thought that was because we were extra special.

To keep her daughter entertained so she herself could attend college while still maintaining a relationship with her daughter, Amanda's mom made "kits" to care for her daughter"

She was really good at making sure that I had like kits and packs of things to go with me...Play Doh and crayons and books, and books on tape...all of these kinds of things, and so I used to have my own, you know, like play set of things to do.

Vivienne remembered her grandmother and her gardening as a source of safety and comfort away from her parent's fighting:

my parents fought so much that just being around her comforted me...It made me feel very relaxed and we'd go out—they, they grew all their food...and do gardening...pick beans...pick berries out in the woods...behind their house and...this...enchanted to me. I loved this.

Katherine saw her mother's making of her quilt as an expression of her love:

I remember she made it during the winter; and she had never done anything like that before; so she was going to these classes. I mean, I think that's one thing that I've always loved about my mom, is just that she wants to learn things and sort of experiment...it's just really sort of sweet that she was making this whole thing for me, and it took all of these piece...Doing all the shopping and figuring out...Like all the colors....it's on my, on my bed now...it's the only one she's ever made...I love it. I think it's just

special to me because my mom and my mom's special to me. Like I'm closer to her than I am to anybody in my family...it was just really sweet...

I have...her old sewing machine that she used for...the edges or something because I thought, "Oh"...I'm not married and I don't have kids..[but] I'd love to do something like that for a daughter if I...so I have the sewing machine but no I'm not really...very crafty like her. I don't know that I could pull that off.

Katherine feels that because her mother took the time to learn and then make the quilt for her is what makes it special. She also included Katherine in the shopping trip to buy the supplies to make the quilt. For Katherine, the quilt is a tangible overture of her mother's affection for her and Katherine's for her mother. It is also a symbol of her mother's willingness to learn and take risks in order to bequeath something to her daughter: a labor of love. It has so much of an effect, that Katherine, who declares she is not crafty, considers a similar project should she have a daughter. On that declaration, I asked Katherine if she thought someone had inspired her mother as her mother inspired her. Katherine attributed it more to her mother's culture—being from a small Southern town—this brought up memories of her mother tracing their family tree and of a rocking chair her mother kept—her mothers', that is, Katherine's grandmother's—as a family heirloom. While Katherine doesn't attribute anyone as inspiring her mother to make the quilt, she does convey more about what she believes is her mother's culture. Although her grandmother died while Katherine's mother was young and

wasn't available, her mother (1) deemed it important to "trace back" the family tree and (2) takes initiative to do so on her own. These narrative threads transcend Katherine's mother's small town Southern roots as they appeared in other women's stories too. Acting as family historian—making meaning of the lives of family members—was always ascribed to the women, particularly those that were or were to become the matriarch, of the family. Sometimes keeping this history involved keeping a family artifact or heirloom: here, Katherine is the keeper of her mother's quilt, her mother, the keeper of her grandmother's rocking chair.

Being connected and making meaning of their schooling was important too. While they or their mothers assumed the roles of matriarch for their families, some found parallel matriarchs in their school experiences. Katherine found solace at school; it was a space away from the abuse she suffered at home at the hands of her stepfather.

I think some with the abuse...timeline[s] and memories are kind of scattered. So it's hard for me to remember. But I remember that there were a lot of people outside of my family, especially a lot of females...who...saw that I was hurting and...comforted me in some way....even if they just sort of...drew me out in conversation, or...saw something. I mean...I remember...one of my – I don't even remember what exactly she did but one of my English teachers, Betty P. ...I don't even remember...a specific thing that happened...I just remember that she gave me...I could go into her, when I had... really bad days or would

come into school crying, that I could go into her office...and kind of collect myself, and it was a...a safe space. I remember...in her class that I could...write about things that meant something to me; and that might have been risky to write about...she was okay with that...she's the one person that sort of stands out...there were...lots of people who were maybe in my life sort of periodically. But she's the one that kind of stands out to me

Morning Star spoke of an influential nun, Sister Rosalie, who acted as a surrogate mother. This doesn't mean to suggest that educators take on a form surrogacy, but in the least make meaning or connection for these women between the lives they have outside school walls and those of the formal curricula. Students like Christine had no connection to school and almost didn't finish: "there were times in my life when I just didn't care about school." Much of the literature writes of an influential female role model to which women from similar predicaments looked up to or aspired such as the women in Madsen's (2006) study on the childhoods of women university presidents. Knowing the literature, I expected that to be the case here. It wasn't. While this is explored more in depth in other sections, few women, save Morning Star, Katherine, and later in life, Christine and Lydia cite an influential person giving shape and meaning to their lives. They were alone in their life course and many spoke of being disconnected from school: they were quiet, obedient, and did not call attention to themselves. For many this lack of

connection resulted in their choosing degree programs, or so they thought, haphazardly.

(3) Making granted access to capital, that is, they could acquire things by means other than money and acquiring them as the means of production was revered as their toil became a part of the finished product.

Ability “to make” allowed mothers “to take care” of their families when money was earmarked for other items essential for survival. Hence, the women had access to commodities such as clothing, food and tastes they might not have otherwise had access too had their mothers not made them; two, the items were often granted more cultural capital by these women as their and their mother’s toil became part of the finished product. The women thought working harder bestowed a greater respect of the things themselves. This same ideology became apparent in these women’s identity formation and how they took up their education.

There are a lot of studies that investigate consumption practices and how lifestyle, one’s tastes, food and clothing smack of class (Bourdieu, 1984; Esposito, 2011; Nenga, 2003; Tomlinson, 2003). Here too, those commodities were discussed and valued by the women interviewed. Many women spoke of wanting jeans. Amelia was worried she might be discovered as having only two pair as one pair had a distinct hole in the thigh and might give her away:

They were never anybody to accumulate debt. They always paid off their bills responsibly, but we still didn’t have much money. So I

remember...I've written a lot of autobiographical stories, and there's one I talk about; a pair of jeans I had that had a hole in the thigh of them. I remember wearing those jeans over and over again and hoping nobody would see the hole; and having two pairs of pants and switching off with them every other day....we didn't have a lot of money in, in that capacity, and that made me kind of angry and kind of outcast too at school because a lot of it was about materialism and what name brands you wore and those kinds of things.

Like the women of Nenga's (2003) study, Amelia tried to disguise the fact that her clothes did not meet the clothing norms (p.180). Lydia recalls a childhood where her mother always provided: "I don't remember being deprived of anything as far as food or clothes, or -- she can make clothes. My mom's a great seamstress." Her mother made all their clothes. Even when the clothes their mothers made were deemed "unfashionable," the ability to make them was still valued. As Lydia explained, all she ever wanted was a pair of blue jeans but to ask for them would be disrespectful of her mom. Further, her asking would call attention to their inability to afford to store-bought clothes not to mention how such articles would deprive the family of necessities such as food and shelter:

We got fed, and she made our clothes. So we couldn't even...buy store-bought clothes....for that reason, I would say we're...low middleclass...if not...very...low class...I guess if I really, really wanted something, my grandparents would have probably bought it for me. But I never asked....it

just never was something that you would even...I knew my mom worked hard just to provide for food and shelter, and stuff. So I'm like, I don't—the only thing I remember ever asking for was a pair of blue jeans...from the store that weren't made by her...Everything was always homemade.

Questioned further, Lydia revealed she never got those jeans and it wasn't until she was out of high school and working that she first shopped in a store. To own a store bought pair would have meant devaluing her mother's hard work: work that while “hard” was just able to provide the minimum necessities of food and shelter. Another item to note in these excerpts are how class—particularly low class—is distinguished. Buying items that could be made, such as clothes, from a store meant you were not “low” class but being “talented enough” to make clothes could excuse not having money to buy clothes or at the very least, was respected. I asked Amanda if she was ever ashamed to bring her upper class private school friends home to her and her mother's apartment. She told me unabashedly, “no.”

My mom was really, really talented that it was always beautiful. It was always nice. I mean the queen of second hand. The queen of renovating things. Very artistic. Able to make everything look really nice, so I don't think...and that came from – like I mentioned earlier – job was not just selling of clothes. It was also the styling.

Her mom was able to use her creative skills and experience as a sales clerk to transform junk into furnishings. Other women who gained symbolic capital via

their ability to make clothing she might not otherwise have access to was Lily. She was appointed Sunday School secretary and her friend reasoned this was because of her ability to make clothes and look the part she couldn't:

one of my best girlfriends at that time, Beverly...she said, "I'm glad that you got asked to be Sunday School secretary"... "I could never." And this cut me, and I didn't understand it at that time. But she said, "I could never do that because I don't have the clothes." And she knew that I sew my own clothes...she was making this snide little remark, because she was hurt, I'm supposing, because she didn't -- you know, she didn't go buying fabric, and she could have. Her mother would have given her the money, but that wasn't her thing. And I didn't -- I don't even remember my response to her, and I remember that hurting me.

Making these adornments granted power in other ways. Not only was there the ownership of these items and the toil it took to produce them, but in Lily's case, engendered courage to stand out among her peers. She likened herself to her mother who before leaving Lily's father, renounced their Pentecostal upbringing by putting on makeup, wearing a short skirt and heels and cutting her hair.

And I remember my mother's walk and how she kept herself. And the few times that I saw her, even -- when all that tumultuous push and pulling, she'd always held her head up high. And I think I mimicked that from her and remember that look on her face. And I think so, it was just -- it's like a

mosaic, we are what we are from all these experiences coming in. So that courage came early.

Hence, her making created experiences which in turn made her: a mosaic. Her choice of simile intimates her awareness of the production of one's identity.

Knowing how to work the land to produce food and cook that food were also predominant and admired. Kerstin Krueger spoke of how her grandmother would labor and cook for everyone. Her grandmother's house was a place where everyone gathered for holiday and Sunday meals. These meals typically fed over a hundred family members across four sittings. To symbolize the importance these gatherings and her great grandmother's role had for her, she chose to share her great grandmother's rolling pin as the item that represented her. For Kerstin, the rolling pin epitomized the toil her great grandmother endured to feed everyone. Too, she worked in her garden and grew the vegetables she used in her native Polish-Ukrainian recipes. Lydia had similar memories of her grandmother and mother:

You know, maybe she needs to feel needed or something. She needs to take care of people...she's always the one that cooks the meals...for any kind of family get together...she's definitely the matriarch...she'll make all the food...she'll bring it with her...she'll make all the food and bring it....She'll make the ham or she'll make the turkey. She'll make the meat, whatever, in her house...nobody really brings anything... maybe soda or chips, or something. But as far as the cooking goes, my mom makes it all.

And my grand—now, when my grandma was younger, we’d have it at her house. My grandma would cook, and my mom would cook...they’re definitely the cooks.

Note it is these matriarchal women who toil to provide sustenance for their families. The way women like Kerstin and Lydia speak of the food and the preparation required intimates their valuing of it above other food like “soda or chips.”

Laboring over the making of cultural goods inherent in the narratives of the women interviewed carried over into their education pursuits. By and large they described themselves as working hard, laboring to get something more than a pay increase from their work. Perhaps one of the starkest examples was the dialogue Christine shared with me that she had with her husband in answer to my question as to what she thought getting her Masters would get her. This passage appears in her portrait but to summarize here, she believes attaining a higher education will grant her the ability to have more. For Christine, education is a guarantor of the American Dream. Knowing she could make a difference, have a nice house, the picket fence, the two cars, is enough to spur her on in her educational aspirations, as she could have them if only she worked hard enough. Her middle-class husband on the other hand doesn’t share her same admiration for hard work and what it “gets” you. His educational choices have been predicated on getting just what he needed to get the job he needed. She and her family she tells me are different. It’s at this point in the interview that she points to a picture in her collage meant to

represent her family, her mother, and their work ethic. The picture Christine points to is the central image in her collage: it is a woman migrant worker in kerchief picking grapes in field. The woman she tells me, reminds her of her mother, particularly, her mother's strength when she was young, married, pregnant, yet alone because her father was away at war. The majority of the women interviewed felt too that they worked harder and took initiative in going after the things they wanted—these were not traits they saw as characteristic of other classes or the opposite sex. For example, many of the women interviewed attributed their choices in life as being of their own initiative and will. This quality wasn't shared by their husbands. Lydia made it a point to tell me her husband wasn't like her:

...the difference between me and him is I'll figure out -- if I wanted to do something, I'll figure out how to do it, and I'll make it happen....He'll just talk about it, [laughter], sort of that man-woman thing....He will be like, "You know I'd like to -- I'd like to -- I'd like to open a gym." "Yeah, well then do it." You know, that's probably the most that we conflict is that he'll just talk and talk and talk about an idea, and never actually make it happen. I'll always be like, 'I'm sick of you talking about it. If you're not going to actually do it, then shut up, you know'"

Karri, Barb, and Amelia spoke similarly; acknowledging initiative and wherewithal as qualities they had that their husbands did not. Barb told me her husband had only graduated from high school. She was a veterinarian. He didn't work and she

supported him. She didn't think he had neither the drive she did nor the appreciation of how hard she worked to support them: "I don't think...he appreciates that, you know, heck I support him basically." Morning Star commented too as to how she thought the trials of being female positioned women to be more flexible and positioned them to dominate males in the realm of work and academia.

...we're educating ourselves...owning our own companies...kicking their butts...We're realizing this...I think that it's a great thing...women are evolving, and I think we're taking advantage of education that's out there...I guess a lot of it has to do with our leadership quality because we can – we're so well-rounded. We're so...flexible. We go easy with the change, you know. Men, they don't have those abilities. A lot of them don't have those abilities. We know how to interact with people. We have relationships with people we work with. Men, you know, they really have to work at that. So I think...women are really becoming very powerful and a lot of it has to do with their education...they're going to just take over. We are.

I asked if she felt class had any part in her educational earnings. She thought it did as it made her more appreciative of the educational opportunities she was afforded: "I think the class does' have an affect 'because I was fortunate enough to have my grandparents who stressed education. Being working class she believes made her work harder, be more appreciative of, and hence get more out of the private

education she received; benefits she felt her middle class peers missed out on because they were not privileged in that way. They took their private education for granted. Her current pursuits are a tribute to her grandparents in that despite struggling and taking divergent paths, she believes she overcame the challenges of gender and class:

...I always had in me and that I could do it. It's just that my life just took a weird turn, twist and turns, and challenges but somehow or another I corrected the path and got that going and now I'm done...I feel a sense of accomplishment...I am proud...I struggled through...everything...having to work full time and then going to school and sacrificing...time with my family and friends because I was home studying...it was a sacrifice but I knew that it would be worth it in the end and so yeah I feel good. I feel very good that I finally did it.

Thus despite challenges, Morning Star and others saw themselves as able to surmount obstacles to get what they wanted. This struggle and subsequent achievement was a source of pride. Like their mothers who bore the scars of work on their bodies, these women took satisfaction with the scars they bore on their psyche. In the example above, “making” the grade, writing the papers, sacrificing time with her family and bearing the ardor of her divergent journey made her MBA that much more valuable to Morning Star and the women like her. Where “making” was a purveyor of capital accompanied by toil, optimism for the future and confidence for what they accomplish for themselves prevailed.

Paying Attention

The theme of “attention” was predominant in the stories of the women interviewed. Often attention—who gave it, or did not, when and how, whose role was it to give attention—was thematized in the women’s stories when asked to talk about who they were and what their lives were like growing up. Many of these accounts were populated by a similar cast of characters, ones we might expect—mothers, fathers, other relatives and friends—but “attention” also seemed always present when the women spoke of their fathers. Even women, whose biological fathers were absent, spoke of a stepfather or grandfather in terms of attention. As the women grew from childhood through adolescence and adulthood, their discussion of “attention” shifted to the attention of other males in their lives, be they husbands, significant others or sons. Interestingly, attention was often commodified as many of their remembrances centered on the attention these women were “paid” and, in most cases, “not paid” by these men: so much so that many of the women went so far as to use words like “paid,” “paying,” and “spend” when describing the depths of their relationships with these males. The theme of attention evolved through a common pattern: the fathers gave their attention to the women as young girls. This attention either waned or grew as the women aged. In instances where it waned the women were expected to have a relationship with their mother; some of these relationships materialized as the women reported growing closer to their mothers whereas others never materialized. Where the women continued to have the attention of their fathers,

they often reported strained relationships with their mothers; in these instances, mothers were characterized as non-nurturing and or mentally unstable. Women who shared these experiences reported that their fathers were inappropriate and talked about their sex life—or lack of it—with their mothers. As the women grew and had families of their own, their present lives seemed to mirror their childhood experiences: they reported, in varying degrees, separation from their husbands and marked the success of their children by how independent they had become; hence, not in need of their “attention.” This lack of “paying attention” paralleled the women’s educational lives as they often went through school drawing little attention: they blended in, sought approval, followed directions, got good grades and consequently, received little direction with their studies or career planning. When some women reported their teachers as trying to intervene and break the cycle, they lament they wish they should’ve listened, but they couldn’t. Schools had little bearing on lives already so scripted.

There are very few studies on “attention” and what it means for women who grew up working-class; even fewer linking the impact of attention to educative experience. Rubin (1976) describes the working-class marriage and it typical of working-class husbands to disengage from their families; however, Rubin’s (1976) study was restricted to husbands and fathers, wives and mothers. There was no interview of the children to relay their experience. Too, the women’s interviews were juxtaposed to the men’s; the effect, the women’s narratives could not be read without being interpreted in light of the men’s

narratives. There is some discussion of Willis' (1977) boys' attention to girls and how their "attention" differs between the "easy lay" and the "missus." Willis (1977) describes it as a conflict between women as both "sexual objects and domestic comforters" (p.43). In the case of the former, "she is a sex object, a commodity...diminished by sex...literally worthless...romantically and materially partly consumed" (Willis, 1977, p.44). The latter represents the "human value...squandered by promiscuity" (Willis, 1977, p.44). The "girlfriend" is the "referent for the home: dependability and domesticity" (Willis, 1977, p.44). The resolution of being "sexually desirable but not sexually experienced leads to behavior which strengthens" the male "sense of superiority" (Willis, 1977, p.45). Sexual assertiveness is reserved for the boys while the girls make themselves appear coy, giggle, whisper and flirt (Willis, 1977, pp.45-46). While Willis' (1977)—his focus was on working-class boys, the females were ancillary, drawn in to illuminate the boys—and Rubin's (1976) studies did not focus solely on women or on daughters of the working-class, some significance for my study can be gleaned from their body of work. Research on education of working-class women has shown that working-class female students are quiet, obedient and seek to please (Luke, 1994; Archer, Halsall & Hollingworth, 2007). The women in my study reported the same. Most of them located this is the working-class student's need to fit in; to not be found out as an imposter (Kaufman, 2003). I suggest that much like "making" is an embodiment of the culture of necessity, attention is the embodiment of this culture of this diametrically opposed female. Mannerisms

demonstrated in the home and the domestic performances of class mediated by gender in which they participated shaped their identities and consequently how they took up education.

To vet this theory I devote much discussion to the domestic experiences of these women and the lessons they learned from their first teachers—their parents; after all, education needn't be formal as exemplified by Anne, one of the participants who commented that at twelve, one of the first “lessons” her mother taught her was if she was ever in a situation where she needed “a little more power” she should “unbutton her top button.” I then tie this inculcation to their enactments in school and the school’s endorsement and or rejection of their behavior. Conflict of sexuality may no longer be as blatant for these women today, but remnants of their upbringing have engendered similar behavior in other spaces. Knowing how and when to draw attention and from whom and for what purpose is assimilated as natural.

Attention is the “concentrated direction of the mind, especially to a problem or task” (Collins, 2003). It can also refer to “an act of consideration, courtesy or gallantry indicating affection or love (Collins, 2003). I present the dictionary definition here because it gives insight into the popularized use and understanding of the word and, subsequently, how the word operates for the women interviewed. For the women interviewed, attention from males punctuated their lives. One interviewee even remarked how disappointed she was to read back over a journal she had hoped to share with me only to see it jumped from wanting

one boy to like her over another and dressing in a way to make herself desirable. She had wanted to share it with me because she thought it would show her talking about her school activities and awards. After all, she told me, she was a good student. Looking back, she was disappointed that this and not her accomplishments or what she termed “real life” were her primary focus:

the idea of when you got up and got dressed, it was not to be comfortable but... to be sexy, even if you were poor...I feel like maybe it had to have been something...get[ting] approval from my father for everything. Maybe that's all tied into the male approval but all of it, it's all about I want this boy to like me. I want that boy to like me. This boy doesn't like me anymore. Why not? I want this other boy to like me and it was just weird...I was really shocked by how much – and then there would be like a sentence, “Oh, gave my speech for the Soroptomist Club today,” and then it would go on to a boy again. It was the weirdest thing. It'd just be like a sentence here, a sentence there about real life and the rest of it was – and most of it is not about being happy. It's about being sad that this boy doesn't like me anymore. Or, “Yay, now this boy and I are going together,” and then a week later, “Oh, he broke my heart, now I'm going to cry”...I was really disappointed in myself...

Other researchers accounted for attention too. Rubin (1976) found that men and women had different expectations for one another. In her study, she described the working-class wife as needing her husband to attend to her feelings (p.117). Her

husband expected her to attend to his needs: have the house and children cleaned, dinner cooked, be available in bed and out of his way when he wanted to relax after a hard day's work (Rubin, 1976). According to Rubin (1976) it's rooted in our "culture where women are trained from birth to attend to the emotional side of life, and men, the instrumental side" (p.65). Anne, whose excerpt appears above, went on to tell me about how her life, particularly her sexual encounters, became pursuits for male approval. She came to this realization in therapy for the sexual abuse she had sustained from her stepmother's father and from her paternal grandfather:

And she just had me, like, sit down and make a list of all...the people I had been with and why...when it came down to it, it wasn't because I cared about them, it was because I was trying to get their approval.

Other women interviewed described their fathers or stepfathers as engaging in what they took to mean as displays of gallantry or their giving the women special consideration; sometimes this was as overt as driving them across country for school or literally being the driver of all the females in the family as in Katherine, Ursula and Kerstin's families. After describing the abuse she had suffered at the hands of her stepfather growing up, I ask Katherine if she ever "got away" as she intended by going to college and if she still had a relationship with her stepfather. Remarkably, Katherine describes herself as softening toward her stepfather even though she had been subjected to years of his abuse. She's touched that he would help her drive to graduate school:

I have no idea why he offered to do this, but when I came out here...instead of me hiring a moving company...he offered to drive...help me drive out here; which is the nicest thing he's ever done in my entire life...and something about that...softened me towards...softened me towards him.

It's as if she absolves him of his abusive years for what she sees as a moment of special consideration for her. The driving of women was prevalent in other families too. None of the women in Kerstin's family—mother, grandmother, aunt—had a driver's license, save Kerstin. They required her father drive them where they wanted to go after he got off work. If he didn't want to go, they didn't. He determined how long they went. He very much directed their movement—in both length and kind—away from the home. Rather than seeing it as an extension of his control over his family, Kerstin interprets her father's actions much like Katherine does of her stepfather's: she can't believe her father would make such a sacrifice of his time giving special consideration to the women in his family by driving them everywhere. Sometimes driving was performed under the auspices of protecting them. Ursula recounted her reaction to her parents not letting her drive cross country unattended:

I was under the impression that I was going to be driving off alone. It had never occurred to me that this would be a problem for my parents. I just didn't think about this being a problem that this 21-year-old woman would be driving cross country by herself. Is there a problem there? Never

occurred to me. Well, my mother says, “You don’t honestly think your father would let you drive out there alone?” And I went, “Well, yeah. I sort of did kind of obviously think that.”

Other times it was less literal and involved directing their daughter’s lives. Celia tells of her arranged marriage where her father threatened to leave her barren if she refused his choice of suitor; a man who promised social mobility for his daughter:

...my father came to me and said “Do you know that Nick Toscano, you know that boy over at, you know, his father has a store?” I says “Yeah?” And he said “He wants to take you out and I told him he could.” says “Why? I thought you said I can’t talk to boys. I can’t even look at them.” I said “What’s going on here?” He says “Never mind...Just remember one thing...” he says “When it comes to going out with boys...This is going to be it...I choose the one.” And then he said something that I was totally blown away with, totally devastated by because I always loved my father very deeply and I probably always will, but he was that most terriblest thing that I think a person could ever be told by someone you love very deeply. He said that “And if you think you’re going to go out with other boys...I’ll kick you in the stomach and you won’t be good for anybody.”...I said “Oh my God! They’re setting me up.” I don’t have any say and I don’t have anybody to protect me, and I don’t know where to go. I’m 15 years old.

While Celia was strong-armed into marriage, other women were compelled in other ways. Vivienne, in telling me about her parents’ relationship, confided her

mother had only married her father because he took an interest in her. A “country girl,” her mother was “naïve,” “unexposed to life.” She paraphrases a conversation between her and her mother, her mother confessing, “‘The fact that your father took an interest in me, I thought was my only chance of having a marriage.’ She’s never been in love. She doesn’t know what it’s like to be in love.”

Sometimes the theme of attention presented as “inattention,” as in the following excerpt, Lando, a woman in her 60s and of New York, Italian American descent recalls her parents’ reaction to her and her twin sister. Notice in the following excerpt how she moves from questioning if, as children, her parents were treated similar to how they treated her and her twin sister, to her father’s attention—or as she sees it, lack of it—towards her. She juxtaposes this with the attention she says he gave barmaids and waitresses:

I don’t know if my parents [was] violently beaten the way I was or cursed at, so, I don’t know why they reacted to us the way they did...I saw my father paying more attention to bar maids and waitresses than he ever—then he ever paid to me. And I never understood that. And I, you know—I was afraid of my father, right until the day he died. I was afraid of my father, you know. So I recognized him as a selfish—self-absorbed man, but I was still afraid of him.

A couple of things stand out here. First, Lando chooses barmaids and waitresses to distinguish between the kind of “attention” she was paid and what these women

were paid, by her father: The two professions are both gendered— *-maids, -waitresses*—and based in servitude. This became a common way for the women interviewed to talk about the women in their families and the “role” they and others attributed to women in general. What emerged as another theme, “Taking Care” is explored in its own section, but these two themes cohabited the stories almost equally as Lando goes on to explain that she never understood the reason for his indifference yet she recognized him as a selfish and self-absorbed man. Paying less attention or withholding it altogether contributed to the fear these women had for their fathers as attention was coveted. Fear, servitude and attention or the lack of it surfaced in other narratives too.

Celia, also in her 60s, from New York and of Italian American descent describes how her relationship with her father changed as she grew older. His attention shifted from her to her brothers. She was no longer his “little girl.”

...I had two older brothers. Then I learned there was a difference between boys and girls the way we were treated. You know, my father was very tender and attentive to me—the girl—the only girl—when I was very little and my brothers probably were outside just playing and probably didn’t make anything out of it, but then as I got older, that changed. Then it was, you know, more attentive to the boys and assuming that you had a mother that was able to—usually girls by that time of more...bonding with their mother.

As the women grew older, many stated like Celia that they were expected to bond with their mothers. Some, like Amelia, explained this away as their just not agreeing any longer or having anything to share: “I do know that my dad spent a lot of time with me. I mean we went to movies together; and we went out to eat; and we were like buddies when I was younger. When I hit high school, you know, we got in arguments and stuff.” When asked about how she felt about this change in her relationship with her father, Celia responded she felt abandoned.

...it's sort of an abandonment because you don't have another parent sharing the nurturing. Whatever nurturing was going on was...very little. That's all you knew. So if he...was less inclined to...spend time with you or I was too old to sit on the lap, you know that kind of thing? It changes. You start to get older and he sees you differently and not as this little girl that he used to be fond of putting on his lap...all that stuff. Well you get to the point then where you become...your own little person and I think a lot of kids at that age do that; automatically say, 'Don't hug me anymore. I'm getting too big for that.' It's a natural thing breaking away. And... at that time I believe girls start to become a little closer to the mother, and the mother becomes the more important role model. I think. I'm guessing all of this because I don't have the frame of reference, but from what I see girls can be terrible to a certain age and then all of a sudden they become their mother's friend.

Celia shifts her remembrance from her growing older and her father not wanting to put her “on his lap” to the rejection being hers, as she “automatically” says “don’t hug me anymore.” Celia too, like Lando, claims not to know why this occurs, only that it does and rationalizes it as a “natural” progression. Notice too, the use of the words “spend” and “paid” suggesting the women recognized their father’s behaviors as a valuation of them. Nurturing—another way of describing “taking care”—was another quality that surfaced in the other narratives and was always the responsibility of the females in the family.

Whereas Lando saw her father’s inattention to her as symptomatic of his self-absorption and selfishness, in other stories, like that of Celia’s, a father’s attention as one matured was deemed inappropriate. In another account, Lando confides,

I wanted to tell you a story. One time my sister and I were at our cousin’s house. And she lived about—about 11 blocks. And it was, like, dusk. And instead of bothering our father to pick us up, we decided to walk home. We were probably about 14 years old. And we were a block away from the house. And this man turns the corner and stops the car, he got out and exposed himself to us...But we started screaming bloody murder, and ran into the—the house right there on the corner, banging on the door. And they called the police. And the police pulled up in front of our house. Any my father sees the police...pulling up in front of my house, his house...And—and he probably peed his pants but...but—then the

policeman took us to the door and told him what happened to us. And this will give you a very, very strong idea about my father. When we came into the house and the policeman left, he beat the crap out of us for bringing the police to the house. In fact, I remember, he'd beat us so hard and we tried to get away from us, and we wound up in the bathroom. And he—we fell in the bathtub, and he was still beating on us. And the shower turned on. And of course my mother—I mean, that was going a little too far, my mother was yelling at him to stop. So, that's an idea of how—how unloving my father was, and uncaring. So, and I've never missed him. Since the day he died, I don't—I've never mourned him. I never missed him. And, I just let him go...

Lando's bringing the police and hence her father's attention—her father was a bookie—to her is punished despite the reason. Attention was always at the behest of males. They directed it: when it was given, to whom and how. Celia too talks of drawing her father's attention—that is, his concern that she might bring shame on the family as she matured by dating the wrong boy or acting inappropriately:

So as I got older and I began to get matured, my father got a little nervous because in his mind – and like a lot of the old-timers; they come from the old country – they don't want the boys buzzing around. There was no such thing as having little boyfriends because he saw them as potential threats...Because boys look for opportunity; girls look for friends. So he decided once he heard I got my menstrual period from my mom whom I

had to tell and uh gathered what it was because I see, hear the girls at school talk wasn't that she sat down and had a nice chat, so I told her about it and it was like night and day; from being able to run outside after I did my chores to the doors being locked...I wondered what I did to all of a sudden cannot do the things I normally do. So at that point and time when it became very obvious to me that there was something wrong with being a girl, and that the world wasn't all right and was dangerous to having to adapt to isolation...my friends would come by and call for me, we'd be doing the things we normally do and I can't go. I had to stay on the porch...All of a sudden there was something wrong with these boys we grew up with.

The girls are taught very early that their sexuality was a liability. Celia tells me after that, she was never the same; she was always mistrusting and suspicious of people, particularly men. Like Willis' (1977) boys, Celia's father communicates to Celia that her value is more akin to chattel. In her father's estimation, women were meant to get married, not to go to school. Her father thought school would be "wasted on a girl." Engaging in premarital sex or even giving the appearance of it would ruin her for her destined role as wife. Years later, as a mother, Lando, unsettled, shares the following account of an impropriety with her father:

My father couldn't care less where I was or what I was doing... if we had any conversations, it was just about him. So he never asked me anything personal...about myself, or never even made any comments about me or

what am I doing, or anything. I remember one time when I came home and I had my son, and I went to visit him...we were leaving my aunt's house, and I was walking in front of him holding Sean. And he—he made a comment telling me that I got my shape back—how I got my shape back...after having the baby....I thought that was so strange...I was probably in my early 40s then....I don't think I ever heard my father say anything to me like that...And that's certainly not what I wanted to hear from my father. He's probably looking at me from the back...he was a womanizer....that was important to him...how a woman looks, not how educated they were or how smart they were, but how good they look...But my father never told me I was pretty, ever. But then I looked nice, not to my dad....I don't think he ever thought it....I don't think he was ever there for him to think...It wasn't important enough for him to think that way.

For the second time, Lando comments on how her father didn't pay attention to her, or at least when he did, it wasn't what she "wanted" from her father. It was the sexuality she had been taught all of her life to veil. Strangely, she immediately negates her acknowledging this type of attention by then stating that he didn't think of her in that way. Recall Celia did something similar when she shifted from no longer being able to sit on her father's lap to her not wanting to sit on his lap as she grew older. She emphasizes it again when she tells me she can no longer play with the boys in the neighborhood and is relegated to the porch. Their tension is evident—demonstrated by their use of terms like "fear," "afraid," "never

understood”—as these women move away from their or their father’s awareness of their burgeoning sexuality. Rather than locate their discomfort in what they’ve been taught, they internalize and take faultfinding with themselves

This is where the stories of the women interviewed diverged. In some instances, such as those above, the women told of how their fathers withheld their attention as the women matured. But in others, the women found themselves attended to by their fathers. When asked to tell me how she selects things to learn, Vivienne, who proclaimed herself as a self-propelled learner, began talking about being drawn to the “mystery of being a woman.” At first I was puzzled why Vivienne linked her learning to discovering her femininity but I quickly understood as her narrative then trailed into her attributing her pursuit to her father. It was one of the most important lessons she and the women interviewed would be taught:

I...love that whole mystery of being a woman. It’s fantastic...maybe that’s what drew me a little bit more to it...that...there was no real feminine role models and...probably because my dad talked to me about sex when I was so young in such a way, like, ‘Marriages just won’t last if you don’t have regular sex.’ I think that sparked something in me at a very young age that, ‘Well I better explore that and find what’s beautiful about that.’ And there—I mean that’s sort of spawned by fear but at the same time, I want to...well, in this situation with my parents, it’s ugly. But I need to find out

what's amazing and what's beautiful about it. I can't have an experience of enduring. That's not acceptable to me. I don't want to endure life.

In a later section I discuss the response the women had to the intersection of gender and class with their identities. They plotted their position on the social-scape with terms like "put up," "give up," "shut up," "one up," and "fill up."

Vivienne watched her grandmother and mother "endure" or "put up" with their positioning all their lives because of their being working-class women. Vivienne told me many times she did not want that for herself. In some ways she fulfills her desire, in others, she persists by enduring in just another way—"putting up" by changing her mind about sex. Like Vivienne, other women too talked about their father confiding in them about their sex life or lack of it with their mothers. Karri alluded to this when she told me about her father and her mother and father's relationship. She, like Vivienne, became a sort of surrogate. She served as her father's confidant and he hers:

My dad, I spill it all to my dad...I look at them now and he is more of a caretaker for my mom than he is a husband...on an emotional level, once again, that bonding – she's not capable of bonding and I think that he's really sa- well, I know – he's told me only on a couple of occasions...it's really sad for him to be...retired and not really have someone who can be more than just a friend.

Yet in some instances, the attention went so far as to be sexual abuse. Anne shared her experiences as a victim of sexual abuse at the hands of her stepmother's

father and her grandfather. In the end, she was blamed for the attention she received as if she had control over her grandfather's attention towards her:

I went to them and told them what was happening; and they – from the child's perspective – they said, “Uh,” or I heard them say, “Um, don't worry about it. Just stay away from him. He's old. He probably doesn't even realize what he's doing.” And I said, “Okay. I'm confused by this, but okay.” So I just tried to avoid him, and it didn't work one hundred percent; but at the same time...the response was, “Well, what do you want us to do about it? I mean, we can tell your grandmother, and she can say something to him. But that's going to cause some problems in the family,” and I was like, “Okay, I'll stay away from him.”

A few years later Anne is abused by her paternal grandfather. Sadly, it isn't his approach that scares her but rather that she didn't know what to do. Despite knowing of her previous incident with her step-grandfather, her parents had not prepared her for thwarting future pedophiles. Recall, their advice in that situation was to avoid it, ignore it, suppress it.

Then when I was 15...I was saving money so that when I turned 16 that I could drive; and with the community that we lived in, you really couldn't get a job when you were 15...there's no public transportation...So, my grandfather said, “Well, why don't you just ride with me on – during the – on the trucks this summer...you can help me out there, and then you can make some extra cash”...when it happened with him, I think – I was so –

how to describe this. I wasn't – it wasn't that I was afraid. It wasn't that I was – I didn't know what to do. I didn't know how to say no. No one had told me the previous time, “Well here's what you need to do in this kind of situation, so that it doesn't happen. You need to; you need to say these things. We need to practice those things you need to say,” or “we need to practice how you're going to react.” No one did that. It was more of a, “Just stay away from him and it won't happen again.”

Further pressure and scrutiny was put on Anne for failing to keep it from happening. At fifteen, her parents made her liable for her family's survival:

he controlled my father's paycheck...half of our income. He lived next door. It was like, “What are we going to do?” So then, when I went back to school in the fall, I talked to the school counselor and because it was so recent, it was something that had to be addressed immediately. So, they called in my parents and I had to sit there and tell them everything that had happened and they said, “We have to call Social Services and decide – they have to come out and interview you. They have to come out and interview him and they have to figure out what's going to happen here. Figure out if anybody needs to be charged with anything,” and on and on and on.

Interestingly, as a young girl, she's made to tell her story three times for it to have any weight: once to the counselor, once to her parents and again to the Social Services representative. Sadly, she can't retell it this third time. When they got home, Anne thought her parents had finally sided with her and would protect her

but instead they turned on her; she would be the purveyor of their family's welfare and happiness.

So when I get home that day... after my parents had come to school, we had talked about this at school; and we leave school and that evening we have – just the three of us – we talk about, like what are we going to do; and they pretty much explained to me...“If you decide you – that we shouldn't live here anymore, then we have to give up our jobs. We have to find a new place to live. We have to make all of these life-changing decisions.” And I said, “Well, I don't want to ruin everybody else's life just because of what happened to me. I'll just, you know, I'll just not go around him anymore or try not to do that.” And we're talking about someone who lived right next door. We're talking about someone who, during holidays, I had to go over there. You know, and so we had to go next door and tell my grandparents because, of course, Social Services is coming and so we had to go next door and tell my grandparents and my grandmother um, denied. She took up for him, all of these different things. No one, at any point, said, “Are you okay? Is everything okay? How are you doing?” It was all, “How terrible of you to say these things about this person who has tried to help your family.” On and on.

Presented with this dilemma, save herself versus save her family, Anne decided to lie to Social Services and make herself out to be a liar. She recalls in her narrative to me and in the poem, “Lessons My Father Taught Me” (see Appendix E8b), how

she felt as she stared out over the shoulder of the Social Services representative at her grandparents' house as she lied.

...well, and of course, he denies everything too. So then Social Services – they have to make an appointment to come out and talk to me first...the clearest thing...I remember of everything is sitting in my room, looking through the window. I opened the blinds just enough so that I could see my grandparents' house while I talked to the Social Services worker and told her everything had been a misunderstanding and that....somehow at school, they had gotten confused about what I had said and... just told it was all a lie....They never went and interviewed him. They didn't really have – all they had was my word to go on. So they simply said, "Okay, well, if it was just really a misunderstanding, then we'll just sign off on the case and it'll be closed, never anything really opened."

From then on, her worth as a woman and as a person were based in her ability to attract men; love and relationships were equated to physicality. "Love" is an insignificant word for her post abuse and this affects her developmentally.

...the word love was just tossed around so lightly and that had to do with...my grandfather, when I was nine, he would always tell me that he loved me at the end, when he was finishing up and everything what he was doing. He was always – say that at the end. "Don't tell anyone, but I love you." That sort of thing, and so I think, for me, it became a very – that word did not have the same association, or that phrase did not have the

same association with it anymore that it did – that it was supposed to.

That it should naturally develop as you're growing up.

In some instances, the women were called upon to be a marriage counselor. Sylvia cried as she spoke of her childhood. When I asked her why she had become emotional, she told me it was because her parents fought, a lot. Her mother was outspoken about her unhappiness at feeling unappreciated. In Sylvia's words, "she would get mean." In response, her dad would withdraw both physically and emotionally from the family. He included Sylvia in his withdrawal:

And my dad just would shut off completely. I mean, he – that's when I finally...not to have this same quality because I, I tend to – but his idea of fighting back is to walk out. So, he would just leave, like, go away, go for a drive....I was really stuck in the middle....I would – to relay messages....and both of them would talk about each other....To me...I was totally, totally stuck in the middle. My mom would talk about how she hates my father and wants to leave, blah, blah, blah and then my, and then my dad would talk about how mean she is, which she was, you know? Still is"

While the men withdrew—as much of the literature attested (Rubin, 1976; Willis, 1977, Sennett & Cobb, 1972), many of the women excused their father's withdrawal or lack of attention to the family as being the fault of their mother. Sylvia does in the preceding example as does Karri: She forgives her father as she says he was "emotionally stunted" as a result of his relationship with her mother.

He is repentant, changes his behavior and attends to her little sister and she excuses his prior absence:

He's...emotionally stunted...relates well to people...fun to be around.

You can...talk and joke...have fun with him. But when I was a kid, he just really wasn't around, and I think he regrets that. I remember even when I was graduating from high school...my family was moving to California and I was staying here for college and there was something that changed when I think he realized I wasn't going to be around anymore and he slowed down a little bit, started spending time with my little sister.

Often times their mother's instability was to blame. This instability was often ruled as an emotional or mental defect. Interestingly, there was a connection between mental defect and not having sex. Mothers that were "crazy" were often also simultaneously wives that "didn't have a lot of sex." Celia described her mother as manic depressive. Karri told me her mother was emotionally detached. Others had similar reports. In all the instances, none of these women were encouraged to seek help nor did they have an official diagnosis. The women I interviewed told me that their families and their fathers endured their mothers' illnesses as the stigma of any mental deficit was far more ruinous and would attract unwanted attention. Celia tells me her mother was a manic depressive; however, she was never officially diagnosed:

My mother was a sick person. My mother probably was a manic depressive...we didn't know about it for years because she never talked

about it, but her life was terrible. It had a terrible beginning, and she probably had very poor...parenting skills if any at all...hers were probably based on instincts to take care of this baby...my mother probably suffered from...her own childhood. But then when she...married in a generation where men...especially...Mediterranean, men were dominant and they lived with their family – lots of families live together -- the extended family, which is disastrous you know?

Celia attributes her mother's mental state to her living amongst dominant, Italian men. Too, she lived amongst the extended family of her husband where she had to compete with other women, namely her mother-in-law not to mention her also being subjected to the will of her husband and her father-in-law.

...it [made] it even worse for her. Her propensity was there and it was exacerbated by the situation in her life. So consequently, this oftentimes is the reason why there is emotional, physical neglect of the children because that person is just deeply involved in their own emotions and their own world. And I know from very young [?] that my mother could be good one day, and the next day you never – she was just off into another world. I mean, it was like shocking – more traumatic things like run away from home...

It was at these moments where Celia told me her mother would take drastic measures to get the attention of her father.

...my father used to put us in the car crying because we didn't know what was going on. He had to go look for her, or throw herself down the stairs to kind of get the attention. You know people like that cry out for attention to get help, but unfortunately you're living with ignorant people. They want to keep it secret because it's an embarrassment. It's a shame. And in those days it was much more of a stigma to have someone that had...manic depression or whatever because then people thought you were crazy and you can't be trusted, so they weren't inclined to tell or get help. So that my father had to live with. So a lot of times his way of dealing with this was to go off with his friends so he wasn't around.

Again, notice the fault is with the woman as the man's withdrawal is excused. It wouldn't have happen if she wasn't crazy, if she would have had "sex regularly."

Some of the women also translated their mother's illness or lack of "caring" for the family as their mother's ungratefulness for their "good life." Becky's mother lapsed into alcoholism. Becky attributes this to her mother feeling unhappy; however, Becky thinks her mother ungrateful.

She was not happy either...she never examined her own unhappiness or depression...her whole entire life. I suggested several times...when I was an adult, that she go to a counselor...she said, "oh, I don't have [to] go to a counselor...that's all way too hooky"...and I said, "I don't think so mom you really need to see somebody," and she never did. She never realized what a good life she basically had. You know, she resented her life.

Trudie was another participant who thought her mother had mental issues. As an ancillary note, this was compounded by both of Trudie's parents being deaf from infancy.

Now, my mother, my mother, I think, has some sort of mental problem...I'm telling you, my sister and I were like...my sister's a rehab counselor for the State. She's, she heads up the Colorado Springs office...and so she deals with a lot of people with disabilities, mental and physical disabilities and so she's seen quite a few things in her...25 years of doing it...she has my mother diagnosed. She's like, I can't remember what she calls it...my mother...everything was about my mom.... If everything was not focused on my mom, my mom would have a hissy fit. So...even into adulthood she was...a child.

Trudie describes her mother as narcissistic and craving attention. She gives me an example to elucidate: her mother was at a party at Trudie's house and most of the guests were hearing and unable to sign. Feeling left out of the conversation and the party as a whole, Trudie describes how her mother started squealing and threw herself to the floor in a tantrum in protest to her being excluded. Karri too described her mother as mentally ill. She tells me her mother had hallucinations and a nervous breakdown. She doesn't seek help however because Karri's father doesn't want to bring unwanted attention to the family. Karri recalls the following conversations with her mother,

I remember – she’s told me – we’ve had several conversations about when I was a little girl, like, like three and four years old...she used to...have hallucinations...She knows that she had a nervous breakdown...When, when we were very, very small kids and um, my dad was just like, “We’re not getting psychological help. You just don’t do that. You’re normal. You’re fine.”...And she just never felt like she could. ..I’ve encouraged her several times since I’ve been an adult...she would really benefit from some counseling but she just – I don’t know – for whatever reason isn’t interested. She has to come to terms with a lot of damage that she’s done...every once in a while she’ll come close to apologizing for some of the things that she did as a parent and I’m always ready to let her off the hook because it’s like, “You know what? You did the best you could with what you’re given,” and I believe that. I don’t believe that she ever did anything to try to harm or hinder us. She just was limited with what she had to offer to begin with.

I asked those women who remarked their mothers were mentally unstable to share examples and how they made sense of them. Often times they revealed some type of competition with their mothers or struggle for attention. Karri shared,

My mom – I, I’ve never confronted her with this or talked to her about it but I think that it was probably hard for her to – because I was such an overachiever...I don’t mean this in a conceited way at all...I think it was hard for her just because I did – she – I don’t know what she felt like she

had to offer or – I mean, I don't know if there was ever a sense of competition but maybe like, you know, I'm doing all these things that she could never do.

The pursuit of attention/inattention followed the women into other relationships they had with men. Some of them recognized the value of their sexuality and the contradiction in which they were entangled: be sexually desirable not sexually experienced. Lando laments if she would have only known how valuable her sexuality was as a 20 years old she would have used it more to her advantage to get things from men. She laments that getting older and gaining weight, she hasn't kept herself pretty and men no longer have a reason to "follow" her "off the bus anymore." Some however, are complicit as Anne explains away her husband's absence as something they've rationalized and to which they've agreed. Anne's husband and Anne have reached an understanding regarding his detachment from her as he likes to spend time away from her and with his friends: "Well you have your life and I have my life and it's great when we have time together but that doesn't mean we have to have all our time together." She sees it as her chance to be her own person. How then, is she complicit? She makes excuses for his behavior. It's like Rubin's (1976) young middle-class couple where the husband gives the illusion of allowing his wife the choice to have the child she is carrying or to have an abortion. She's not ready to have a child but would like children one day (Rubin, 1976, pp.97-98). He tells her it's her decision but if she aborts he'll never have any other children with her as she wasted that life. She chooses to have

the child and says the decision was all hers—it really wasn't. Rubin (1976) identifies this as an example of the "ideology of equality" that is "strongly asserted and characteristic of middle-class marriages (Rubin, 1976, p.97). It does seem as if the women interviewed engage in a second struggle as they transverse back and forth between the trappings of their working-class heritage—habitus—and their now self-proclaimed middle class status; however, I save this discussion for the "Conclusion." Vivienne explains it as her husband not having a "deep well" to delve into. Even their children have been enlisted in the ensuing performance as Lando shared the following exchange between her and her son:

..he has a lot of compassion...we have a great relationship. One time...we went through a phase where he wasn't talking to me very much...He's kind of distant...one day he blurts out, we were at my sister's house, "What do I have to talk to you for—about? We got nothing in common"...I was eating a pastry at that time, and I threw it at him...I said, "I don't need another fucking man in my life treating me bad"...He left. He left...So I came home, and I got out all my albums of my son from the time he was born until he was in his late teens...[I] put together an album, from the time I was pregnant with him...Just him and I, just pictures of him and I, and there were a lot of them. And I sent it to him. And I and I wrote a note in the album. I said, 'This is what we have in common.' I said, "Look at the smile on my face in every one of these pictures and know how much I loved being a mother, and how much I love you." Then I told him, "This

is what we have in common.'And we've gotten closer, and closer, and closer. And now we're really close, you know. I have a great relationship with my son, you know. And he's very, very self-motivated. He's very independent. He never asks me for anything.

She remarks her son is compassionate and in the same sentence says he is distant. How can someone be considerate yet detached? She takes great pride in that he's grown and now, doesn't ask her "for anything." It's in this way, many of the women were instructed that male attention was important, particularly their father's. These lessons occurred first in the home and later at school.

The women's academic lives mirrored their domestic lives. No one described themselves as "stand-outs." Some loved school because it provided a safe haven away from negative attention like the beatings Lando and her sister received: "I wouldn't leave high school...that's where I was safe; in school...no one could yell at us or hit us." Women who grew up working-class gave the appearance of requiring little attention from their teachers and counselors and so they received little to none; many of the women complained this was a mistake on the part of the school's personnel (Archer, 2008, p.550). Karri told me,

my high school counselors and even my college professors, they assumed a lot about me...I got good grades. I was very docile and obedient...good student...they didn't realize how much insecurity was in me....the lack of direction that I had...I think a student who looked like me usually had support from home that I didn't have....so no one had ever pushed me to

figure out what I wanted to do and what the options were. So I was kind of on my own to figure it out.

Christine and Celia withdrew from school when they were fifteen. Christine felt her counselors didn't expect much from girls like her—Mexican, working-class—and so they didn't take the time to find out what she might like to do. Celia lost interest in school as she was soon slated to get married. She wanted to go to college but everyone knew marriage, motherhood and nothing more was the expectation for girls like Celia.

Most shared they were average to good students academically. Amongst their peers, they operated in the middle to the fringe of the social space. Amelia reported being part of the “middle of the road crowd;” she tells me they weren't the “cheerleaders....the weird fat kids...they were just good students, we weren't the brainiacs we were just kind of the middle of the road crowd.” This “omnivoric refrain” can be drawn to both the working and middle classes; it gives the appearance that one is “normal” and therefore “ordinary” (Savage, Bganall & Longhurst, 2001, pp.887-888). By emphasizing they are ordinary they downplay any distinctions (Savage, Bganall & Longhurst, 2001 p.889). She didn't have many friends in high school, nor did Celia. Ursula reported “most of the teachers were good teachers” imparting “knowledge they were supposed to impart,” but she “wasn't the sort of kid that uh, grownups warmed up to.” They described themselves as not like the other girls or kids. Celia was one who “knew she was different” as her friends liked the Beatles and she preferred “classical music.” The

women had few mentors, fewer that were teachers; only a handful—about five—reported having a memorable person of influence in their lives. Those that did cited the reasons as the teacher knew more about kids than most, took an interest in them and were “real” and not “fake nice.” Sylvia explained, “they were just like realistic...tough, disciplined...disciplinarians.” Many reported having few to no friends. Some forsook school for male attention or because they wanted a “social life.” Anne was conflicted at school as she wanted to “blend in, hide way,” but wanted male attention too:

I think I just...every opportunity I had, I just wanted to kind of hide away and blend in and just not stand out at all...I didn't want – it was weird. I wanted male attention but at the same time, I didn't want male attention because it made me feel uncomfortable. So I was constantly struggling with those things and so that made me just want to hide away, blend in.

Amanda spoke of not remembering much about school. The stories she recalls are about the people, the clothes they wore, the sleepovers they had, “best and first kiss and those kinds of things, so I really wasn't learning that much about the academics of school.” Vivienne was one who saw little relevance for school. She was more interested in cultivating a social life: “I was third in my class in high school and third and not first because I really was not – I wanted a social life, too.” Others treated it like a job. They assigned it the same importance their parents gave their jobs. School was like a “job” for Sylvia just as her parents had jobs. She told me it was her responsibility to do well and while her parents shared

stories of their day at the dinner table, she would talk about school. “my parents worked and worked, worked hard and worked a lot so my thing was...this was my job...I was...so excited for my first day of school...devastated on the last day of school.” Karri knew school was important because she “went every day.” For those students, grades were equated to pay and many felt the need to get good ones.

Women that did get good grades did so in the hope they would get praise for their hard work; most remarked they didn't. They described themselves as people-pleasers and as always wanting to please. They usually expected praise to come from their mothers. A few had expectations for such “praise” from their parents; however, none expected praise from their fathers alone. Lydia strove to get good grades to get just “one little morsel” of praise but often received none. She recounted the times she would bring home A's on her report card with the hopes of her mother giving her accolades: “I'd bring home straight A's...I always remember, I'd like to wait for that one little morsel of, ‘Oh, good job’...one little time that she ever said anything, like, positive or negative...’Good job.’ Never got anything.” Recall Katherine had a similar experience. Her mother's praise of her had come too late. She wanted her mother's recognition for her academic success when she was growing up but never got it. Karri reported the same and thought her mother's failure to praise her was symptomatic of her jealousy of her.

When they choose postsecondary schools or careers they received little assistance financially or in planning. Anne enlisted in the military believing it

would offer the chance for her to go to college—a chance she wouldn't have had otherwise. What she found was little time to take classes as she was always training or moving base to base. They attributed their lack of assistance to the type of expectations their counselors had for them or because they didn't appear to require it. Recall Karri, Celia and Christine received little guidance. Others fumbled their way through feeling guilty and then changing careers because they found too much enjoyment in their choices or chose jobs with which they were familiar because they knew people that had those jobs or because they were the same jobs held by their parents. Sarah was conflicted in making her career choice:

I spent a long semester deciding if counseling was really going to be it for me...some weird guilt associated with going for something that I loved. Like, that would be too easy...you can't go for the easy things...almost equivalent to –'Well, I can't major in parks or recreation, that's too fun...there's no credibility in something fun...I just kind of thought my parents would say, "Oh, Sarah, you're just going into counseling because you like it"...like it's a bad thing.

Those that chose to go on to college chose schools based on what names they had heard before and applied to renowned ivy league schools like Harvard and Yale. Amanda, Chloe, Kerstin, Anne, Vivienne, Sarah and Amelia all laughed as looking back, they talked about how unrealistic they thought they were in their applications to such institutions. Some women, like Christine, Anna Maria, Lynda, Lando and Chloe admitted encouraging their children to apply to these same schools. Some,

while encouraged by teachers to choose a four year institution, didn't: few did so because social expectations were so entrenched or because of the lack of funds. Even when schools interjected, it was often with little effect as the schools hadn't the resources to remove the barriers these women faced. Ursula couldn't accept an invitation to Wellesley because she could never afford it; too, it was radically different than anything her parents had done or known. Anna Maria regrets not listening to her high school teachers who warned her she'd "be bored" at a community college and that she should go to a four year university. Instead, she chose to get married.

As they were taught by their parents, particularly their fathers, the women neither demanded nor received attention, including in schools. While they were good students they tended not to "stand out." They were obedient, got good grades and were average to good academically. While this "middle of the road" moniker may be out of the need to appear normal it also contains colorations of the women balancing between attracting attention and not attracting attention. Too, the women sought praise for their academics from their mothers and received little. Hence, education and their taking up of it was just another iteration of the withdrawal of attention that was symptomatic of their childhood.

Taking Care

"Taking care" appeared parallel to the theme of "paying attention." Just as "paying attention" was central to the experience of growing up a working-class female, so was "taking care." While the women sought their father's and other

male attention, they required their mother's care. These "father—paying attention" stories were set in childhood through adulthood and often appeared in juxtaposition to "mother—taking care" stories. The women often used stories of the two in contrast to one another, e.g., mother was an introvert, the father, an extrovert, and vice versa. The women would then describe themselves in terms of how they related to their two parents. Often their relationships with their fathers brought out questions of gender and what roles and or duties they saw ascribed to them as daughters. They judged their mothers on their ability to "take care" or "nurture." Mothers who were not good nurturers were described as cold, uncaring, a bad mother or mentally ill. As females, they later assumed the vestige of "taking care" themselves, for their aged parents and for their own families; when they didn't, they experienced guilt. Those that did not "take care" as their gender and class told them they should often did not because they had marked new paths for themselves: these paths diverged from what they were told was ascribed to working-class women. Using education, they sought to alter their destiny. In this way, "taking care" and educational aspirations were in conflict with one another.

There are very few studies on "taking care" and what it means for women who grew up working-class; even fewer linking the impact of caring to the educative experience of these particular women. Studies that did exist restricted themselves to looking at women juxtaposed to men in domestic partnerships (Rubin, 1976; 1995) or as mothers who encouraged their children to pursue higher education and the effect of that encouragement on that pursuit (Andres, Adamuti-

Trache, Yoon, Pidgeon & Thomsen, 2007). The few that skirted “taking care” spoke about women who chose career paths and careers that appealed to their class position such as teaching and nursing, or other such “caring” professions (Brine & Walker, 2004; Jackson, 2003; Lawler, 1999; Maguire, 2008; Reay, Davies, David & Bell, 2001; Yodanis, 2002) or investigated women in the academy and how the choice to work at a university was inherently rife with conflict: conflict in discourse, in leaving one’s caring nature behind so as to compete in a male dominated world (Luke, 1994; Madsen, 2006; Hey, 2003; Jones, 2004; Clegg, 2008; Richardson, Lawrence-Brown, and Paige, 2004; Sharma-Brymer & Fox, 2008).

Nel Noddings (2002; 2003) has done a significant phenomenological investigation into the meaning of “caring” and much of her work has been applied to the field of education. In her book, *Starting at Home: Caring and Social Policy* (2002), she draws on the work of Ruddick (1980) who locates the experience of caring as first occurring in the home. While Noddings (2002) acknowledges that the duty of “care” is relegated to both parents, she asserts it’s most often exercised by the mother. In *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, Noddings (2003) investigates the experience of caring, dividing her excavation between the two ways in which “care” can be experienced: the experience of the “one caring” and the experience of the one “cared for.” While the dictionary defines “care” as

(1) a burdened state of mind, as that arising from heavy responsibilities; worry; (2) mental suffering; grief; (3) an object or source of worry attention, or solicitude; (4) caution in avoiding harm or danger; (5) close attention, upkeep, maintenance; (6) watchful oversight; (7) attentive assistance or treatment of those in need (American Heritage, 2003).

Noddings (2003) purports care goes beyond this: it isn't enough to have a burdened state of mind about something or to have an inclination towards it. Rather, caring involves a commitment of the self, which in turn causes the self to undergo some conflict. As a result of that conflict, the self experiences a displacement of interest from their own reality to the reality of another (Noddings, 2003, pp. 13-16). The women interviewed spoke similarly of their experience of care. As stated, being daughters, mothers and wives often situated these women as the "one caring." These roles and the caring required engendered external and internal conflicts which were revealed in the narratives of the women interviewed.

In the narratives shared as part of this study, the women revealed they learned early on from their families that "taking" care was a duty ascribed to no one other than its female members. Their first demonstration of this came to them via watching their mothers. Later, as they grew older, they assumed the responsibility of "taking care." "Taking care" was often a stressor that interfered with their life course and subsequent educational aspirations. Too, when the curriculum failed to recognize the importance of "taking care" or made little space for it, the women felt disconnected, inadequate and guilty.

“Taking care” was understood to be “woman’s work” as demonstrated by Anne Cascarino’s account of the time she first brought her husband home to meet her family. Born to “Yankee” parents and of “middle, lower upper middle class” upbringing, her husband was criticized by the men, particularly, her father, for helping to clear the dishes after a family meal:

...that evening and the next morning when meals were eaten—and there’s a whole group of people because it’s the holidays—the men had their table and they were served first and the women had their table with all the children and took care of the kids and then when Alexander—when they got him over to the men’s table and he finished eating and stood up to take his plate and offered to take someone else’s plate—oh boy. They lit into him. Every man at the table lit into him about, ‘That’s a woman’s work. That’s a woman’s job.’

Notice in the passage above that the men of the family had their own table, were “served” and served “first.” The women on the other hand, had a table, but it was shared with the children as their primary function was—after serving the men—taking care of the kids. The concept of “serving” emerged in other narratives too as the women described their relationship with their fathers. Both Sennett (1977) and Rubin (1976) make the case that women split their time between two roles: one as sexual object, the other as domestic comforter. They knew that failing at either could have a perilous effect. They were taught at an early age by their parents that if they failed they risked being labeled crazy, uncaring and cold. Celia,

Trudie, Lando, Ursula, Sylvia, Karri, Becky, Amelia and Sarah all share that their mothers were deficient as mothers. Celia recalls examples where her mother would throw herself down the stairs just to get attention. She covets the mother of her friend with whom she walks to school. This mother bakes fresh bread, had warm milk and clean hankies every day for her daughter. Other ways in which the mothers carried out domestic duties included, caring for the children, caring for the husband, cooking the meals, cleaning the house, doing the laundry. These women too were supposed to make sacrifices so that others of their family might live worry free. Becky confides her mother was selfish and barely cared for her. Often she went to school unkempt: "...she just was not a terrific mother. She'd let me go to school with dirty hair or with the same clothes I wore the day before...she didn't care." Karri saw her mother as not having the capacity to encourage her: "my mom just didn't have a lot of capacity to encourage, you know, any of those kind of things and that's a whole 'nother issue."

Opposite mothers who didn't "take care" were mothers who did. Lydia, Kerstin, Morning Star, Katherine, Christine, Anne, Chloe described their mothers as ones who took care. Morning Star's mother spent time with her daughter. Christine's mother took care of her family all on her own while her husband was at war in Vietnam. She also cared for her parents: "She took care of the needs of not just us, but extended family like she took care of her mother." Chloe's mom made her daughter clothes. Katherine's mother made her a quilt.

As the women grew, “taking care” of one’s parents, particularly their father became prominent. When asked about what her father thought about her going away to graduate school, doctoral student Katherine Street told me, “My dad wanted to know to like why I’m so far away. Why I don’t like go home and take care of him. And like, I’m not kidding, like cook dinner and do the laundry and I mean, assume the female roles. Like he’s, he’s upset that I’m far away and that I’m not like doing my female duties in the family.” Anna Maria, a 49 year old displaced New Yorker who claims Czechoslovakian roots, echoed Katherine as when I asked her what her family thought of education she stated,

“it was not a big thing. You’re going to maybe get a job and then you’ll get married, and I do remember my mother and father telling me, “...were so happy we had you because we knew in our old age, you’d take care of us.”

Even though they had left their hometowns to go to school, many of the women told me they were expected to return. This expectation was held by family males and females alike. Kerstin exclaims that “even after 10 years, they still ask me when I’m coming back home!” Katherine echoes Kerstin:

they ask every single time they talk to me or see me...I’ve had to prepare my mom...I think my mom now knows that...probably won’t happen...I already sort of prepared her that as I go to presentations out here, that I’m going to check out universities...plant the seed that I might get a job out here....I think there’s just sort of the family expectation that if you leave

you come back....if my mom like needed me at all, I would absolutely drop everything and go, and go back. Like no, no question at all.

Notice the contention in Katherine. She's gone away to school and does not want to return home after graduating. She's thought out her departure to the extent that she has been preparing her family and her mother for her unlikely return; yet in the same breath, she says she would return to care for her mother should she need it. Christine too, tells me she learned from her mother that she too would one day need to take care of her parents: "I feel like it's my responsibility; I have to take care of my parents...growing up, that was kind of how we were brought up – to take care of, you know, your parents." About half of the women had this same connection with their mothers. Mothers were described as either nurturing or non-nurturing. Where the mothers were described as nurturing, those women continued to have a close connection with their mom and spoke similarly of the connection with home as Katherine does in the preceding example. Kerstin, another with a close tie to her mother, calls home everyday day despite having moved away 12 years ago. They remember and describe their mother's as taking care of them and other family members and reciprocate by being ready to take care of their mothers should they need it.

For these women, there was often a struggle between "taking care" and education. The women described this struggle in a couple of ways. One way was that they saw themselves having to make a choice between "taking care" or not. One was more symbolic in that they failed to see education connect to their lives

and two, they had to postpone or relinquish their educational pursuits because of family. When they didn't, they experienced extreme guilt.

Many women failed to see how education connected to their lives. They saw schools as not caring about them and they in turn cared little about school. Christine was very articulate in locating her disconcert: "I just didn't see like they really wanted to help the students go above and beyond. It was just get through. That's how I always felt through school." In the case of Katherine, she describes the struggle as being dehumanized by academia:

that's one thing...since I've been here that I've been struggling with. I feel...I think there are lots, lots of ways that I feel like academia sort of dehumanizes us...so I've been kind of, I mean it really does feel like sort an identity, identity crises...I've been struggling with...just the idea of, I mean I'm a pretty...driven person...once I...figure out how a system works, I'm pretty good at navigating it...but here...there's a professor here...he's one of my favorite professors here because his research...he would even say that it's humanizing research...he would call it that

For Katherine, her studies and the research models she's been taught go against exactly what she had been taught growing up by her family. How can she participate in something which she feels "dehumanizes" people when all along she had been taught to care for them? She names it well when she likens it to an identity crisis as that is exactly what it is. Even though she thinks the research of this one professor is humanizing, she doesn't sound convinced. "He" would say

it's humanizing; "he" would call it that. Her use of pronoun suggests she hasn't fully accepted it as such. Too, when her studies failed to care for her, Sylvia dropped out of her doctoral program:

I had gotten really sick...of people romanticizing the life of a poor graduate student, who had trust funds or who had their parents' money...I had this one friend who was just like, "Oh, I'm so sick of being poor"...yet her parents bought a condo for her...There's just so many people with silver spoons in their mouths who – I was actually living on \$15,000.00 a year...what...if...the bottom fell out or your world fell apart...what if I got really ill? What if I had some injury? There's no backup...I didn't want to live like that anymore.

How can Sylvia embrace something that she sees as abusive? She gave it all of her attention, sacrificed herself by living meagerly only to have no guarantee of what it could provide for her: "there's a point where it's just like, you're not really contributing anything to the world by studying these obscure things that no one understands." Brine & Walker (2004) found this too among the women in their study. After going to school the women find themselves, "different" selves as they have no one with which to share their university experience (p.104).

The other way in which "taking care" was important was how it affected their educational pursuits. Often the women were forestalled either because of marriage or children. Christine wanted to attend school the first year of her marriage but her husband didn't want her to: "When I first got married, I was

done. I had my Associate's degree and I talked about going back to school, but I remember our first year of marriage, he didn't want me to." The tension comes like it does for so many women, between their ambition to go to school and their domestic life which is threatened by it (Brine & Walker, 2004, p.104). Celia said the same thing about Nick. He was afraid if she went to school she would shirk her duty to "take care" and that might lead to something more permanent. I asked her what he thought about her waiting to go back to school: "Big threat...because he thought I was getting restless and that I wouldn't stay home." She tells me she always made sure to have all her work done so he would have no complaint. She made sure nothing interfered

with the family. I was there for the meals. I did the shopping. I took care of my house. I did the laundry. Took care of my children. If the kids were home sick, I stayed home. I did my papers home. If I had research, I did them while the kids were in school. I did it all around the family, and so he had no complain. I made sure he had no complaint.

Celia took great pains to ensure the care of her family were met. But still, her husband Nick made it hard on her, often using guilt to make her feel bad about leaving the house to go to class at night. It was as if choosing to do something for herself was in direct conflict with her duties as wife and mother. He intimated it was a sign of her lack of care for her family.

he made it very hard for me because he would come home late...most classes start at 7 o'clock and you have to leave at a reasonable time; 6:00-

6:30. Well he'd come home late and I'd be running out that door...then he would...belittling remarks like "You can't even wait. Your hand is on the doorknob. You can't wait to get out of this house." And see he did everything he could to break me down and my spirit, so I'd say "Oh I'm not going to go"...I used to cry on the way to school and I was going, and that's what kept me going. It was defying the fact that they didn't want me to become a person.

Celia believing education would make her "a person" is key. It suggests that without it, she doesn't see herself as one. That begs the question, what then did she consider herself? She believed that by pursuing education she was in turn taking care of herself. For Celia's husband and many of the other working-class families, women were to sacrifice themselves to their domestic roles. Anne talks about taking on so much as a graduate student and a new wife that she fills her days up until she can add no more. She tells me she'll stay up all night until "it," caring for the house, cooking, school work gets done. Many of the women did this. They would knock themselves out trying to manage all their duties and took it as a mark against them when they failed to perform. These feelings of being unable to manage it all can be overwhelming not to mention how that's exacerbated by a society that doesn't recognize it.

Other women adjusted where they went to school and how they went.

Lydia chose to go to a law school with a lesser ranking because it had night classes and she could attend around her work schedule. When her second child was born,

she gave up school altogether. It isn't until now, that her children are old enough to not need a babysitter that she can consider returning to school. Savage, Bagnall & Longhurst (2001) found class influenced where working-class students in England chose to go to school. Working-class students often chose schools based on location and cost not on the quality of program. Several of the women, like Lydia, took longer to complete their programs. Bachelors are typically completed within four years. Many of these women took 9 to 15 years to finish.

By ignoring the constraint domesticity placed on these women, that is, by competing with roles that had salience from when they were little girls, education does little to care for women of working-class backgrounds. Too, in a culture that considers caring essential to defining who they are, when education fails to reveal that in return, these women from working-class have difficulty seeing how their lives have meaning in institutions bent on denying their existence.

Up

This study began because I wanted to look at how women from working class backgrounds came to know who they are and how they made the choices they did despite what the literature and their upbringing may have told them. How did they navigate what for most was uncharted social space? What challenges do they or did they encounter along the way and how did they surmount and or surrender to those challenges? In what ways did their educative experience contribute? Unquestionably, their lives were told as if one were recounting a battle: full of maneuvers all with the purpose of jockeying for a better position in

life—better than that of their families, their grandmothers, their mothers, even what they had now. As the mantels of being female and working class were continually thrust upon them—reminding them to take care of their families and strive for the “right” male attention—these women used phrases like “shut up,” “give up,” “put up,” “one up,” “fill up” to describe ways in which they acted, reacted or had been acted upon throughout their lives in relation to their aspirations and subsequent educational pursuits. This finding corresponds to the literature I surveyed as the women in those studies too relayed stories of either resistance/oppositional behavior or suppression/cooperation when responding to struggles with their identity and identity making. They differed, and what’s new here is how they described their responses. This section explores those strategies—shut up, give up, put up, one up and fill up—and what the theme of “up” suggests overall about women from working class backgrounds.

Dictionaries provide a view into what the current consensus is around the use of a word; as a starting place and as a means for gaining insight into the meaning these women may be projecting by the use of such phrases in their narratives, I have included a brief definition and analysis of each. In doing so, it’s clear, their word choice smacks of their agency—even if only seeming to the women themselves as “up” suggests movement. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 4th Ed. (2009) lists 17 definitions for “up” when “up” is used as an adverb. As an intensifier for the verbs here, the phrases operate similarly as they all indicate position, but dissimilarly as they denote the

way in which that position is ascertained. What follows is a discussion exploring where the women reported how they lived in their social space by “shutting up,” “giving up,” or “putting up” their wants and desires for another; often this surrender was attributed to their roles as working class mothers and or daughters. Sometimes the women were reminded of their gender and class by being, as one woman called it, “one upped.” Other times they were the ones “one-upping.” They searched for meaning in their lives and fought to combat the emptiness they felt by “filling up” their days. Nevertheless, despite their struggles, the women didn’t see themselves as powerless like much of the literature on the intersection of class and gender portrays (Gorman, 2000; Rubin, 1976; 1994). Rather, they always described themselves as actively plotting next steps. The very use of these verb phrases—shut up, give up, put up, one up, fill up—to describe their experiences and the experiences themselves suggest the women didn’t see their dreams as defeated. For them, it was more a strategy of perseverance—in juxtaposition with the men, the women described themselves as flexible, always ready and able to change course without mislaying their dreams.

Some critics would argue their willingness to preserve and or change themselves not an advantage at all; rather, they would see it as proof the women were complicit in what had been assigned to them as women, mothers, daughters and wives mediated through a habitus which bears their working-class origin. Others too might rationalize this evidence of either their move from growing up working to now living middle class and taking on that class’ trappings, or that class

really is non-distinct and the women have assumed this—although false—philosophy of egalitarianism common in the middle-class which is really just a complex but still resolute way of acquiescing (Rubin, 1976, pp.96-98). It's false in the sense that they are not "so much more egalitarian, but that the ideology of equality is more strongly asserted" (Rubin, 1976, p.97). They think they have a choice, but they don't. While there may be truth in that theory, the women I interviewed didn't believe this for themselves. Bamboozled or not, they believed they had power over their lives. As tacticians, these women illustrate their awareness of the spaces they navigate as well as many of the respective rules. This is significant for educators as it elucidates the effect gender and class have on working class women and education on the whole, and it also speaks to how they may move within the educational space. When challenged, do they "shut up" or silence their ideas? Do they "give up" or "put up" their intelligence? In what circumstances? When do they choose to challenge or "one up?" How do they react when competition or middle class values are promulgated in schools?

Shut Up

"Shut up" is an informal phrase used to mean "to cease to talk or make a noise or cause to cease to talk or make a noise" (Collins, 2003). The definition recognizes the nuance attributed to silence that is of current trend with the use of the word "cause" suggesting "shut up" can be imposed by one's self or "caused" by something external; it isn't merely absence of speech but an overt act taken to promote "negative" speech (Acheson, 2008). Consequently, while historically

silence has been perceived as symptomatic of women's subjugated status, "silence," in the Foucauldian sense, might also be understood as the "refusal to 'confess'" and or "to 'expose' the self" (Luke, 1994, p.213). I found instances of both in the women of working class heritage of which I interviewed. An examination of each follows.

Many of the women told me how they did not want to be like their mothers or grandmothers who often had to submerge themselves or "shut up" in the presence of their families, particularly male family members. They told stories where their matriarchs or they themselves were silenced by the men in their lives and, in the view of these women, restricted to the roles of wife, daughter and mother ascribed to them. Interposed throughout the narratives, the women told me stories of where they were reminded of what I term as their "spatiality"—their place and relationship to other persons, things, etc.—by being "shut up." Vivienne's narrative alone included the following three reminders in her discussion of her grandmother and mother:

1. "Um, it was – and I think this is also probably partly the 50s mentality of the woman does what the woman's supposed to do, which is take care of the children and shut up."
2. "My grandfather was very, very dominating and would just basically anytime she said a word tell her to shut the fuck up."
3. "Uh, because women weren't – didn't have a brain. They had no valid thoughts whatsoever."

These were stories of subjugation. One such story was Anna Maria. In speaking of her own aspirations, Anna Maria told me about the time she went to visit her mother in a nursing home. Leading up to this she had described her mother as quiet, someone who chaperoned and baked cookies and cakes for the ice cream socials at school. But Anna Maria was conflicted by her mother's silence. The quiet was in part, Anna Maria reasons, due to her mother's "hate" for her father. Anna Maria expressed deep love for her father and his community activism; this was in contrast to the insipidness and now and again disdain she directed at her mother. Early in the interview, Anna Maria tells me it was jealousy not loneliness as the reason for her mother's "hate" because her father was outgoing in ways her mother couldn't be, it took him away from his family and it earned him the esteem of his peers. Researchers have cited male distancing from their families such as this as characteristic of working class marriages (Komarovsky, 1962, as cited in Gorman, 2000, pp.695-696; Rubin, 1976). Their studies attribute this departure to male self-blame for their perceived occupational failure (Komarovsky, 1962, as cited in Gorman, 2000, pp.695-696; Rubin, 1976). Anna Maria's mother's story on the other hand, suggests something else may be the cause. Anna Maria makes this illumination and, recognizing a different cause for her mother's recluse, in turn leads her—even if only for a moment—to draw a comparison to herself:

She was smart, also but she never went on to college. I think she – as a matter of fact she's 89. She's in a nursing home, now and I visited – I visit her maybe every three months and at Christmas when I visited her, she told

me something very insightful. She, she was sitting by the Christmas tree in the nursing home and she leaned over in the wheelchair and she started crying...“What’s wrong, mom?” She said, “I have so many regrets. I never did what I really wanted to do. I always did it for your father. I, I, I don’t know who I am," and the tears just rolled down her face. And so, you know, tears started rolling down my face. I know what it’s like. I did the same thing and I – I’m trying to stop myself from doing the same thing.

Many of the women found that their mothers and grandmothers “shut up” in this way only to voice regret, as Anna Maria’s mother did, later in life. In these instances of “shutting up,” women such as Anna Maria’s sacrificed their lives and submerged their own wants and desires for their husbands. I speculate they never came to know their own wants and desires as Anna Maria’s mother states, “I don’t know who I am.” In experiences such as this, the women didn’t use silence as an expression of hate or jealousy but rather, as they saw it, they were keeping quiet in support of their husbands. Two other items of importance here are the comparison Anna Maria makes to her own marriage. Further on in this section, I discuss her marriage and how she is similar to and where she departs from her mother’s life story. Two, Anna Maria’s statement, “but she never went on to college” suggests she—like many of the other women I interviewed as well as those that appear in the literature—believed college may have provided her mother the answer as to who she was and the voice to express it. In the coming analysis, other women will report similar hopes for their education only to be met with mixed experience

(Sharma-Brymer & Fox, 2008; Jones, 2004; Richardson, Lawrence-Brown & Paige, 2004; Jackson, 2003; Gorman, 2000; Lawler, 1999). Some, such as Katherine Street, shared a current experience where she felt “shut up” by the academy.

Being “shut up” wasn’t limited to family. The women also reported experiencing it at schools and linked it directly with their being a woman with a working class habitus. Katherine Street, a doctoral student in her thirties, is the newly elected president of her school’s graduate student organization. When I asked her about her experiences as a graduate student and how she felt gender and class had affected her life course, she shared with me an example where she was excluded by the outgoing male president in one of the office’s key activities. She had prepared a schedule for the workshops the college would hold that semester and he reworked it. She believes had she been male she would have had a different experience. Too, she thinks class may have been a contributor. She fears she may not be recognized as being academic enough and hence, this made her seem vulnerable and capable of being overpowered and silenced:

I just think that’s a domineering thing to do. I mean, all of that’s domineering...for him to have reworked an entire, like there are so many levels, so for him to have reworked an entire schedule, instead of, instead of talking to me about it. Like he just, he took ownership of it, right...and then, when I asked for...the copy or asked for suggestions for him not to email me the suggestions but for him to then take my copy...it’s like he’s

going to take the whole...thing and then he's going to exclude me from the process...the whole thing was like completely...it's completely about power and a domineering, and a domineering way...to relate. And no, like I don't, I, I don't, it's not that I think a guy would have responded differently in my circumstances. I don't think he would have ever done that to a guy. I mean I don't think that would ever, ever have happened.

I asked Katherine if she thought class had had any part of her being "excluded" as she told me earlier about how, being from working-class she had often felt uneasy in her graduate program: "I wonder about that...Just relationally...if there are...just sort of tells. Or like signals...I told you just the tension of I'm like not academic enough...I wonder...how does that come off?...I'm sure that that shows up in places." Katherine continued to explain she was a "people-pleaser." Many of the women did: Anne, Anna Maria, Sylvia, Barb, Celia, et al.. Obedience and conformity are key values stressed among the working-classes and they were important to Katherine too (Rubin, 1972; Sennett & Cobb, 1973). She ties this to her workshop schedule experience with the outgoing president.

...I'm pretty driven but I'm very much a pleaser...I want to do what's expected of me...whatever...the right thing is in a given situation...I want to do right. And most of the times...I think I just sort of have a sense of that. So I don't know if, like he picked up on that and thought, "Oh well", in that situation that he would be...in a situation where I would sort of be working for him...I don't know what it was, but I wonder if there are

things that sort of...signaled him that that was okay. I mean it had to have...at some point.

Feelings of inadequacy and insecurity are rampant in the literature of students—particularly those that are female—of working-class backgrounds who consider and or attend a college or university (Sennett & Cobb, 1972; Gills, et al., 2008; McMillan, 2004; Reay, et al., 2001; Reay, 1998; Madeson, 2006; Hey, 2003; Kaufman, 2003; Hurst, 2008; Sharma-Brymer & Fox, 2008; Evelyn, 2004; Pamphilon, 2005; Nenga, 2003; Jackson, 2003; Lawler, 1999; Jones, 2004; Richardson, Lawrence-Brown & Paige, 2004). Chloe and Anne voiced this same concern and responded by being quiet. Many women were “shut up” too as they sought guidance for their future. Ursula, Christine, Karri and Sarah spoke of instances where they shared with their guidance counselor what they wanted to pursue as a future career only to be stopped midsentence and told to pursue something else. Sarah had wanted to study Math and become a teacher but instead got her Bachelor’s in Fine Art. I asked her why she was dissuaded from becoming a Math teacher. She answered,

...that’s a good question...it was at a time...when the buzz was that there was a shortage of good Math teachers...I went in and I said, “I would like to get a minor in German and a major in Math...that way, I can be certified to teach both and make myself a little more marketable in schools when I go to apply for a job”...he said, “You know, you’re really not going to have enough time to study both areas. I would recommend if you get a

minor, that you get one in Math or perhaps Science"...I walked out of there thinking, well and the other things he said was, "And this is a really, really tough field to get into. It is really difficult to be a Math major...it's difficult to --"...whatever, you know. His words were not, "Hey, this is a great market. It's a great time." I think I got easily swayed by people who were my supposed experts that I went to....I walked out of his office thinking, "Huh, doesn't seem like so much fun to be a Math major or a Math minor...I decided to look into other majors.

With little consideration of her aspirations on the part of her counselor, Sarah chose a profession entirely opposite of what she had wanted to do. Katherine too is fearful to say anything to her peer that took over on creating the workshop schedule. In their families and in their academic lives, gender is compounded by class as women from working class backgrounds keep silent or "shut up" in deference to authority; in the instances shared with me, this authority was always wielded by men.

How then can "shutting up" or silence be construed as agency? Silence can be imposed from something external to us, but it can also be self-imposed. One can choose when to speak and when to keep silence. Some theorists go so far as to assert competition of voices or "one-upmanship" is a discursive practice of males and "that women use silence in politically strategic ways to subvert and resist male social and linguistic power" (Luke, 1994, p.214). Some of the women interviewed confessed to "shutting up" or keeping silent as a means of protest.

This strategy was employed in the most pressing of situations where the women felt their very person threatened. Recall Celia's portrait and an earlier example used from her narrative when analyzing the theme "paying attention;" it functions as an example here too. Celia told of the time her father told her she was going to marry her husband. It was an arranged marriage as Celia had eyes for a girlfriend's brother, aspired to finish high school and attend college. Her father had always admonished she not socialize with boys but then Celia saw him pushing her toward one man. When she asked the reason for his behavior change, he told her he got to "choose the one," she had no say in the matter and if she did assert herself, he would kick her in the stomach until he rendered her barren: "I don't have any say and I don't have anybody to protect me, and I don't know where to go. I'm 15 years old. So I went out with Nick." Engaged at 15, Celia married Nick at 16 and although she dreamed of going to college, wasn't allowed to finish high school. During their courtship she told me she "shut up" to her father and saw dating Nick as a way to get out of the house. "Between the crazies and my father, it was so bad at home I would do anything to get out and that was the compromise." She resorted to more extreme tactics of silence as when marriage was pressed, Celia tried to commit suicide:

I just thought to myself "I don't know what to do." So I took a half a bottle of aspirins that night....I thought they would kill me. I was hoping they would....I heard him talking..."I'm never going to permit her to get with this other fellow. If that's what she thinks she's going to do. That's

not going to happen.” So I decided then that I was better to acquiesce and save my life and get out of there and I accepted what they did. They did all the arrangements. I just came. You know what I mean?

Realizing she was at the behest of her father, Celia chose silence as a way to get away from him hoping in her new situation she might have a chance to finish school: “I had a lot of dreams in my head that someday I can go to school so I can be something or get out of this ignorance. I hate this ignorance you know what I mean?” Celia saw marrying Nick as an easier path of resistance to her educational pursuits. By keeping quiet and marrying him, she earned her GED at 18. Other researchers spoke of the phenomena of silence as strategy: “Even if she wants her voice to be heard it is not; she adjusts and compromises in everyday life, making silence a practice” (Sharma-Brymer & Fox, 2008).

Hence, “shutting up” or silence was a mechanism of protest for other women of working class backgrounds too, particularly in school. Ursula spoke of how she refused to participate in the “club” in her architectural program. She felt her professors treated her differently and held her to a different level of standards because she was an outspoken female.

...it was always some bizarre thing, like, “What are you going to make this out of?” “What this little feature here?” Because nobody else in the class had to tell you what the materials were. Nobody else had to provide a spec on this on their first year design class. I mean – nobody else had to provide strict little details. It’s like – but anyway, so and I guess because, you

know, they would bring out, I think that probably bring out the stubborn, flippant part of me to be, “Well, to hell with you. If I can’t be part of your club, well, you know, do the physically impossible.”

Other women used “shutting up” to conceal themselves. The women in this study, as did the women in much of the current literature on women from working class backgrounds, spoke of women who didn’t speak because they were fearful they would be found out as not belonging. Amanda was illegitimate as was her mother and therefore, she tells me, her grandmother couldn’t be that upset with her mother when she found out she was pregnant with Amanda:

I don’t think my grandmother was really all that annoyed with my mom because we’re not sure of the story but it may have been the same thing that happened with her. I don’t know. He may have been married. There may have been a divorce. It may have been bigamy. We’re not really sure because when that door was closed there was no discussing it...that is the huge rub between these two women was the fact that my mother always wanted to know more about her father. Well she actually didn’t know [?] her father until he died and she was a grown woman and she found the birth certificate, which is very exciting. Can you imagine?

Similar tactics followed these women into the classroom and other social spaces:

Katherine talks of concealing the abuse she suffered at the hands of her step father from her high school basketball team:

...the people that I played basketball with and were, and I was probably closest to them. I mean, they, they knew, like they'd see at games what would happen, you know. But um, but I wouldn't talk about it. Nobody would talk, and they wouldn't talk about it. I mean, and somebody might make a comment about my step-dad being like mean or an idiot or whatever, but, but that was kind of it, you know.

In high school she experienced moments where it wasn't safe to expose her intelligence or basketball skill: "it wasn't always safe, like in front of the kids to sort of be smart or to be good at things." Morning Star, Christine, Barb, Amelia and Amanda reported the same: they might get "beat up" for being too smart and not fitting in. Christine hid herself and eventually withdrew mentally from school because being smart was such a stigma: "I was in fourth grade in the fifth grade reading level, so the girls...in the fifth grade in the fourth grade reading level threaten[ed] to beat me up because they thought I was smarter than them...I just work hard." Morning Star recounts a time when she would take different paths to avoid the public school kids who would attack her for being in private school:

sometimes we try to walk down to...a local park that was several blocks down and we had to pass...a public school, which we kind of learn to divert [our] path because we wore a uniform...when the public school kids saw the kids in uniforms, you know, they were like "Oh, let's just beat them up"...we always had to be carfeul of public school kids, and you can tell which ones to watch out for or which ones not to...several times when

we would see like a whole group of them coming...we would have to just run.

In other situations later in Katherine's doctoral program, she worried about being exposed via her speech and chose to keep quiet afraid of being discovered as not academic enough:

...I think there are lots of times when I feel like I'm not academic enough...Which is really kind of weird because I feel like I'm too academic for my family and not academic enough for most of the people...that I'm in classes with...that just feels kind of strange.

I asked her why she thought there was such a gap and she attributed it to her not having access to the "right" knowledge. Katherine made this assertion in her interview while talking about being too academic for her family and not academic enough for her peers. This "split" makes her uneasy as she doesn't know how to reconcile it:

...I feel like there are these sort of pockets of knowledge that...I have no access to. Or I haven't had access to and I don't know...where those would have been...I feel like I'm playing catch-up or something...I think that's hard for me...I feel pretty confident at most things...but I, I do...feel like that a lot...there's just, like something that I've missed that I don't even know like where that would have been. You know. I don't know if that makes any sense at all...

Other women I interviewed intimated the same. Sylvia had a similar experience. Now withdrawn from her doctoral program she had no access to people who thought the same way she did. She had “no one to talk with.” Anne Cascarino who was silenced by her parents earlier in her life, unable to talk about the sexual abuse she incurred from both her grandfathers,

I adored my parents...to me...they were so wonderful. There was nobody else like them. I shared a very close relationship with them all growing up, except for those two, those incidents. Those became silent. Never talk about them again kind of things...then when my dad and my mom divorced...they each took the liberty of sharing with me much more information than they should about the problems in their relationship and about – just how they felt about each other and things like that – I realized neither of them were the people that I thought they were and then my father remarried and then got divorced again, and then remarried...I’d meet these women and I’d talk to them once or twice and then somehow, they would all feel like they could call me and vent about my dad.

Her family used silence to cloak her sexual abuse yet rejected it in other scenarios by making their own sexual disclosures to Anne. Anne too used this “shutting up” strategy in school to protect herself from being discovered as not smart enough; gaps she attributes to her growing up working class.

I do feel that way...even now, like in the teacher world, I feel like I, I’m still trying to figure out how to be this professional, how to present myself

as this professional...sometimes I feel insecure in those situations – a lot of times I feel insecure in those situations. Like I feel like I do a great job teaching. When I'm in front of the classroom, I feel very confident, I don't have any problems there, but when I have to work with or deal with like a supervisor or something, then it's more along the lines of, "Am I coming across as being as professional as I should be," or am I inadvertently...creating some kind of faux pas, some social blunder that I'm not even aware of.

I asked her to relay a specific instance of when she felt this way and she relayed, Specific – it happens to me a lot with words... I feel like I can talk normally. Come up with vocabulary without any kind of problem but then when I'm talking to someone – even like with his parents [her husband's] sometimes, or...neighbors that we had that I feel like are more professional, I mean retired from some professional position – I feel like I have more difficulty coming up with the right word. I feel like I'm always searching for how to say it best so that I sound smart enough. That's it, smart enough.

After our interview, Anne was one of the women who chose to follow up with me and provide additional fodder for her interview. It was here where she made the connection to her class and talked about manners—when to use the right fork—to not knowing appropriate dress codes and nuances like how to wear a scarf. Other researchers found this too; class was salient through clothing, food, leisure and

taste (Bourdieu, 1994; Esposito, 2011; Nenga, 2003; Kaufman, 2003). Through talk, clothing, etcetera, class is revealed. The women knew this and navigated their social space in such a way so as to conceal themselves or “shut up” who they were.

Give Up

“Giving up” was another response to the challenges the women had in their lives related to class and gender which in turn had impact on their educative experience. Sometimes the women used “giving up” as a way to avoid conflict—“I have a weird internal thing with conflict and yelling.” Lydia, like many of the women, described herself as driven; she felt she could “roll over people” to get what she wanted. But when “push came to shove,” she would “give up” and had a “hard time” when it came to any actual conflict. One woman reported giving up all her 20s, her good years only to have her fiancée break up with her two weeks before their wedding. Others spoke about women in their families that settled, such as Lydia’s grandmother, who had the choice to marry more than one man, including a “doctor,” but Lydia always got the impression that her grandmother felt she “settled.” “I always got the feeling like...she kind of regretted, you know. Maybe she should have picked one of the other ones.” The experiences these women name as “giving up” are in line with the definition. They usually used “giving up” in a way to suggest a loss or “settling.” ”To “give up” means (1). a). To surrender; b). To devote (oneself) completely; (2). a). To cease to do or perform; b). To desist from; stop; (3). To part with; relinquish; (4). a). To lose

hope for; b). To lose hope of seeing; (5). To admit defeat; (6). To abandon what one is doing or planning to do (American Heritage, 2009). Unlike the definition, the women interviewed didn't always lose hope. But they did "let go" or acquiesce to their roles as mothers, wives and daughters as they often were required to "give up" their aspirations. These aspirations included starting new businesses, new non-profit/charitable organizations and in many instances educational programs that would parlay into better pay, a better job, and or the businesses and nonprofit/charitable organizations about which they dreamed. Many times this "giving up" was not indefinite, but nevertheless, they were forestalled.

Lydia was one woman who had to "give up" her educational pursuits in order to take care of her family. She went to a less distinguished school and then eventually, gave up her program altogether. She began classes at a four-tier law school—the lowest rank a law school can be assigned—not because she wasn't smart enough to get into an upper-tiered school but because it offered night classes that she could take around her duties as a mother and wife.

it's accredited, but it's not, you know, a top school [laughter], by any means. It's like a four-tier school, but it had a night program. .And the other schools don't around...have any night programs. So I was working full time, and then going to school. I took, like, two classes at a time. So I got seven classes done. But then, my other child was born, my daughter

was born, so. We -- I had to give up something [laughter] because my husband was at school full time.

I asked how they made the decision that “they,” or rather “she” give up school if they both were enrolled. She explained that while she enrolled first and they both managed one child, going school and working, when her daughter was born, her special needs required someone to take care of her:

when the second one came along, she has some issues. She has special needs, so. It was a matter of him finishing at all, or me. You know, like, he needs to have a degree. So I should give up...I should be the one to give up

While it was Lydia’s second degree and her husband’s first, still she explains, it was her duty to stay home and take care of their daughter. Her husband, she tells me, didn’t have the patience for their daughter—particularly because of her special needs. She required too much attention and care. Women that gave similar accounts include Christine and Celia. They both had to drop out of school to care for their children. It wasn’t until family responsibilities lessened that they could even think of going back to school. This often coincided with the kids being school aged and no longer needing the level of “care” for which the women felt responsible as Lydia shared she “just finally got to the point where I could handle going to back to school...My kids are old enough now, and they stay home alone for a while...I don't have to have a sitter.” As a plus of her job, she was also “getting free tuition” which alleviated any financial burden (Savage, Bagnall, & Longhurst, 2001). Nonetheless, even upon return, the women always

had to operate under the guise of “having it all” and not drawing attention from their husbands. Recall Celia’s story of Nick keeping her from getting to class. The other women had similar stories. They needed to have all their housework done, everyone clothed and fed, job worked—if they had one—satisfactorily, before going off to class. Other researchers found this common in the working-class women they studied (Jackson, 2003; Rubin, 1976).

Chloe echoed some of these other women as well, but explained it as her not “needing to make history” and located it in her religious affiliations. She was willing to give up her aspirations she reasoned as having children, her role as mother usurped anything she would have wanted for herself.

Do I think it's right? No. Do I agree with that's reality? Yeah. I mean, most quiet women -- or no, it's well-behaved women. "Well-behaved women rarely make history"...I used to have the need to make history.

And I don't anymore, not in that way.

I asked Chloe, “Why not? When did it change for you?” She responded, citing the Bible. Chloe, like some of the other women, claimed a denomination and or referenced their spirituality. Although there are no formal studies, religion and or spirituality seemed to reinforce what the values purported by being female from working-class. Chloe was Seventh Day Adventist and was taught her role as mother was paramount among all else.

Kids...in the Song of Solomon...there's a line that says, "A truly blessed woman is one whose kids would rise up and praise her as a mother"...I

think...if my kids get to be adults and still value me as a mother, as a friend, still want me in their lives, I can say that I was a good mother, then I've made history...I've done the most important job that I was here to do...if my kids grow up, and they are happy, and they are still right with God, I've done the most important thing.

These women reconciled themselves to their choices to put family—usually children first—as they saw it their duty to “take care.”

Conversely, some of the women were dejected and wondered if who they were or attainment of their aspirations held any real value. Forty-one year-old high school English teacher Amelia reported being disgruntled learning that working hard didn't have the same value for her colleagues and her education wouldn't be remunerated at the expense she incurred. She, like the women of Jackson's (2003) study, wondered why she should work so hard when passing or taking a less demanding job was acceptable and sometimes better. She thought about acquiescing:

I've been learning this year...maybe hard work isn't about...I've actually been questioning that. Maybe I'm a dumbass...why am I getting my doctorate and making as much money as somebody who did no schooling and is a manager somewhere?...maybe I'm stupid for this...this is kind of been the first year where I thought, you know, maybe I shouldn't have worked so damn hard.

Sylvia, like Amelia, felt she wouldn't get her due for all her study and expense and withdrew from her doctoral program; but, despite acquiescing, all of these women later in their interviews expressed hope, either as mothers for their children, as demonstrated by Anna Maria in the following paragraph or in reconsidering their choices and starting down a new path. Sylvia was going to look into obtaining an adjunct position. Amelia was looking for an assistantship to support the continuation of her doctoral studies. She also reported reconciliation with her colleagues as she said she was appeasing her sense of "doing what was right" and being a "good," "challenging" teacher for her students.

Sometimes the women gave up their aspirations so that their children, particularly their daughters might not "give up." Anna Maria admits indoctrinating her daughter from an early age to go to school, have a career and be self-sufficient long before she considers getting married and having children. Anna Maria and several of the older women interviewed were taught the reverse: get married, have children. Thoughts of school, while they had them, were usually treated as a hobby by the rest of their families. Anna Maria continues that while her daughter is very successful in her job, school and etcetera, she is "everything I, I, I wasn't." She goes on to explain how she was able to engender a different path in her daughter than the one she followed.

I pushed it...Since she was five years old...[to this day] We talk about it all the time. We talk everyday...she will not, never depend on a man. She will always be independent, financially. So since she was five, I...[told her]

“When you grow up; you go to school; you get your college degree. Then you get a job; then you’re in the job for, you know, so many years, you get your career going and then you get married.” And I’ve started that since she was very little, and she’s thanked me many times for that.

These women recognized that they had wanted something different for themselves. When that wasn’t a reality or seemed an impossibility, they sacrificed for their families. Hope was sustained by their pursuing amended dreams, inculcating the change they had envisioned for themselves in their children or believing they would one day be able to resurrect the aspirations they had to abandon: “I can’t swing it...top school...get top grades...have a family at the same time, it’s just not possible for me...my plan is the kids be gone...then I can climb as high as I want to go.”

Put Up

Many of the women describe their having to “put up with” someone or something in their life course as a consequence of their gender and class. “Put up with” means “to endure without complaint;” “to endure, tolerate, bear” (American Heritage, 2009; Random House, 2011). The women used “put up” to talk about situations in their lives where they had to endure complaints and constraints on their dreams, specifically their educational aspirations. These complaints and constraints stemmed from their responsibilities as wives and mothers. Anna Maria tells me she has always put her family and husband first, herself last. She dropped out of college to get married and start her family:

I had three years done towards my four-year degree when I got married...at that point, I was working full-time and decided to have my daughter – have a child, which I wish I had waited. I wished I had waited...I put family first, husband first, me last. I think that came from the Catholic upbringing. I went to Catholic School until grade eight –and my mother was a stay-at-home mom. So I probably had not role models to, you know, be a career woman, per se–and I wish I had. That was probably one of the biggest mistakes I, I’d say I’ve made.”

Note this is the daughter she placed her “hope” in the preceding section. At the time of our interview, Anna Maria tells me she has held off on her dream long enough. She’d like to get her Masters. While Anna Maria saw Catholic school and a lack of career women as role models as the impetus for her choices; researchers have found that “masculine organizational cultures,” such as schools, and “the lack of female role models are found to alienate girls and women from the traditionally male-centered academic and occupational fields” (Glover, 2000; Kubanek & Waller, 1996 as cited in Andres, Adamuti-Trache, Yoon, Pidgeon & Thomsen, 2007, p.140). Other younger women interviewed experienced similar obstacles sans the Catholic education or lack of role models. Amelia, a teacher and doctoral student, confided her husband saw her doctoral program as an excuse to postpone having children and berated her about it:

he thought the Ph.D. thing was an excuse to not have kids. Because he knew that I didn’t want, see I anticipate, when we first got married, he

said, “Now you know I want to have kids.” I said, “I know. When I’m 30 I’ll feel differently.” And I had thought that would happen. I had thought I would hit 30 and be like, “Yeah, kid time!”...it didn’t happen...at first he thought it was an excuse to get out of that...he was upset; and I told him it was not an excuse...I just, I want to finish this degree and get it done.

It has been difficult for her to keep him at bay while she attends school. Her current struggle with trying to obtain an assistantship has only exacerbated the problem and she wonders how she’ll continue if she doesn’t have the financial backing. She cannot take a sabbatical from her job and have no income, too. Plus, she needs the assistantship as part of her requirement to graduate. She doesn’t think she can put her husband off from having children another year. Other women too, like Amelia, postponed or in some cases, forsook their “duty” to have children. They had to endure criticism from others. Women such as Trudie, Kerstin and Vivienne “put off” getting married and or having children and had to “put up” with the scrutiny they were subjected to from those that thought they were out of their classed female bounds. Kerstin complained she was under the dual pressure to get married. She was 36 and as of yet, had no prospects. She knew that if she did marry, the pressure to have children would come soon after and even more so as she was older. Trudie has been married thrice and is now widowed; scrutiny derives from her being married three times and now having reached menopause, never having borne a child. She says it’s been worth it as she has the freedom to come and go as she pleases. Barb, also childless, agrees.

While I share Barb's story in the "One Up" discussion, it deserves mention here too. She had to lobby to have a self-selected hysterectomy. The insurance company and medical community did not embrace her conviction. Unlike Chloe, they doesn't see it as their purpose in life. Trudie explains, "I think not having children is a big, if I had a child and I, I couldn't yank my child all over everywhere and just go with the flow...I've really been fortunate because I've been able to try all sorts of shit, have opportunities and just, and I've been successful at just about everything I've done. I can't even tell you one thing I've done that wasn't successful." Trudie has plans to enroll in law school in the fall.

Other women described enduring abusive relationships in order to get what they wanted. Morning Star describes herself as miserable in her marriage. Her husband limited her access to school, family and friends. He was afraid her going to school would make her "smarter" than him. She stayed because she had been taught that was what you did. You kept families together for the sake of the children. She couldn't wait to get out and when her youngest child was old enough, she left:

I was not myself. He was very jealous. He was very controlling...he was very verbally abusive, and I was just miserable. I missed...having friends...I just never felt like I fit in because I really didn't. I never fitted in there. And when I moved back – I remember moving back to LA and I remember...the stench of like I'm back home...I just felt so right to come

back...I still feel that way. I would never, ever move back there no matter what.

Morning Star stayed and “put up” with the abuse until her children were old enough and she could leave and return to school. The women, like Morning Star, used “putting up” as a strategy to endure the constraints and restrictions placed upon them by being female from working-class. They knew that if they could just wait out and survive these constraints of class and gender, they would one day get what they wanted.

One Up

Sometimes these women were reminded of or struggled with their place in the social landscape through competition, or as one woman called it, “one upping.” “One up” is defined as “to keep one step ahead of (a competitor or opponent, for example)” (American Heritage, 2009). “One up” was used by the women to describe instances in their lives where they had been opposed because of their intelligence or their choice to buck conventional notions of what it meant to be female, from their class. Often this opposition was raised by those who contested the identities the women had selected for themselves. In turn, some of the women reporting “one-upping” the opposition. Together, these were stories of resistance/oppositional behavior.

While all of the women talked about “one-upping” at some point in their lives, Katherine actually used the phrase in telling me about her relationship with

her step-dad. I was asking her to tell me what her family thought about her going to graduate school and pursuing her doctorate and she relayed,

I think he enjoys telling other people...I'm a doctoral student. But...I don't talk to him about anything...if I'm...talking to my mom and he overhears me saying something, then he'll always...point out...what I should be doing...to...get ahead. Or to...it's always about that to him.

For one upping somebody else.

I ask her to clarify: does she see this as his way of taking control and one-upping her or helping her one-up someone else? She tells me it's both.

Both. It's like he wants to show that he knows more than I do about whatever it is...but...he also always wants me to one up somebody else too. Again, I can remember in, now get this...I was playing up one varsity. I'm a freshman; I'm a team captain with a senior. I'm scoring like 24 points a game...the senior is scoring like 10 points a game. We're a horrible team; we're losing all the time...it's a really bad team...he's wanting me to sort of talk to this senior saying that she's hogging the ball from me. Which she wasn't...he keeps saying, "That I need to stand up to her." That, "I'm...weak. And I won't stand up to anyone." And so, I mean this is going on for like a long time. And I'm just sort of standing there listening and...he's getting louder and louder. And...I shouldn't have said anything but...it finally got to me. And I'm like, "Well I'm...standing up to you. And I'm not going to say anything to

her...that's not happening"...he jumped across...grabbed me by the throat and had me pinned to the wall...he always wants to one up me...everything I do is not good enough. And always wants me to one up somebody else. It's always been like that. And so it's like that now...he's not as violent towards me...but it's the same sort of mentality even in conversation.

This story comes around the same time in the interview as Katherine's discussion of the outgoing president usurping her creating the college workshop schedule. She relates the two and tells me she felt one-upped there too as graduate study on the whole as competitive and political. I asked her to explain it to me and she described what she sees, "people struggling for...power or recognition...[I] feel like there's competition...instead of everybody...thinking that there's enough out there for everybody...just to pursue...what's best for them...but it's like, that every....there's a lot at stake and there's not enough for everybody." Katherine experienced "one-upping" at home and school.

Many of the other women spoke of one-upping their husbands in order to pursue their aspirations. Anna Maria tells me of how she must sell her husband on her ideas. In order to do so, she prepares a business proposal when she wants to gain his support.

So, for example...I wanted to build my own website. I had this vision; I had this plan – which he sort of supports, but he almost takes it over....when I explained to him what I would like to do; what I'd like to build; he makes me prove to him that it's a good idea. So, before I could

get – this is where the finances come in and being independent, financially independent. So, before he would sort of not allow me to go out and buy the equipment that I needed to build a website, I had to document everything for him. He’s a very – he’s an analyst type thinking...I had to show him what it would look like...basically sketch out the whole website myself and then present it to him...as a proposal.

Rubin (1976) reported that the language of “permitting” wives only existed among the working-class. If this is accurate, it lends further proof to the durability of habitus (pp.96-97). Anna Maria’s husband, while he grew up working-class, is now a Fortune 100 CEO and has command of the company’s jet which they use to fly to the many homes they own across the country; yet still, he gives and does not give permission to his wife. She got the funding that she wanted but in order to do so, has had to “learn how to do things on his terms.” While the manipulation appears to flow both ways, she sees herself as staying “one-step” ahead of him which she reasons she would be required to do in business: “when you’re presenting any idea, whether it’s in business or anything, it’s important to communicate well...And I have to communicate on his terms.” “One-upmanship” is a communication strategy attributed to males (Luke, 1994). There some debate as to whether or not could be construed as an exercise of power, but rather Anna Maria may be further subordinate her as she takes on the trappings of masculine discourse (Luke, 1994). If she fails, she interprets it as her own inadequacy (Luke, 1994). Too, other studies have shown that when women assert themselves in this

way, they often get the opposite of what they intended: “men abandon women who speak too loudly, or who are too present” (Luke, 1994, p.218). Nevertheless, Anna Maria has to use this same strategy to convince her husband to let her return to school. I ask her why she needs to resort to such tactics and she tells me her husband is probably threatened by the independence she will earn for being able to provide for herself. Christine, Celia and Morning Star made similar remarks about their husbands. They believed their husbands felt threatened by their wives going to school and would try to stop it. All shared their husbands were afraid their wives “would look at things a little differently” and maybe “change their mind on things,” particularly their marriages.

Celia “one-upped” her husband and their families when she wanted to go to school. Celia reported her husband’s family and her own had tried to isolate and control her. I asked her to tell me how they accomplished this “isolation strategy:”

They don’t want you to go with your friends so they isolate you. They try to keep you busy and they try to discourage whoever comes around. And my father...was good at that because if anybody came around he would insult them. That was one way of keeping them out of the way.

After being suppressed by her and Nick’s family for so long, Celia describe a situation where she asserted herself. She was pregnant with her second child and they were living in an apartment upstairs from Nick’s family. After having a fight with Nick, she put her son to bed, got a babysitter, left the house and didn’t return until much later than what would have been expected of her. When Nick arrived

home, he found the babysitter and his son, but no Celia. She had gone to the movies to plan how she would leave.

It was one of those moments that I got very focused and determined, and I said “I am not going to live this way.” So I thought it out...I’ll never forget...this movie – it was a Tom Jones. Remember that English movie? I was watching this movie and I decided I was leaving...by the time the movie finished it was 9:30 – 10:00. He was home looking for me asking my sister-in-law where am I. He was surprised she was there. She says “I don’t know Nick. She just left.” So he calls up my father and his father and they were all up there in the apartment, and I called home about 9:30. And my father answered and my father says “Where are you?” I said, “I’m at a movie.” He says “Do you want me to come and pick you up?” and I says “No. I’ll come home.” He says, “Okay, as long as you’re okay.” So I came home. So my father saw that there was something going on here and he wasn’t about to stick around. He left. His father went downstairs where he belongs, and the baby was sleeping. Maria had left. The door is shut. And he turned around and he was ready to start. And I says, “Don’t even start. Tomorrow, I want you to bring home some boxes. I’m leaving. I’m leaving with my child and you will support us. I will get an apartment and I do not want to be here. You’re staying. You’re not coming with me.” And he thought about raising his voice but he saw, he saw that I never say anything I don’t mean and I never argue. I never shout, scream,

but if you – if I tell you something, you better go to the bank with it. And I was that mad. And he knew by me going out that night not telling anybody, he knew that something had turned. So he didn't say anything and I went to bed. He talked to his father and three days later, he bought a house because he knew, and we moved out of there. And he started to get Sundays off.

Celia also returned to school. It was one of the other stipulations to which Nick agreed in order to get Celia to stay. While her struggles were far from over, she reported “one-upping” Nick once more in their lives; the details of which she chose not to disclose.

Other woman use “one-upping” more broadly. That is, they used “one-upping” as a way of attempting to make a “wider” statement to society as a whole. After “putting up” with her father's inappropriateness and her parent's troublesome marriage, Vivienne talked about not wanting a “life of enduring.” Married, but with no children and no plans to have any, she differentiated how she did it differently than her parents. She tells me she didn't escape her gender and class via a career or marriage but rather viscerally.

...there was no real feminine role models and I saw, from example, what it was like to kind of be real practical and boyish from the women that I was around and I went, “That doesn't look very interesting”...probably because my dad talked to me about sex when I was so young in such a way, like, “Marriages just won't last if you don't have regular sex.” I think that

probably sparked something deep in me at a very young age that, “Well I better explore that and find what’s beautiful about that”...that’s sort of spawned by fear but at the same time, I want to, “Okay well, in this situation with my parents, it’s ugly. But I need to find what’s amazing and what’s beautiful about it. I can’t have an experience of enduring. That’s not acceptable to me. I don’t want to endure life.

She continues to explain telling me she has always done things by instinct. She chose her husband that way. Today, that’s how she makes her life. She takes classes at the local library, works and volunteers at local animal shelters. She’d like to start a program to feed the hungry and begins telling me her plan for collecting leftovers from local restaurants to supply her vision; it is similar to “City Harvest” a program run in other cities. Since her parents were the ones to lead her to this conclusion, I asked her if she ever shared her feelings with them. She told me,

They don’t totally understand...my dad just wants to override it, “Well, when I was young and had two women,” it’s like, “Well, okay, this is, this is a conversation we shouldn’t be having”....let’s not go there...when I’ve tried to share, even just, just talks about femininity with my mom, she’s...mystified by my journey but doesn’t really relate to it...you can see her almost like a kid reading a really neat book. You can see her taking pleasure in the fact that I was willing to go there. I think I was willing to take risks that neither of my parents was willing to do and the way that I

did it happen to be not in a career...that's where you were supposed to do it. You're supposed to do it by being a career person...That's what all the women were working for. You were supposed to fulfill yourself and go out there and make something of yourself...I went the opposite direction. I wanted visceral, sensual, life experience: things that I could touch and feel. People that I could res- I don't know – bond with. I, I don't – it goes beyond bonding. It's a – it's a healing thing.

Vivienne has chosen different course for her life and she relates it all back to what she was taught about marriage and sex. Her lifelong learning, how she makes her living to how she chose her husband, she believes goes against what would have been viewed as natural for a woman of her class.

There were even some women who went so far as to remove any chance of procreation: Diana underwent a self-selected hysterectomy at 37 because she didn't want to have children. She saw childrearing and the expectation that she have children a constraint on how she envisioned her life. Her husband also chose to limit his ability to father children and had a vasectomy before they married. She shared that with no diagnosis of an illness, she had to petition her doctor and the insurance company to support her decision. She also insisted on their returning her now removed uterus to her. She told me she kept it in her closet for many years preserved in formaldehyde until it became moldy with the exception of her unveiling and sharing it at a hysterectomy support group she only twice attended.

I had to hold off a little bit. But I mean, that's what I wanted...I also said, "That I want it in a jar with formaldehyde." No, I said, "I want it back. I want to look at it." So I had to campaign for that.

I asked her if she still had it. She had wanted it to be the artifact she was going to share with me but had instead shared a book on developmental anatomy which included the study of embryology.

....No, no....It got moldy after a while, after several years....even though I had it in formaldehyde....I took it to a support group, though, once....I had this hysterectomy support group, and I thought....I've never been to one -- any support group before. And I thought, "Well, I'll see what they do"

She told me, "in case [I] was wondering,"

....They're talking -- and they're mostly older ladies that talk about how their lives have been in ruins...ever since they had their hysterectomy. Like, they're hearing has gone, their joints ache, and they -- their vision is going. I'm looking around thinking, "Old!"....And then, it comes to me, and I'm thinking, "What am I going to say?" I says, "I came here because I thought you had cookies." [Laughter] They do.

I ask Barb if she pulled it out of her bag and said, "Here you go." She relates how she revealed it to the group letting them know she kept it in a jar in her closet.

Their response she says, was fascination as the thing they lamented losing, that

made them female, they had really never seen. They didn't know what it looked like. Barb offered to be their teacher:

the next time I could make it there, I brought it. And I showed them...the anatomy and what was what, and stuff like that....after the women had learned. You spent time teaching them, and because they didn't know....they just thought it was kind of interesting....let's take a look at the [thing] that's making me miserable, right? So what's missing for them?

Barb's realization is profound. Why should she miss something that made her miserable? Although life had told her she should be a mother just by the virtue of being female she rejected it and had to lobby and endure criticism to gain control over her reproductive life. In the end, she won on many levels: how could she have a child without a uterus? Symbolically too, she got rid of the key organ that differentiated her as female.

Other women like Karri spoke of how she needs to be manipulative and change her speech given social situations. When she finds herself feeling awkward, particularly among people she believes are middle to upper class, she'll get quiet. These times are often when she is giving a presentation for her job. She works for an educational foundation teaching teachers how to perfect their skills and often has to solicit funding from wealthy area philanthropists.

I become a little bit quieter because I want to make sure that my speech patterns fit in. I know that in that kind of a setting that, um, being a little more reserved is a good thing....you would never just walk in and

introduce yourself to somebody. You would wait to be introduced...I back off and I observe but I'm really friendly and polite at the same time. So sometimes I just trick people. They think that I fit in – or I think I'm tricking them anyway. (Laughter) You know, to at least, um, look the part, even if I don't feel the part.

Hence, “one-up” became a broader strategy. The women used it in social situations, to make larger social statements and well as in school and with their families. While some would argue they were further entrenching themselves in the language of male domination (Luke, 1994) the women interviewed, saw themselves as exercising power over their own lives. They relied on “one-up” where situations were most desperate. “One-up” worked in many ways, many times in achieving what they wanted, including their educational aspirations.

Fill Up

The women also used the phrase “fill up” to describe how they made their lives have meaning. That is, they needed to “fill up” their days in order to feel as if they were living a meaningful life: this was an extension of the “making” theme. This was so common; I found it interesting that it didn't occur in the literature. The women always felt like they needed “to do something” with their time. When they would get bored is when they would look to do other things, change jobs, go back to school, etc. For many, their “to do” list changed over the years. They no longer had the “giant goals” they set for themselves, but rather, the small things, that when together, added up to something. Vivienne shared,

You know, when you're younger, you think of these giant goals for yourself, in ten years out and you're looking for my deathbed backwards, you know all those things are so inspiring but really it's the day-to-day choices that you make that fill up your actual life. That's where you have to be happy.

Other women, like Anna Maria referred to it as something to satisfy the emptiness she felt. Other women like Anne claimed they overfilled their time. I would ask them why and they all believed they "should be able to do it all"...even if it meant staying "up all night long." They also claimed to be "perfectionists" that had "high standards." I asked the women how they recognized when they had been "filled up" or when they knew they needed more or whatever it was that remained nameless in all of the interviews. Descriptions ranged from "little nudges," to "gnawing curiosity," to being driven. These were things they were willing to take up without any formal prompting. This is often how they chose what they wanted to learn.

Conclusion

This section explores those strategies—shut up, give up, put up, one up and fill up—and what the theme of "up" suggests overall about women from working class backgrounds. In their narratives, the women described how they lived within their social space by "shutting up," "giving up," or "putting up" their wants and desires for another; this surrender was attributed to their roles as working class mothers and or daughters. The women were reminded of their gender and class by

being, as one woman called it, “one upped.” Other times they were the ones “one-upping.” They searched for meaning in their lives and fought to combat the emptiness they felt by “filling up” their days. Nevertheless, and what’s key for educators is despite their struggles, the women didn’t see themselves as powerless like much of the literature on the intersection of class and gender portrays. Rather, they always described themselves as actively plotting next steps. The very use of these verb phrases—shut up, give up, put up, one up, fill up—to describe their experiences and the experiences themselves suggest the women didn’t see their dreams as defeated. For them, it was more a strategy of perseverance—the women were flexible, always ready and able to change course without mislaying their dreams.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This study was a phenomenological one where I sought to discover the experience of identity and identity making for women who grew up working-class. How did these women come to know themselves? Did they experience times when they didn't know who they were? How did they feel and respond to this disconnect? Did this disconnect relate to their class and how was gender mediated through class? If it did, did it effect how they took up education and in what ways? What were the implications of these findings for education? To discover these answers, I interviewed 21 women and used their narratives to piece together a mosaic of their experiences. In "Chapter 4: Portraits," I supply textual photographs of seven of these women. Through reading these stories and the 14 others like them, I found similarities in what they revealed about themselves and their lives growing up; even in the decisions they make today. While each life was unique, the topics of their narratives, the ways in which they told their stories began to coalesce. In the center of those groupings, I found the women, despite different lives, would describe their experiences in similar ways often with similar terms. It is from these terms that the themes essential to knowing the experience of what it means to be female, from a working-class background were excavated. These themes are "making," "paying attention," "taking care," and "up." The very use of these words suggests that the women do recognize, even if only subconsciously, that they are active participants in their own identity formation. While they carry the bastions of what it means to be female from working-class in

their need to make, to garner “right” attention and to take care of their families, they believe too, that they can secure a “better” place for themselves: a place better than that of their parents. A place where they might have more freedoms and a respite from the guilt they feel when they move away from their working-class habitus. As they move in, out, across, between and within the various social spaces they chart their course and jockey for position. The direction in which they wish to move is “up:” perhaps not an actual direction but rather a holdover of metaphorical structuring created against the backdrop of the American Dream. They seek out experiences that will help them make these departures and often they locate that escape in education. They believe education will help them create ruptures in the social fabric that will allow them to move out and away from the constraints imposed by class and gender.

“Making” was central to these women’s lives as during their childhood they came to realize how fragile their existence. The women watched their parents and learned how to “make” themselves so they could survive should job, money, resources become scarce. By making, these women were able to create symbolic capital for themselves as, (1) making or the ability to make things meant they could transpose seemingly useless pieces when alone, into something of use; (2) making was a way to confer love, it was an outward sign of “taking care;” (3) making granted access to cultural capital, that is, they could acquire things by means other than money and acquiring them as the means of production was revered as their toil became a part of the finished product. “Paying attention” was also key for

these women and how they formed their identities. Here again, parents were their first teachers. The women found that yet another source of cultural capital was their sexuality; however, they had to know when to exercise it. This became a source of conflict for them; conflict that was created and sustained by the men whose attention they sought. Working-class women were told they needed to be sexually desirable while not appearing sexually experienced. For these women, the daughters of working-class parents, the conflict of sexuality may no longer be as blatant, but remnants of their upbringing have engendered similar behavior in other spaces. Knowing how and when to draw attention and from whom and for what purpose is assimilated as natural as the women duck in and out of their femininity. This artful move carries over into the classroom. Last, “taking care” also became a source of conflict for the women, particularly those that wished to move away from their beginnings. Opposite their role as sexual objects was the role of domestic comforter. This role was so salient that when the women tried to suppress it, they felt inadequate or guilty. It was the reason the women cited most for interfering with their education aspirations.

On the whole, the study of the intersection of class and gender is lacking. The literature that does exist is restricted to categorizing and explaining women who grew up as working-class by the markers that have been ascribed to these women: they don’t assert themselves in the classroom; they choose menial jobs or careers that mirror their feminine classed identities, i.e., teacher, nurse; they are obedient and quiet students; they don’t aspire to anything that gives them

challenge; they require little because they won't amount to much. When those assumptions are challenged, the women challenging them are left with feelings of inadequacy or not fitting in. They either (1) look to shape their behavior to conform or to what society and the research that upholds it tells them to be or (2) they look for ruptures along the social plane and try to move about and jockey for a new position that "fits." By performing a phenomenological study some of these "truths" the research community had long accepted about this population have either been disproved or elucidated. What stands is an understanding of what it's like to be female from working-class; from this depiction, educators are better positioned to see how to best to serve their female, from working-class students. This includes, (1) making education useful for where they are as women, from working-class, (2) opting for strategies that honor both assertiveness and timidity, and (3) creating equal space in school curriculum for cooperation as is there is for competition.

EPILOGUE

Who is Shannon Irene Decker? Truthfully, I'm not sure. I can only relate the "facts" as they were told to me or how I remember them. She was born February 4, 1971 at 6:37 p.m. in Saint Francis Hospital, Port Jervis, New York to Harold K. and Patricia A. Decker. In fact today is my 40th birthday so it seems very fitting for me to have to reflect on "who I am," but I think the question that most reveals my personhood, is "Where is Shannon Irene Decker?" I lost her a long time ago and it is this struggle of trying to find myself that was the impetus for this study.

I've never felt like I've fit in...anywhere. I'm an interloper through and through. No one gets me. It doesn't matter the situation. For the longest time I've blamed myself: I must not know the code word, the secret sign, or the right way to say something that would throw back the doors and thrust me into welcoming arms. I feel like words never capture what it is I'm really trying to say. This struggle to figure out "where I am" is represented in my discourse: yielded in a language that is not my own, an underlying cacophony of egoism and insecurity, self-righteousness and self-doubt resounds.

To start with a description of my childhood would not be enough, nor my parents, nor my grandparents. "Who I am" and "where I am" resides first in my hometown: a city in a valley, divided by a river who harbors a rock, that if you stand on it, you can be in three places, that is states, all at once.

The city of Port Jervis, New York is a small, bygone industrial town who had brief heydays during the canal era and then the railroad era of the late eighteen, early nineteen hundreds. Growing up there in the nineteen seventies and eighties meant you were linked to a proud history of hardworking people who failed to recognize prosperity had passed them by. The population was sustained by procreation as the succeeding generations were expected to work in the factories where their parents worked, and live and die in the houses their parents had owned. In fact, the city, when I was growing up, wasn't a city at all. The meager population, as defined by New York law, only constituted the label of "town." Perhaps no one had the heart to change the "Now Entering..." sign and tell us decadence gave way to despair when the last of the canal boats and trains pulled out of town leaving a scarred landscape of polluted rivers, empty parking lots, and desolate train yards. Still though, the people, their houses, well-tended Victorians and Colonials surrounded by broken flagstone sidewalks and pothole pocked asphalt streets remained with an air of ferocious perseverance. This is the place my grandparents, my parents, and I call home.

My father's father was a front loader operator some of the time, an alcoholic most of the time. Often I've been told of how my father quit school in the eighth grade to support my grandmother and his sister. They moved so many times because my grandfather's work required it, whether it was because of the lack of work available or the lack of availability of my grandfather as after one of his famous weekend binges, he might disappear for a couple of weeks. Once

during these disappearances it was said that a man who showed favor to my grandmother also disappeared. Two trails of footprints led to the river, and only one showed the way back. My grandfather's addiction and the shrouded mysteries it afforded caused them to relocate so many times that the school registrars couldn't keep up with them as despite never graduating from high school, my father's been invited to three different high schools' reunions. As transients, they moved in and out of Port Jervis and its neighboring towns.

My father's mother caused quite the scandal when she married my grandfather. Disowned and desolate she forsook her family's fortune when she ran away with my grandfather. Daughter of a prominent industrialist, as an adolescent, she was forced to live with her uncle when her parents died. Often, my great uncle, a religious zealot and socially, i.e., financially, prominent in his own right, would chain my grandmother to the leg of her bed in an attempt to quell what he termed as her "adolescent rebelliousness." It was questioned by family and townspeople as to whether my grandfather really loved my grandmother or his ensuing battle with, and eventual conquest of, my prominent great uncle's control over her.

This was the backdrop of my father's childhood. Actually, as he describes it, it wasn't what the status quo would deem a childhood at all. In the traditional sense, he was more parent than child most of his life. Relegated duties by absentee parents, as my grandmother, if she wasn't out looking for my grandfather during his disappearances, withdrew reclusively into herself, my father quit school in the

eighth grade to support his family financially and emotionally. Often he was charged with the care of his sister, who was close to twenty years his junior, and the upkeep of the house or apartment they lived in at the time. Once, when my father supplied the presents for the family's Christmas, my grandfather, in a Seussian, "Grinch" like fashion, stealthily stole them on Christmas Eve, trading the unopened gifts in for his bourbon of choice at the time. I can only recall being told of one attachment my father had with any degree of trust and permanence during his younger years, and that was to the family's pet goat.

My mother on the other hand came from what was considered a "stable" family during the 40s, 50s, and 60s, or at least gave the appearance as such as unlike my father's family, my mother's family's secrets were kept secret. My grandfather, disabled in World War II, met my grandmother while he was an outpatient in a hospital in her hometown of Martinsburg, West Virginia. She, Helen Irene Williams at the time, was a soda fountain counter girl twelve years my grandfather's junior, when my grandfather began courting her. As one of thirteen children, my grandmother would often tell me of how her and her siblings ran barefoot, only to put on shoes and "good" clothes on Sunday to go to church. This was their only permissible venture off the family's farm when she was a girl. My great grandmother was a religious zealot as well and my memories of her are of a decrepit woman in an overstuffed, worn easy chair flanked by a bible, crucifixes and velvet paintings of Jesus and his Blessed Mother. Once, my grandmother told me how she was beaten because she missed the family's Sunday

outing. Apparently, her father miscounted how many children were in the back of the wagon and although she ran, her siblings laughed at her as she failed to catch up to the pace of the horses to join them. This is the life my grandmother left when she married my grandfather in 1945 and returned with him to his hometown, Port Jervis, New York. It wasn't until she was sixty two when she returned to Martinsburg to get her birth certificate while applying for a Social Security number in order to receive benefits when she learned she wasn't Helen Irene Williams, but rather Helen Irene Wolford. As my mother tells it, they didn't have babies in hospitals then. This is the reason my great grandmother gave for the discrepancy. However, it was learned later my great grandmother had indeed been married to two men: my grandmother was not the child of the man she thought was her father and further, she was a year younger than, what all her life, she had been led to believe.

Although my grandmother left Martinsburg and her convoluted heritage, she wasn't "saved" by my grandfather either. It wasn't until after my grandparents had died that my mother and her siblings dismantled my idyllic vision of my maternal grandparents. My grandmother, a strong woman, would sustain my grandfather's tantrums by replacing the family's broken china with indestructible Malomar. I still remember eating several meals from these said dishes. My grandfather's disciplining of his children was just as harsh as often in his tirades he would give them the choice of buckle or boot, traces of which can still be found on my mother's body as pocks left by missing flesh attest to.

These stories are but a glimpse of my hometown and the lives, my grandparents, and my parents to which I am inextricably linked. Yes, I am German, Dutch, Scottish, Irish, Polish, Native American, and whatever else I have yet to discover. I am what they termed in my home town as a “Heinz 57.” Religion, I have none, or at least anything organized, just smatterings of Episcopalian, Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, and Catholic, exposure given to me by family and friends through the years. What really identifies me is these stories, the heritage of my parents, of my grandparents, of my hometown.

I am what most would consider working class, white trash. In high school, my guidance counselor, among others, told me to forget going to a university. I was advised to get married, or if I couldn't give up the “college dream,” work in the factory for a while and attend the local community college to see if I could “hack it.” That was what girls did in my town. Got married, worked in the factories, or both. If they did get a degree from the community college the choices were still the same, excepting being given the choice to work in the factory office rather than on the line, a position paid in prestige rather than money like the latter.

Although I don't regret my decision to leave my hometown, the inherent confusion in my voice and in my personhood is partially a result of my choosing to move away from this heritage. I hear it in the times I choose to be quiet, afraid I might give away my secret of coming from such a place, and in the times I chose to be boisterous, priding myself in my rebellious decision to leave, creating another option, another future. In an English class many years ago I was asked to describe

where I was from. The description could take any form and I chose to write it as a poem. I later published this poem, even won money for it. I thought of sending it back to the people I grew up with, even publishing it in the local paper there. I'm glad I didn't. Reading it now, placing it here, I am ashamed of the feelings I felt while writing it

Port Jervis, New York

Darkness lies down
upon the backyard fence.
The jaundiced sun takes one last
s t r e t c h
across the sky as houses fade
into gypsy moth pillaged mountains.

The sunflower
in Grandma's garden nods it's head limply, overburdened
with sterile seeds.

Above the beetle-eaten rhubarb, lightning bugs hover
l a b o r i o u s l y
in the heat.

The flagstone vibrates
with the incessant drum

of children's feet playing hopscotch.

One more game...

Watching, the people lie like fat cats
on their porch rails, lapping languidly
at the sweat
on their upper lips.

Stroking their egos
with tales that might have been, they bat their eyes
at mosquitoes and
y a w n
inhaling the stench
of nearby factories and shad rotting
on the river banks.

They loll their heads
in ignorance
to the chime
of church bells keeping irrelevant time.

So I'm not T.S. Eliot, but I thought I was from "The Wasteland" at the time. Often times my writing, my language sounds like that of my poem, cold,

impersonal, and detached. The truth is I don't want to be known. I guess, like Jackson (1990), I am afraid to reveal myself, as doing so may invite criticism (p.12). I don't want to be associated with the inhabitants of this poem, but I am, as it is where I am from. Now and again, I am ashamed of my pride in leaving, of my wanting to hide, because I come from such strong willed, fierce stock. People I admire because they do everything hard and find enjoyment in the simple. I don't know if my admiration is the result of my conditionally entrenched deference for bourgeois ideology or my sadness in my own loss of identity as when I chose "to climb towards the 'language of the educated'" I became detached from my home (Jackson, 1990, p.13). Like the many women I interviewed, I too feel like an "other" as a result of my education. Petra—the illiterate woman of Rigg's (1985) study—couldn't have been more spot-on when she described she photograph she was shown of a woman reading, "...she has to change. She is not going to be the same as before, if she learns" (p.132).

My maternal grandfather earned his living as a silversmith, then soldier, and later, as a railroad trackwalker; my maternal grandmother, as a mother and homemaker. My paternal grandfather worked heavy construction as a front loader operator; my paternal grandmother, as a mother and homemaker. Both my mother and father worked on the assembly lines in several of the local factories in our hometown before putting themselves through cosmetology school, becoming hairdressers, and owning their own salon. Currently retired, but feeling, as he says, "the need to keep busy," my father still works a gamut of jobs dividing his time

between the local grocery store, beauty salon and side business of repairing cracked tile floors. My mother too tried her own business as a housekeeper, and worked part time sporadically, across the years, in the local factories, in the local diner as a short order cook, or as a bookkeeper/receptionist for my father. However, for the majority of her life, she assumed the role of mother and homemaker: This last designation primarily at the preference and urgings of my father. To him, and my family's preceding generations of men, it was only proper that the man be the sole "breadwinner." Any other arrangement was an insult and called one's "manhood" into question.

I was never very close to my paternal grandparents. My memories of my grandfather consist of a slew of curse words and of my grandmother, a collection of "yard-sale-rabilia," as the woman wore other women's "Baby on Board" shirts well into her sixties and as a child, every holiday, I could anticipate receiving from her a used pair of worsted wool socks. But in a way, I am thankful for them, for the man they created. Sometimes, my father is proud and rightfully so. He is both survivor and victim of a dysfunctional family; a label I don't believe was in existence then. But perhaps it is this lack of a label, of naming the collective cultural identity he sustained, which contributes to his insecurity, about himself and his value as a person: it insidiously pervades him even to today as a man well into his sixties.

My father, a factory worker, turned hairdresser rose to prominence in our town not because of his upbringing but by the money and recognition he earned

through his profession. I am part of the Mid-Atlantic nouveau riche. Not New England mind you, as that would grant more cultural capital, but Mid Atlantic. As mentioned earlier, my father never earned his high school diploma but was invited to three reunions. It seems material capital helps people to overlook your lack of “knowledge” capital. But for my father, the fact that he didn’t finish high school gives him a sense of pride as well as shame. Proud in that he gained material success, but shame, as he has confided in me, of not being what he considers, very intelligent, often apologizing for his lack of knowledge (Jackson, 1990, p.15).

My mother, like my father, apologizes for who she is, for not wearing the right clothes, for knowing the right words, etcetera. Although she graduated high school, she shares the similar post school education of my father: factory worker, hairdresser, differing only in her last employ as housewife. My mother never talked of the abuse she endured as a child while my grandparents were still alive. She suffered in silence until her death in 2005. I love my mother. She was incredible and I admired her for her fortitude, while at the same time I was angered by it. My mother was what I call a “harmonizer.” Rather than cause trouble, she kept her mouth shut. When my mother got upset she didn’t speak or only did so with persistent urging. When my father made comments about being the “breadwinner,” rather than confronting my father about the slight, my mother spoke to me about her toils as a housewife, as my father’s keeper. As a working-class woman, she endured violence from her children: my disrespectful brother when he called her names and from me when I, rather than listening, diminished

her voice by telling her what I would do if I were in her situation. In a way, I feel like Petra's son, denying her access to language (Rigg, 1985, p.138).

Often, both of my parents ask me "Is that the right word?" or "How do you say it?" "Did I use that word correctly?" See, I was the first person from my family to attend college and the only one, as of yet, to hold a degree higher than an Associates. This difference is what pulls me from where I was, a child of my parents, a product of my town. Like Jackson, I am both proud of my parents and ashamed of them, the later of which I've recently become aware of as I write this paper. It pains me to admit it, but I know it, as I remember the many times I've corrected my father, unsolicited, giving him the "correct" word or stifled my mother with "Okay mom," when she repeated the same statement as a way of illustrating the intensity of her feelings. In this way I have become an abuser like my grandfathers.

I am not only connected to my parents in this way, that is, as their oppressor, but also as their advocate. Like stated earlier, I admire my parents. Like I am of the people of my town, I am proud of their heritage of fortitude and working class simplicity. Sometimes, I think I hear all of these voices coming through in my voice, like I'm "caught up" in a "struggle' that 'was going on before' I was 'even thought of' (Danridge, 1999, p.12). I, like Jackson (1990), "hear myself really screeching, 'Pay attention to me. I matter!'"(p.18). As do my parents, my grandparents, and the people of my hometown. For them, or actually,

maybe it's more for me, I continue their struggle: I have assumed their confusions about identity and tenacity in facing adversity.

When I have to describe what it's like to be me, to be my family, to be from my hometown, I think of the climbing rose bush my maternal grandmother used to have in her backyard. This rose bush, constrained by an old dry rotted truck tire painted a washed white by enduring the many years of mercilessly mercurial New York seasons, climbed upward and bloomed fiercely every summer, entwining the lattice staked in the center of the tire. A thing of simplistic beauty, yet duplicitously ferocious, both qualities relentless and inseparable.

So in answer to the question "Who am I?," I am Shannon Irene Decker, born February 4, 1971, at 6:37 p.m. in Saint Francis Hospital, Port Jervis, New York, to Harold K. Decker, and Patricia A. Decker. But "Where am I?," well haven't found a name for the place yet, but it feels like I'm standing in the middle of a river, on a rock, in many places all at once.

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APPENDIX A



IRB APPROVAL

A1: IRB Approval, April 22, 2009



Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

To: Donald Blumenfeld-Jones
ED

From:  Mark Roosa, Chair 
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 04/02/2009

Committee Action: **Exemption Granted**

IRB Action Date: 04/02/2009

IRB Protocol #: 0903003830

Study Title: Down the Rabbit Hole: Perceptions of Identity Formation in and through the
Educative Experiences of Women from Working-Class Background

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2).

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

APPENDIX B

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

B1a: Instructions to the Research Participants

Information Letter

DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE: PERCEPTIONS OF IDENTITY FORMATION IN AND THROUGH THE EDUCATIVE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN FROM WORKING-CLASS BACKGROUNDS

Date: _____

Dear: _____

Thank you for your interest in my research on the experience of identity and identity making in women from working-class backgrounds. I value the unique contribution that you can make to my study and am excited about the possibility of your participation in it. The purpose of this letter is to provide you (as a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research.

The purpose of the research is to explore the relationship between identity, identity making and educational experience in women from working-class backgrounds. The term *identity* in my questions, as I am using it, means the “kind of person” you are recognized as by you and by others.

My goal is a critical one where I hope to increase awareness of social structures (i.e., class, gender) and the power given to them by excavating these structures from the identity stories these women tell. I believe this work has implications for education in two ways. One, the ways in which education perpetuates and reinforces these structures will be illuminated and two, that these revelations will suggest ways in which education may reform and paradoxically, help us be more critically aware.

If you decide to participate, then you will join a national study involving research of the relationship between identity, identity making and educational experience in women from working-class backgrounds. Participation will involve one to two interviews where you will be asked to share stories of your childhood. Each interview is expected to last 60 to 90 minutes. During the interview, you will be asked to answer questions which will require you to share memories of your childhood and how you believe growing up as a working-class female has influenced your life course and who you are today. You can skip any questions.

If you say YES, then your participation at each interview will last for not more than 90 minutes at a mutually agreed upon location. Total participation time, if you are asked for a second, follow-up interview, will not exceed 180 minutes, combined. You will be asked to answer questions which will require you to share memories of your childhood and how you believe growing up as a working-class female has influenced your life course and who you are today. Through your participation as a participant, I hope to understand the experience of growing up as a working-class female as revealed by your stories. This will require you to recall specific episodes or events in your life. I am seeking vivid, accurate and comprehensive portrayals of what growing up was like for you; your thoughts, feelings and behaviors, as well as situations, events, places and people connected with your experience. You may also wish to share personal logs or journals with me or other ways in which you have recorded your experience—for example, in letters, poems or artwork.

I would like to audiotape this interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be taped; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know.

There are no known risks from taking part in this study, but in any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified. The possible/main benefits of your participation in the research

include sharing your story and how education might better serve females from working-class backgrounds. There is no payment for your participation in the study.

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential. Your name and address will not be recorded and you will be asked to select a pseudonym to which you will be referred to throughout the study. The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researchers will not identify you. Only your pseudonym will be used. Any other potentially identifiable information will be changed or omitted prior to your story's use in the study. In order to maintain confidentiality of your records, all information, e.g., tapes, transcripts and notes from interviews will be stored in a cabinet in a locked, private office within the College of Education. Only the investigators, Donald Blumenfeld-Jones and Shannon Decker will have access to this information. MP3 files of your interview will be encrypted and password protected. Upon conclusion of the study, these files will be erased. Print materials, including notes and transcripts of the interview(s) will be shredded.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. It is ok for you to say no. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop the interview at any time. Even if you say yes now, you are free to say no later, and withdraw from the study at any time. If you withdraw from the study, tapes and/or data from your interview will not be used as part of the study and will be destroyed.

Any questions you have concerning the research study or your participation in the study, before or after your participation, will be answered by Donald Blumenfeld-Jones, Arizona State University, College of Education, Tempe Campus, Farmer 342A, Tempe, AZ 85287, 480.965.0999, dbj@asu.edu or Shannon Decker, Arizona State University, College of Education, Tempe Campus, Farmer 342A, Tempe, AZ 85287, shannon.decker@asu.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk; you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at 480-965 6788.

I value your participation and thank you for the commitment of time, energy and effort. If you have any further questions or if there is a problem with the date and time of our meeting, I can be reached at shannon.decker@asu.edu.

B1b: Further Instructions delivered prior to interview via email

Hello.

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in my study on women from working-class backgrounds.

We need to begin scheduling interviews. If you live in Arizona, I would like for us to meet in person as it makes for a better interview. If not, or if it is more convenient, we can conduct the interview by phone. The interview should last no more than 60 to 90 minutes. I may ask some of you for a second, follow-up interview, also 60-90 minutes.

To get started, please respond to this email with the following,

1. Your contact information, phone & email
2. Your best days and times to participate—please ensure you have at least 90 minutes to speak with me. Please include your time zone if you live outside .
3. If you live in and are willing to meet me in person, please suggest a public space where we might have some privacy to speak, i.e., a local coffeehouse (Starbucks & the like), a study room in Library, etc.
4. The pseudonym you would like to use throughout the study to protect your identity (first & last name).

I would also like to ask that for our interview, you share a picture or other object/artifact that you feel represents you, your life growing up or has some significance for who you are and how you identify yourself. With your permission, I'd like to make a copy of the photo or photograph the object you've chosen. Some examples might be a favorite toy, play place, pet, etc. To offer an example from my own childhood, I might offer a picture of a honeysuckle bush—these bushes flanked the playground I played on when I was young and are often part of my memories when I recall my childhood.

I am attaching an information letter to tell you more about the study and what, as a participant, will be asked of you.

Please let me know if you have any questions. I look forward to speaking to all of you in the coming weeks!

Sincerely,
Shannon

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

C1: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. Where were you born/where did you grow up?
2. What was it like living there?
3. What was school like?
4. How did your family feel about education?
5. How did your friends feel about education?
6. Did you grow up in one place or move around a lot? If so, did this change with your new situation? In what ways?
7. What was life like in general?
8. Describe something from your childhood.
9. Have you always seen yourself as someone getting a college degree?
 - a. If so, where did you get this idea? If not, how did you get this idea?
 - b. What did you hope or believe getting an education would accomplish?
10. What did your family (birth) feel about your getting a college education?
11. How does your present family feel?
12. Have you experience any change in your life since making this decision?
13. Has your being a women made a difference?
 - a. If yes, in what ways?
 - b. If no, in what ways?
14. What is something I should know about you?
15. Is there anything else I need to or should know about you?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

D1: Interview Schedule

Pseudonym	Tape #	Interview Date(s)
1. Morning Star	05	4.21.2009
2. Amelia Daly	06	4.22.2009
3. Becky Thompson	07	4.24.2009
4. Katherine Street	08	4.28.2009
5. Chloe Holland	092728	4.29.2009, 5.22.2009
6. Vivienne Wolf	10	4.30.2009
7. Celia Toscano	121314	5.1.2009
8. Karri Stevens	15	5.4.2009
9. Kerstin Krueger	NA	5.5.2009
10. Anna Maria Rifiorati	1718	5.7.2009
11. Lando	22	5.7.2009, 5.11.2009
12. Amanda Johnson	2021	5.8.2009
13. Sarah Cole	25	5.9.2009, 5.16.2009
14. Christine Ellison	23	5.14.2010
15. Ursula Manders	24	5.15.2009
16. Trudie Mizet	26	5.18.2009
17. Anne Cascarino	31	5.20.2009
18. Sylvia Butler	32	5.30.2009
19. Barb Robinson	33	6.6.2009
20. Lily Baker	3435	6.7.2009
21. Lydia Carter	36	6.8.2009

APPENDIX E

ARTIFACTS COLLECTED APRIL 2009-JUNE 2009

ARTIFACTS COLLECTED APRIL 2009-JUNE 2009

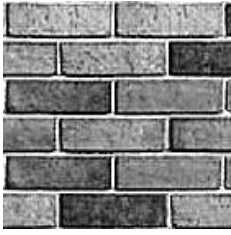


Artifact E1: Morning Star, Yaqui Spirituality & Intuitiveness

The Symbols that Represent Me



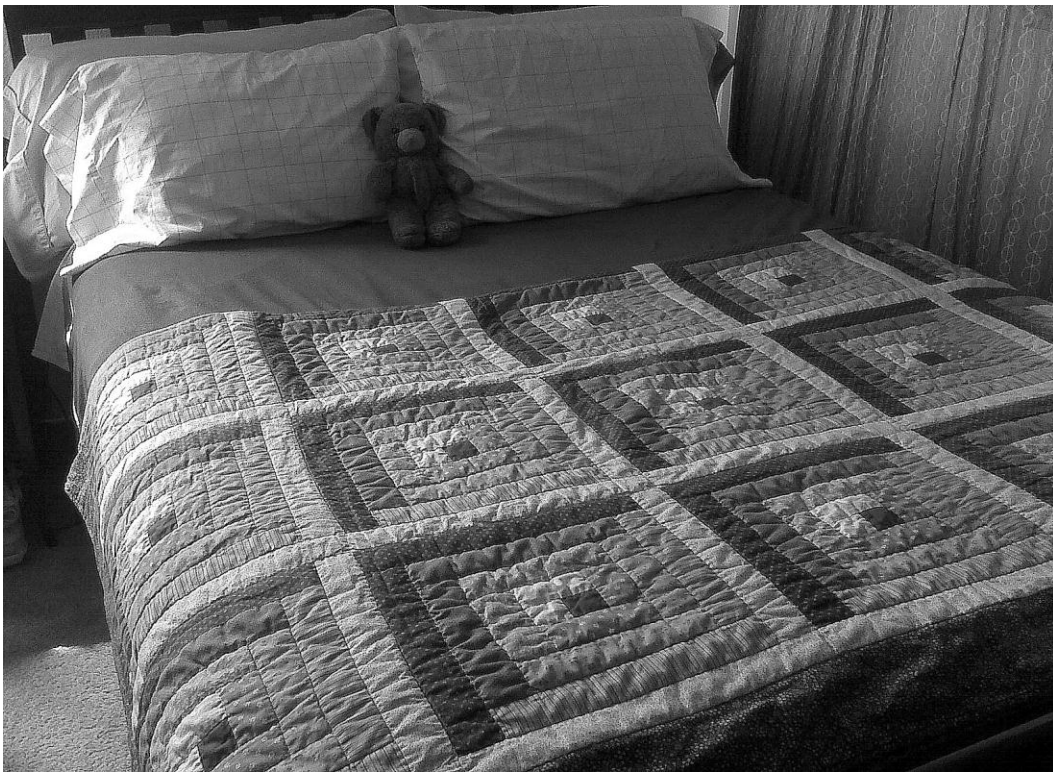
Artifact E2: Christine Ellison, “The Symbols that Represent Me”



Artifact E3: Ursula Manders, Common Bond



Artifact E4: Sarah Cole, River Rocks



Artifact E5: Katherine Street, The Quilt My Mother Made for Me



Artifact E6a: Lando, Rockaway, 22



Artifact E6b: Lando, Honolulu, 35



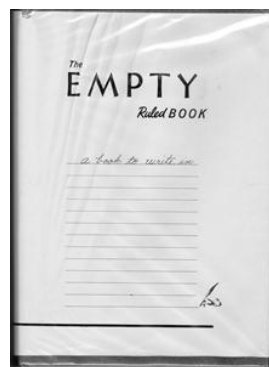
Artifact E6c: Lando, Greece, 60



Artifact E6d: Lando, Today w/ Son



Artifact E7a: Celia Toscano, Last Smile



Artifact E7b: Celia Toscano, Journal

Vermont

12/22/72

By chance I came upon a splendor that
stirred the very depth of my being

A silvery brook gently flowing; a mild
breeze brushing the leaves of eternal lovers,
whose limbs entwined across the water

A timeless place hidden from shallow
beholders

Mine to return to in reverie always.

Daily Pond

10/14/73

Of all the memories that I am most
fond
it is that of daily pond

Where many a day I did tread
to find what there ~~is~~ lived

A frog or two did I catch
then down to the beach to see what
they would fetch

As my feet labored thru the sand
friends called over to give me a hand
together we wended till day end

~~By then~~ ^{till} we had reaped enough to spend
until tomorrow when ~~we meet~~ ^{we meet} in

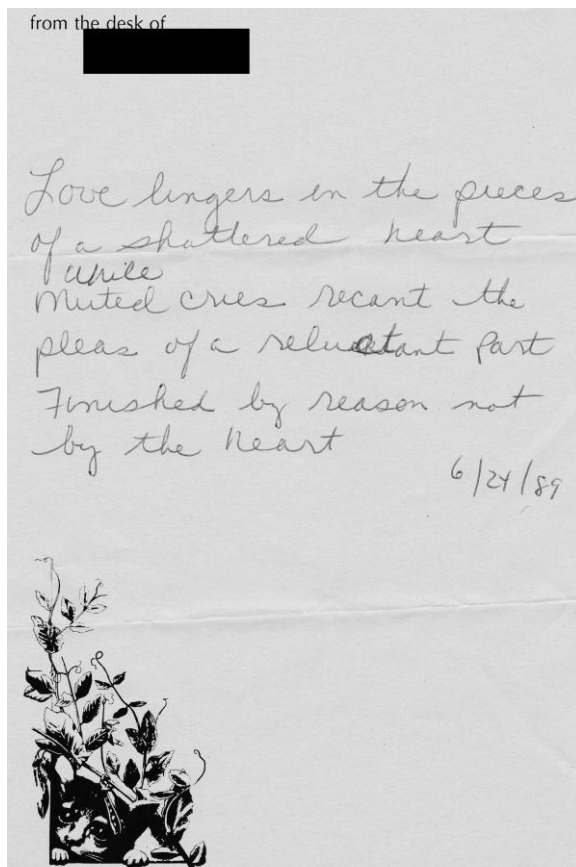
~~meet~~ ^{bond}
there beside Daily Pond.

Artifact E7c: Celia Toscano, Journal Entries Vermont" & "Daily Pond"

7-17-91

Secrets are like the
wind
Invisible but felt
Kept safe inside the
heart
Until words let loose
what others knew
from the start

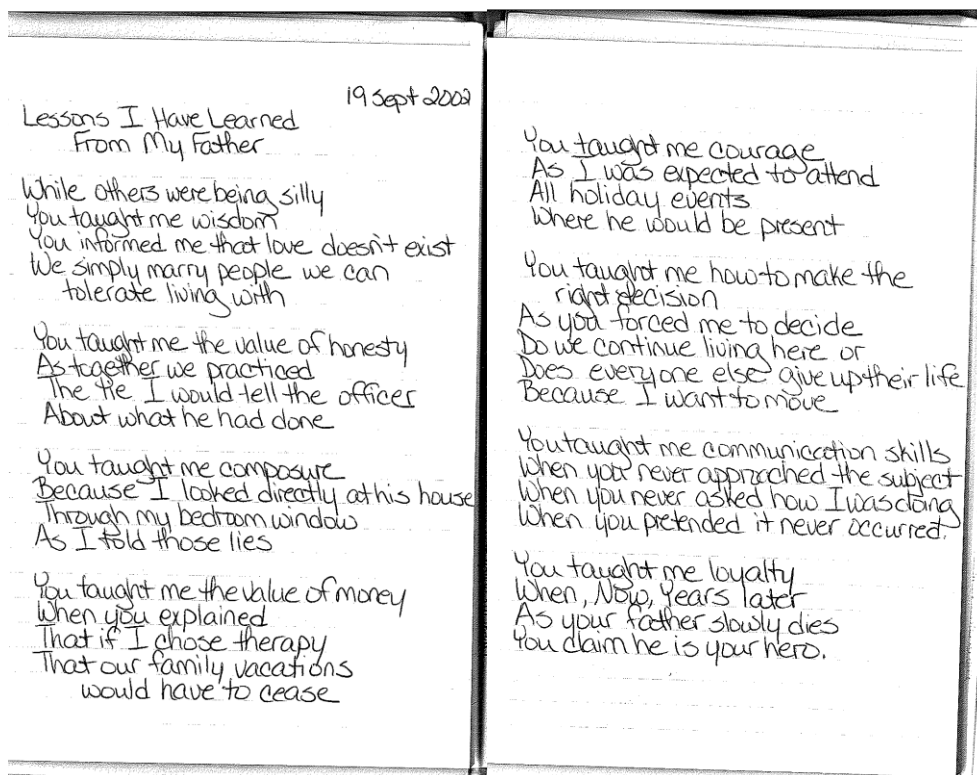
Artifact E7d: Celia Toscano, Journal Entries, "Secrets"



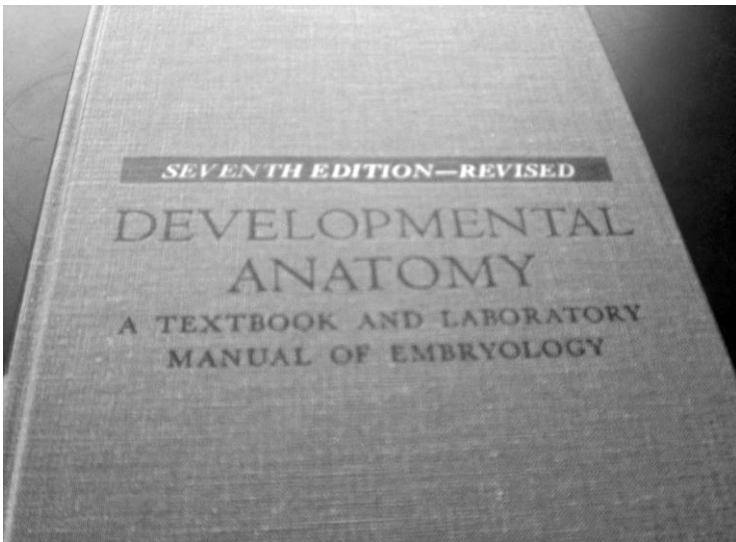
Artifact E7e: Celia Toscano, Journal Entries, "Love Lingers"



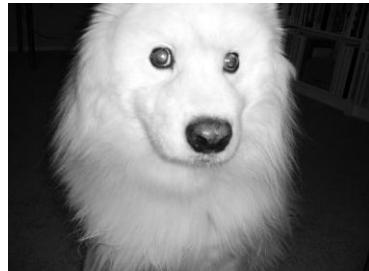
Artifact E8a: Anne Cascarino, Postcard of Home



Artifact E8b: Anne Cascarino, "Lessons I Have Learned from My Father"



Artifact E9: Barb Robinson, Developmental Anatomy Book



Artifact E10: Karri Stevens, Pictures of My Dog, Thunder

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Shannon Irene Decker was born in Port Jervis, New York, on February 4, 1971. She received her secondary education through the Port Jervis Unified School District from which she graduated in 1989 with a Regents Academic distinction and as a Project Advance scholar with dual enrollment at Syracuse University. She also attended Orange County Community College in upstate New York, 1990-1991. She graduated with her B.A. in English in 1993 from Arizona State University. She earned her Teaching Certification in 1995 and her M.Ed. in Secondary Education in 1996 from Arizona State University. She taught AP, Honors, and Regular English and History for 11 years in the Cave Creek Unified School District and held numerous district level leadership positions in Curriculum and Assessment, Administration, Governance and was deemed a “Master Teacher.” She has also taught graduate classes in Literacy and Research Methods as Associate Faculty at Arizona State University. During her tenure as a doctoral student she co-authored “Rethinking Curriculum Integration by Expanding the Debate” and authored the Foreword for DIY Media in the Classroom. She earned her Ph.D. in Curriculum Studies from Arizona State University in 2011. Her primary research interests include cultural studies, working class and gender studies, educational philosophy, curricular and critical theories.