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THE MALE ADULT WORKING-CLASS STUDENT IN FORMAL HIGHER

EDUCATION: AN IDENTITY CRISIS?

A Dissertation in

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by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore how working-class adult students maintain their aspects of their identity in a formal higher education environment. While the literature has highlighted social class issues in adult education little is known about why and how some working-class students maintain aspects of their identity while some students choose to abandon their working-class roots and attempt to assimilate into the dominant, middle-and upper-class culture of formal education.

This study explored the following questions: What does being working-class mean to working-class students? What are the experiences of working-class students attending formal higher education? How do working-class students maintain aspects of their identity?

This study used a qualitative methodology and heuristic inquiry. This was accomplished by conducting a series of in-depth interviews with current and former adult working-class students. The purpose of these interviews was to elicit open-ended responses that enabled understanding and captured the points of view of these students. The participants' perceptions and experiences resulted in an understanding of their worldview and exploration of their social class awareness.

The research findings centered on three areas – working-class identity and meaning, experiences in higher education, and responsibilities of higher education and the working-class student. The participants identified characteristics of working-class identity; how they have maintained this identity; the roles, responsibilities and meaning of work; and dynamics of the intersection of social class. Findings regarding experiences in higher education included influencers and motivators to attend higher education;

challenges of the working-class student; and attitudes, attributes, and motivations while engaged in higher education.

The thesis provided an analysis related to social class identity and findings on how working-class students maintain aspects of their identity while adopting aspects of middle-class identity as well as how critical consciousness is developed. Other areas expanded upon were the challenges of the working-class student, specifically feelings of impostership, lack of cultural capital, and cultural suicide. Finally, the study explored how students of working-class origin coexist in the working- and middle-classes with a focus on opportunities versus threats and the role of the working-class student as an intellectual laborer and organic intellectual.

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The centerpiece of this thesis is the respective interviews that were conducted with the five gentlemen of working-class origin who volunteered to participate in the study. These men dedicated their valuable time to conduct two interviews, review their transcripts and provide feedback, and finally meet in a group session. Without their candor, honesty, and feedback this study would not have been possible. I greatly appreciate their enthusiasm for this project and their encouragement as I analyzed their transcripts and wrote this thesis.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The first chapter provides the reader with the purpose of this research and an

understanding of the statement of the problem as well as specific research questions. The

chapter begins by presenting an introduction to the problem with a reference to the

pertinent literature, followed by an introduction to the conceptual framework used in the

study. The first chapter also provides an overview of the research design and

methodology, the significance of the study, definition of terms, and assumptions and

limitations.

Introduction to the Problem

The impact of social class permeates many, if not all, aspects of our society including

formal education. In our society education is meant to inculcate the dominant values of

the middle- and upper-classes, not to confront these values (Nesbit, 2005a). Generally,

the middle- and upper-classes have the means, in terms of income and family support, to

enroll and succeed in formal higher education (McCallum & Demie, 2001; VanGalen,

2000). Students in the working-class, particularly adults, may not have the money,

family support, and time needed to continue their education (Cervero & Wilson, 2001).

Adult working-class students have various unique challenges such as lower income,

potential lack of support and understanding from friends and family, as well as

integrating into an academic environment which may be ambivalent to their special needs

– daycare, class hours conducive to work hours, and others (Soliday, 1999). These

challenges may often appear insurmountable resulting in an adult working-class student

dropping out of a program or choosing not to enroll in a formal higher educational setting.

American society should strive for a goal of educational equity among the social classes in terms of accessibility and power relationships in higher education. A small percentage of working-class adults participate in education (Tobias, 1998). Those low-income and working-class students that do participate are often not successful in terms of graduation. Forty-one percent of low-income students entering a four-year college managed to graduate within five years compared to a graduate rate of 66% of high-income students (Leonhardt, 2005). Astin (1993) found that socioeconomic status has a strong effect on completion of a college degree and that students from the middle- and upper-classes have more positive outcomes in college, regardless of their abilities, academic preparation, or other characteristics.

This lack of working-class representation in higher education may, ultimately, create an ever-increasing chasm between social classes – the "haves" and "have nots," the educated and uneducated, the leaders and followers. Over the past two decades the American public has increasingly viewed social class within these two categories. Allen and Dimock (2007) found that the perception of the public that America is divided into the "haves" and "have nots" almost doubled (from 26% to 48%) from 1988 to 2007. Further, fewer people consider themselves a "have" (1988-59%; 2007-45%). Also, during the period from 1965-2003 top executive salaries went from 42 times an average worker's pay to 301 times as much (Collins, Leondar-Wright, & Sklar, 2004). These top executives are typically a product of private, rather than public, education. "This separate educational system is important evidence for the

distinctiveness of the mentality and lifestyle that exists with the upper-class, because schools play a large role in transmitting the class structure to their students" (Domhoff, p. 51). This is not the type of society our founding fathers envisioned and is not the type of society the citizens of today envision for their children (Carcieri, 1997). Despite challenges and inequities, many working-class students graduate from educational institutions, but at what cost? Do these students compromise their integrity and their working-class identities in order to survive in the formal academic environment? Or, as Nesbit (2005b) suggests, do working-class learners view education as part of their continuing struggle for a better world not only for themselves, but for everyone else as well?

It is important for students, educators, academic institutions, and the adult education profession to understand these challenges, particularly in terms of an awareness of identity, and address these questions. Excluding the working-class from higher education, either intentionally or unintentionally, creates an educational blind spot in those privileged students and educators who have the means to thrive in higher education. Not having the opportunity to interact and learn from working-class students, a significantly large percentage of society, would certainly create a void in the overall development of middle- and upper-class students. Conversely, the working-class student would miss a significant opportunity by not attending higher education. These opportunities for all students, regardless of social class, can be enhanced by the adult education profession identifying, accepting, and resolving the unique challenges of working-class adult students. Adult educators and institutions have the responsibility to help close this societal chasm by providing opportunities for all classes to achieve success

in higher education. Further, they have the responsibility to create an educational environment that does not force working-class students to unintentionally lose their identity and compromise their values, beliefs, and attitudes. In short, formal higher education has a part in influencing social change. The scholar and writer Raymond Williams (1989) suggests that "the central ambition of this process which was eventually called Adult Education was to be part of the process of social change itself" rather than being "instituted, developed and altered by social change" (p. 157).

The adult working-class student also has a responsibility while attending formal higher education. Williams (1980) further contends that in Great Britain "the erosion of the old crude division between mental and manual labour has, partly through an extended educational system…, reached deep within the general class a wage earners" (p. 271). He goes on to state; however, that the main social forces needed to deal with the challenges that are inherent in this erosion must originate from the working-class. Therefore, the working-class student must have the courage and tenacity to embark on a higher educational experience by exploring their identity and addressing personal challenges related to maintaining working-class identity, many of which must be met head-on. These challenges may be self-inflicted, or imposed by other influences such as work, family, friends, the academic institution, or the teacher. These challenges must be dealt with and resolved to the extent possible without compromising one's integrity and identity. Adult educators often have the resources at hand to facilitate the resolution of these challenges and accompanying problems. A first step in coping with these challenges, however, is an awareness of working-class identity within formal higher education.

This topic is critically important to adult education and our society. Many working-class teachers and students have encountered, and are currently encountering, some of these challenges. However, the current literature on working-class adult students is limited. Foley (2005) suggests a widespread denial in our culture of the importance or even the existence of social class. "The ethics of self-reliance and mobility and the ideologies of individualism, egalitarianism, and meritocratic achievement have become more powerful forces than class solidarity" (Nesbit, 2005a, p. 9). However, recent events in the United States, most notably the plight of the underprivileged in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, have highlighted that social class stratification does, indeed, exist in this nation. The writing of Chapter 2 of this study provided an opportunity to explore the literature that is available not only in the United States, but also in other countries regarding social class and education.

Four themes emerged from the literature that inform this topic – social class stratification and definitions of social class and working-class, social class and working-class identity, institutional centered issues that impact working-class students, and student centered working-class issues. These issues all present challenges to the working-class student.

Social Class Stratification

Nesbit (2005a) contends that a common perspective, particularly in the United States, is that social class stratification does not exist and everyone generally resides in the middle class. Others view social class stratification from a structural functionalist perspective (Ryan & Sackrey, 1984) or from a conflict theory perspective (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004).

Structural functionalists view social class stratification, and the relationships, interaction and order between classes, as rational, ideally harmonious, and necessary for a healthy society. Entry into all social classes is possible if one is talented and motivated (Ryan & Sackrey, 1984) and functions associated with the higher classes are generally viewed as more important to society than those functions in the lower class.

The second perspective, conflict theory, was developed, in part, as a result of the criticisms of structural functionalism (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). Conflict theory is rooted in the work of Marx who stratified social class into two levels – the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The bourgeoisie is characterized as those that own and control the means of production, such as factories and mills, while the proletariat provides the physical labor that generates products. This relationship is not equitable and is in conflict – the working-class generates excess wealth for the bourgeoisie, but does not equally profit from it (Nesbit, 2005a). Both theories will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

Definitions of Social Class and Working-Class

There are various perspectives and definitions of social class and working-class (Bee, 1996; Cheung, Rudowicz, & Lang, 2001; Egerton, 2001; Glaser, 2002; Livingstone & Stowe, 2001; Longwell-Grice, 2003; Maneval, 1999; McCallum & Demie, 2001; Nesbit, 2005b; VanGalen, 2000; Wright, 1994). Wright (1994) and VanGalen (2000) define social class in terms of occupation, not necessarily income. Similarly, Livingstone and Stowe (2001) define "workers" as employees without authority over other workers or without control over the design of the work process. Bee (1996) states, however, that occupation, income, and education determine social class. McCallum and Demie (2001) consider a number of demographic factors to include homeowners, number of people

living in the home, and number of cars owned. Egerton (2001) considers manual

industrial and agricultural employees the working-class. Maneval (1999) focuses on more

subjective factors that define social class. She describes working-class as a culture that is

produced from a "distinct set of values, understanding and ideologies" (p. 13). Nesbit

(2005b) also suggests that class is less a possession and more of a dynamic: "a

relationship between different people and groups divided along axes of power and

privilege" (p. 84).

Social Class and Working-Class Identity

Perspectives and definitions of working-class identity are also inconsistent in the

literature (Belkhir, 2001; Bottero, 2004; Lindquist, 2004; Nakhai, Silverman, &

LaGrange, 2000; Smith & Hanley, 2003; Willis, 1977). Working-class identity is a set of

shared experiences (Lindquist, 2004). It is also an individual phenomenon and differs for

each person. There may be, however, some common characteristics of identity among

adult working-class students. This study explores these characteristics.

Institutional Centered Issues

The literature identifies issues of working-class student bias that are centered in the

educational institution (Bamber & Tett, 1999; Brookfield & Preskill, 1999; Cheung,

Rudowicz, & Lang, 2001; Glaser, 2002; Gos, 1995; hooks, 1994; Littrell, 1999; Martin &

VanGunten, 2002; Price, 2003; Tobias, 1998; VanGalen, 2000). Social class issues

inherent in the classroom include the level of critical thinking skills, teacher-centered

power, the invisibility of social class, and public versus formal language. The perspective

and attitude of a working-class student in the classroom also influences his or her success

or failure. Some students view themselves as "students who work" while others see themselves as "workers who study" (Berker & Horn, 2003).

Student Centered Issues

A number of articles address student centered issues that present challenges to the working-class student (Berker & Horn, 2003; Bond, 1999; Cervero & Wilson, 2001; Chafel, 1996; Cheung, Rudowicz, & Lang, 2001; Conner & Dewson, 2001; Cormack & Osborne, 1997; Egerton, 2001; Glaser, 2002; Lipset, 1995; Longwell-Grice, 2003; Marks, 2000; McCallum & Demie, 2001; Soliday, 1999; Tett, 2000; Tobias, 1998; VanGalen, 2000). These issues range from the impact of parents' education on the working-class student, to resource challenges, to the balance of work, school, and family. Related to resources is the notion of cultural capital that is addressed in many of the articles. That is, "the style and patterns of speaking, dress, and posture, the command of language, and the knowledge of cultural matters that one brings to an educational situation" (Cervero & Wilson, 2001, p. 214).. This term and others are further defined later in the study. Also, the motivation and attitude of the working-class student to attend post-secondary education is in stark contrast to many middle- and upper-class students.

The literature identifies many factors that have the potential to not only marginalize the adult working-class student, but also to possibly cause him or her to decide not to embark in a formal educational experience. If the prospective working-class student does enroll in an educational program he or she must confront student centered issues as well as issues manifested in the academic institution. In some cases these issues are insurmountable.

However, as working-class students experience marginalization and inequities, they often prevail in terms of having an awareness of social class identity. Consequently, success, to the working-class students, is not only graduating from a higher education program, but maintaining their working-class identity – that is, "going through the university, not letting the university go through them" (Archer & Leathwood, 2003, p. 177). Relatively few working-class students embrace the notion of changing their identity (Archer, Hutchings, & Ross, 2003). Although some students do succumb to the pressures of the dominant culture and lose aspects of their working-class identity others persevere and embrace their working-class values and beliefs. What compels some adult working-class students to evolve into what Gramsci (Boggs, 1984) describes as organic intellectuals – those intellectuals from the working-class that lead and motivate other working-class students? What factors contribute to these learners maintaining their authenticity in terms of their working-class backgrounds? These questions were addressed in this study.

There is a significant gap in the literature regarding factors contributing to working-class students maintaining aspects of their identity throughout their formal educational experience. As discussed earlier, the literature that does exist on social class issues in formal higher education varies in terms of definitions of terms (social class, working-class, working-class identity) and focus. A reason for this absence and variance in the literature may be the primary source of scholarly work – professors who predominantly originate from and reside in the middle- and upper-classes. Consequently, the topic of working-class identity in higher education is not adequately addressed and the voices of those students originating from the working-class are not heard. In order to further

understand this dynamic the conceptual framework adopted for this study is that of critical theory.

Overview of Conceptual Framework

Critical theory, particularly the work of Jurgen Habermas and Antonio Gramsci, offered a conceptual framework for addressing these questions. For the purposes of this study, critical theory was defined as an examination of the power relationships of all aspects of formal adult education with a goal of unmasking and overcoming ways in which working-class adult students are oppressed and their identities challenged.

According to Brookfield (2005, p. viii) critical theory is grounded in three core assumptions regarding how the world is organized:

- That apparently open, Western democracies are actually highly unequal societies in which economic inequity, racism, and class discrimination are empirical realities.

- That the way this state of affairs is reproduced and seems to be normal, natural, and inevitable (thereby heading off potential challenges to the system) is through the dissemination of dominant ideology.

- That critical theory attempts to understand this state of affairs as a necessary prelude to changing it.

Elias and Merriam (2005) cite the following as common themes of critical theorists: …a dialectical view of social reality in which human subjectivity is deeply involved, a rejection of a deterministic view of society, a unified view of reality that avoids a dualistic perspective, an emphasis on human liberation not only in

economic but also in cultural terms, a rejection of the economic determinism of

Marx, and an analysis of all forms of domination, hegemony, and cultural

imperialism (p. 151).

Formal adult education often serves to exacerbate the social disadvantages that class

and background produce (Nesbit, 2005a). An understanding of the dominant ideology,

power relationships, and the impact of hegemony can potentially provide the working-

class student a greater awareness of his or her identity.

A critical theorist that has had a significant influence on adult education and the

challenges of working-class students is Jurgen Habermas (Brookfield, 2001; Brookfield,

2005; Connelly, 1996; Elias & Merriam, 2005; Habermas, 1962/1989; Habermas, 1971;

Habermas, 1981/1984; Habermas, 1981/1987; Habermas, 1996). An appealing aspect of

Habermas' work is his relatively optimistic viewpoint. He became disillusioned with

Marx's perspective of economic determinism, offering "a view that puts faith in the

rationality of human beings to engage in critique and action to bring about a more just,

free, and equitable society" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 347). Additionally,

Habermas seeks reformation of the capitalistic society, not necessarily revolution – a

more moderate approach that is more palatable to many contemporary adult educators

(Connelly, 1996).

Habermas represents knowledge in three ways that are applicable to various

knowledge and skills found across the social class spectrum: technical (task related

competence), practical (interpersonal learning), and emancipatory (learning for

perspective transformation) (Elias & Merriam, 2005; Merriam & Simpson, 2000).

Habermas' work in the realms of knowledge, as well as his overall perspective of critical

theory, is firmly grounded in communicative action (Brookfield, 2005; Connelly, 1996; Habermas, 1981/1984; Habermas, 1981/1987; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004; Ziegahn, 2000). Habermas describes communicative action as:

> when the actions of the agents are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success but through acts of reaching understanding. In communicative action participants are not primarily oriented to their own successes; they pursue their individual goals through the condition that they can harmonize their plans of action on the basis of common situation definitions (Habermas as cited in Ritzer & Goodman, p. 145, 2004).

Communicative action is a means by which issues of social class inequities and awareness can be effectively addressed in formal higher education. Understanding, rather than competitiveness and success, is a goal of communicative action.

Habermas also identifies three crises that he believes western society is facing – the decline of the public sphere, the threat to civil society, and the invasion of the lifeworld (Brookfield, 2005). "These crises all signify a loss in people's ability to apply reason to the discussion and resolution of common social problems" (p. 220). The majority of these social problems are ultimately manifested in the working-class society. Consequently, the inability to discuss and resolve these problems has a significantly greater negative impact on this social class as compared to the impact on those residing in the middle- or upper-classes.

Gramsci also provides a framework for examining adult working-class in higher education. He, like Habermas, provided a bridge between the economic determinism of Marx to modern theories with subjective orientations. Gramsci (2000; 1997/2003)

believed social revolution required action by the masses. However, a prerequisite to action was an awareness of the situation and system in which the masses lived (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). The masses, or proletariat and peasants, had a false consciousness enveloped in a bourgeois culture which represented a failure of awareness and comprehension. Once awareness and comprehension of the situation and system were achieved through class organizations people could affirm control over their lives (Morgan, 1996). However, the masses could not achieve this alone. A "stable, disciplined and permanent organization of specialists (both working class and intellectuals) was necessary to mold these movements into a protracted, all-encompassing assault upon the State and the capitalist class" (Holst, 1999, p. 418). Gramsci termed these specialists organic intellectuals. The working-class student, by maintaining and embracing his or her identity, has the potential to be a 21st Century organic intellectual who returns to the working-class culture and encourages others to pursue educational opportunities.

Central to this proletariat awareness are the concepts of hegemony and critical consciousness. Hegemony is defined by Gramsci as "cultural leadership exercised by the ruling class" (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004, p. 136). Brookfield (2005) further defines the concept as "the process by which we learn to embrace enthusiastically a system of beliefs and practices that end up harming us and working to support the interests of others who have power over us" (p. 93). Hegemony can be identified, and potentially overcome, by adult working class students by the development of critical consciousness. That is, learning to think critically about power in formal higher education and learning how to recognize working-class position, identity, and political interests.

Gramsci's notion of contesting hegemony by the development of critical consciousness; as well as Habermas' concepts of representation of knowledge, communicative action, and the three crises facing western society are central to adult working-class identity in formal higher education. This framework provided a lens for this study.

Additionally, the ideas of Habermas and Gramsci addressed in this study provide a springboard to critical consciousness for the adult working-class student. Feelings of not fitting in, being inadequate, and not belonging in formal education are often attributed by the working-class student as their fault and their problem (Willis, 1977). This may result in a questioning of the value and relevance of their working-class identity. By viewing these feelings through a critical lens, the working-class student can discover that issues of hegemony are the root causes of incongruent feelings and actions, not their inadequacy, and that their identity can add value to their educational experience, as well as the learning of other students whose origin is middle- or upper-class.

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this study was to explore how working-class adult students maintain aspects of their identity in a formal higher education environment. Some working-class students, as well as students from other marginalized segments of society, do not maintain their identity; rather they adopt the values, beliefs, and behaviors of dominant society. However, others are able to somehow function in the middle- and upper-class environment of formal education and, at the same time, maintain their working-class identities (Archer & Leathwood, 2003). Having the discipline and perseverance to resist adopting a dominant culture identity, at the expense of aspects of working-class identity,

appears to be a conscious and deliberate undertaking. How this undertaking is accomplished has not been studied. While the literature has highlighted social class issues in adult education, little is known about why and how some working-class students maintain aspects of their identity while some students choose to abandon their working-class roots and attempt to assimilate into the dominant, middle-and upper-class culture of formal education.

Statement of the Problem

Recent literature (Nesbit, 2005c) has centered on class concerns and adult education, specifically social class and adult education policy, literacy issues, pedagogical issues, as well as the intersections of class, gender, and race. Although this and other research has explored adult working-class issues and challenges in the formal education environment, little attention has been paid to the problem that this study addressed - how adult working-class students make meaning of and maintain aspects of their working-class identity while immersed in the middle- and upper-class culture of formal higher education.

Research Questions

This study explored the following questions: What does being working-class mean to working-class students? What are the experiences of working-class students attending formal higher education? How do working-class students maintain aspects of their identity?

Overview of Design and Methodology

This study used a qualitative methodology and heuristic inquiry. This was accomplished by conducting a series of in-depth interviews with current and former adult

working-class students. The purpose of these interviews was to elicit open-ended responses that enabled me to understand and capture the points of view of these students. The participants' perceptions and experiences resulted in an understanding of their worldview and exploration of their social class awareness.

Qualitative research is appropriate because this study was interested in meaning – how adult working-class students make sense of their educational experience in terms of maintaining their identity. Additionally, I was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, the research involved fieldwork, and the research was descriptive and inductive (Creswell, 1994).

I am an adult working-class student attempting to make sense of my attempts to maintain aspects of working-class identity while immersed in the middle- and upper-class environment of formal higher education. Consequently, heuristics was appropriate because this form of inquiry brings to the fore the personal experience and insights of the researcher (Patton, 2002). Heuristic inquiry is based on a question that is a personal challenge – maintaining aspects of a working-class identity in a middle- and upper-class environment – and a desire to understand one's self and the world in which one lives (Moustakas, 1990). "The heuristic process is autobiographic, yet with virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social – and perhaps universal – significance" (p. 15). I considered Moustakas' (1990) concepts and processes of heuristic research – identifying with the focus of the inquiry, self-dialogue, tacit knowing, intuition, indwelling, focusing, and the internal frame of reference. I then implemented Moustakas' six phases of heuristic research: 1) initial engagement, 2) immersion, 3) incubation, 4) illumination, 5) explication, and 6) creative synthesis.

A purposeful, homogeneous sampling was used for this study. The participants for this study were white, male adult working-class students (current or former). I networked in social and professional circles to find participants. The sample size was six participants. They were individually interviewed face-to-face, using the informal, conversational interview approach. With permission of the participants, the interviews were taped and transcribed. After individual interviews were completed, participants met as a group to further discuss perceptions and experiences as well as identifying themes and commonalities. Also, triangulation and participant feedback was used during the data analysis process.

The data was interpreted using Moustakas' (1990) outline guide of procedures for analysis of data (pp. 51-52). Verification included investigator triangulation. Various people were asked to interpret the data to include selected participants and members of my committee.

<div align="center">Significance of the Study</div>

This study was significant because the lack of working-class representation in higher education may, ultimately, create an ever-increasing chasm between social classes – the "haves" and "have nots," the educated and uneducated, the leaders and followers. Increased participation and equity can be achieved, in part, by adult educators and students understanding what factors contribute to students having an awareness of and maintaining aspects of their working-class identity and, as a result, enrolling in and remaining in formal higher education.

Foley (2005) suggests a widespread denial in United States culture of the importance or even the existence of social class. This denial is also prevalent in adult education.

This study added to the base of adult education and social class literature as well as increased awareness that there exists, in fact, privileged and oppressed segments of our society and educational system. This awareness can facilitate an appreciation of what all students, regardless of social class, bring to the classroom in terms of unique perceptions, perspectives, and experiences. A purely middle-class or working-class educational perspective is not conducive to producing well informed, critically conscious members of society. As a result, this study also contributed to a renewed interest in social class as an influential factor of learning.

<div align="center">Definition of Terms</div>

Terms used throughout this study are listed below:

Adult Student – a student who is either over twenty-one years of age, married, or the head of a household.

Communicative Action – an action that occurs when attempts at communication "are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success but through acts of reaching understanding" (Habermas, 1984, p. 286). Communicative action, then, is realized when distortions to effective communication; such as attitudes, beliefs, and biases, are identified and overcome in order to fully understand and learn.

Critical Consciousness – the ability to think critically about power and control in formal higher education in terms of one's class position.

Critical Theory – the product of a group of German neo-Marxists who were dissatisfied with the Marxian Theory tendency towards economic determinism (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). The Critical school's interests include a critical examination of universities (a "knowledge industry") that "have become oppressive structures interested in expanding

their influence throughout society" (p. 140). More specifically, for the purposes of this study, a critical lens is used to examine the power relationships of formal higher education with a goal of unmasking and overcoming ways in which adult working-class students are oppressed and their identities challenged.

Critical Thinking – the ability to analyze, evaluate, reason, apply, and compare aspects and positions within various issues or problems.

Cultural Capital – the style and patterns of speaking, dress, and posture; as well as the command of language, and the knowledge of cultural matters that one brings to an educational situation (Cervero & Wilson, 2001).

Cultural Suicide - the process whereby families, peer groups, and communities exclude from their midst students whom they see as changing in front of their eyes as a result of their engaging in learning (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999).

Dominant Culture – the culture with the greatest resources, power, and privilege to maintain their position of dominance over others (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999). In terms of social class in higher education, the middle- and upper-classes are the dominant cultures.

Formal Higher Education – an educational experience that is conducted at, or sponsored by, an institution of higher learning (beyond high school). This experience can include both face-to-face and on-line interaction.

Hegemony – a central concept of the writings of Antonio Gramsci which for the purposes of this study was defined as a process by which adult working-class students, often unknowingly, embrace and accept the values, beliefs, and attitudes of the dominant culture (middle- and upper-class) found in formal higher education. This acceptance

results in harm to the adult working-class student and, concurrently, supports the interests of those that have power.

Identity – values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are manifested based on one's view of the world. Identities are not fixed – they change as a result of lived experiences.

Impostership – the sense among working-class students that they possess neither the talent nor the right to become college students (Brookfield & Preskill).

Social Class – people's productive relation including ownership of capital, the means of production, control of managerial functions, and possession of expertise. Social class hinges on an individual's occupation, and income is not necessarily a criterion to define class (Wright, 1994).

Working-Class – a particular class position within a hierarchical social class system (Maneval, 1999). Other positions within this social class system include the middle-class, the upper-class, and the under-class. Within each social class position there are also levels of stratification. Those in the working-class generally engage in manual labor, rather than intellectual labor, as a means of production. Working-class students can be characterized as those whose parents have not achieved a college education and have worked in jobs that did not require a college education (Longwell-Grice, 2003). Working-class adult students self identify as working-class based on their social class of origin, not necessarily based on the social class in which they currently reside. The definition of under-class, working-class, middle-class, and upper-class, as well as levels of stratification is subjective and various widely in the literature. The objective definition found above (manual labor, parents have not achieved a college education and have

worked in jobs not requiring an education, social class of origin) was formulated for the purposes of this study.

<div align="center">Assumptions of the Study</div>

This study included the following assumptions:

1. Social class positioning affects life experiences including experiences in formal higher education and the interpretation of those experiences. The middle- and upper-class culture in higher education produces relations of domination through a system of gender, class, and racial oppression. This oppressive system cannot be fully understood unless one understands his or her relative positioning in the system. Consequently, the adult working-class student's participation in formal higher education is shaped and influenced by their location within the dominant culture (Maneval, 1999).

2. People are often not aware of their positionality in the dominant culture and the impact this has on others within the culture. Those in the dominant culture believe that their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are normal and the standard for a healthy, functioning society. Those not in the dominant culture, such as the adult working-class student, often feel inadequate and inferior because of the incongruencies between their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors and those of the dominant culture. These feelings of inadequacy and inferiority often result in withdrawal or avoidance of a formal higher education experience.

3. Adult working-class students desire to understand and maintain aspects of their working-class identity.

4. The lived experiences of the participants can be accurately understood, analyzed, and reported.

5. I am an adult learner of working-class origin. My experiences as an adult working-class student are acknowledged and included in the design of the study.

<div align="center">Limitations of the Study</div>

The limitations of the study included the following:

1. The size and homogeneous nature of the sample limited the generalization of findings to the larger population of adult working-class students or other students who are not part of the dominant culture. It must be noted, however, that generalization is normally not a goal of qualitative research and, consequently, was not a goal of this study.

2. This study utilized interviewing as a primary data collection technique. The limitations of interviewing include the degree of truthfulness and cooperation found in the participant; the time taken to analyze data, the quality of the data and, potentially, the quality of the results.

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

The purpose of this study was to explore how adult working-class students maintain aspects of their identity in a formal higher education environment. This study explored the meaning of working-class identity; the experiences of adult working-class students in formal, higher education; and how working-class students maintain aspects of their identities. This chapter introduced the problem and provided a conceptual framework as well as a research design and methodology, definition of terms, assumptions, and limitations. This study was an important step in acknowledging and understanding the lack of working-class representation in higher education which may, ultimately, create an ever-increasing chasm between social classes. Increased participation and equity can be

achieved, in part, by adult educators understanding what factors contribute to students

maintaining aspects of their working-class identity and, as a result, enrolling in and

remaining in formal higher education.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature informing this study centered on five major areas – the conceptual

framework of the study, social class stratification and definitions of social class and

working-class, social class and working-class identity, institutional centered working-

class issues, and student centered working-class issues. These areas facilitated a deeper

understanding and provided context for the exploration of how working-class students

maintain aspects of their identity in a formal education environment.

The chapter begins by addressing the conceptual framework for this study – critical

theory – which provided a lens through which to examine the review of literature and, in

particular, social class incongruencies and their impact on not only the working-class

student, but also adult education and Western society. This section reviews selected

works of Jurgen Habermas (1971/1996; 1981/1984; 1981/1987) and, specifically, his

notions of communicative action (Brookfield, 2005; Connelly, 1996; Ritzer & Goodman,

2004; Ziegahn, 2000) and the three crises in Western societies (Brookfield, 2005;

Habermas, 1962/1989). Additionally, Antonio Gramsci's ideas regarding the organic

intellectual, critical consciousness and hegemony (Boggs, 1984; Brookfield, 2005;

Coben, 1998; Gramsci, 1971/2003, 2000; Morgan, 1996; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004) have

application to the adult working-class student maintaining aspects of their identity in

formal higher education.

The various literature reviewed in this chapter provided perspectives regarding social

class and working-class in terms of definitions and characteristics of social class

stratification. These perspectives all have unique approaches to characterizing the working-class student. Wright (1994) and VanGalen (2000) define social class in terms of occupation, not necessarily income. Bee (1996) states, however, that occupation, income, and education determine social class. McCallum and Demie (2001) consider a number of demographic factors to include homeowners, number of people living in the home, and number of cars owned. Egerton (2001) considers manual industrial and agricultural employees the working-class.

As is the case with definitions of social class, working-class identity has various interpretations (Nesbit, 2005a; Ohmann, 2003; Ryan & Sackrey, 1984; Smith & Hanley, 2003; Willis, 1977). Identity – the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are manifested based on one's view of the world – has many lenses to include social class. Although this study focused on identity from a white, male, working-class perspective, working-class identity also intersects with and is influenced by gender, race, and sexual orientation. It is important to note that identity is not fixed – identities change based on lived experiences. However, changes in identity should be understood and intentional rather than causing conflict, confusion, frustration and feelings of incongruency. Working-class identity and the incongruencies with dominant middle- and upper-class culture found in higher education create significant challenges for the working-class student.

The chapter then examines institutional centered working-class issues and their impact on identity. Issues inherent in the classroom include the ability to think critically, teacher-centered power, the invisibility of social class, and public versus formal language.

The perspective and attitude of a working-class student in the classroom also influences his or her success or failure.

Finally, the literature revealed student centered issues that present challenges to the working-class student. These issues include the impact of parents' education on the working-class student; resource challenges; balance of work, school, and family; and motivation and attitudes of working-class students.

<div align="center">Conceptual Framework: Critical Theory</div>

Critical theory is comprised of ideas and concepts of German neo-Marxists who were dissatisfied with the Marxian focus on economic determinism. It is a product of the Institute of Social Research which was founded in Frankfurt, Germany on February 23, 1923 (Wiggershaus, 1994).

Ritzer and Goodman (2004) highlight three significant aspects of critical theory: 1) a shift from the economic to the cultural system; 2) employment of social-scientific techniques which make this theory more acceptable to mainstream sociologists; and 3) the integration of "individually oriented Freudian theory with the societal- and cultural-level insights of Marx and Weber…which proves stimulating to many intellectuals" (p. 68). Merriam and Caffarella (1999) add that the "identification of these systems of power and oppression as a lens through which to analyze society is a key component of critical theory" (p. 347) and in order to "fight the hegemony of the system, citizens must engage in rational discourse about sources of power, knowledge, and oppression in the hope of redressing the current imbalance between the power of the lifeworld versus the system" (p. 348).

Common threads through the various perspectives of critical theory include a critical examination of the power relationships in all aspects of modern society, the apparent transparency of the dominant ideology, and a goal of unmasking and overcoming the oppressiveness of a hegemonic society. The adult working-class student resides on the margins of society and formal academic institutions. An understanding of the dominant ideology, power relationships, and the impact of hegemony can potentially provide the working-class student a greater awareness of his or her identity.

Jurgen Habermas

One critical theorist who has had significant insights regarding the challenges of working-class students is Jurgen Habermas. Habermas, a disciple of the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt, is a contemporary critical theorist who has had a prominent influence on adult education (Brookfield, 2001; Brookfield, 2005; Connelly, 1996; Elias & Merriam, 2005). One appealing aspect of Habermas' work is his relatively optimistic viewpoint. He became disillusioned with Marxism, offering "a view that puts faith in the rationality of human beings to engage in critique and action to bring about a more just, free, and equitable society" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 347). Additionally, Habermas seeks reformation of the capitalistic society, not necessarily revolution – a more moderate approach that is more palatable to many contemporary adult educators (Connelly, 1996).

Habermas represents knowledge in three ways: technical (task related competence), practical (interpersonal learning), and emancipatory (learning for perspective transformation) (Elias & Merriam, 2005; Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Those residing in the working-class value technical knowledge and are sometimes hesitant to venture into

the practical or emancipatory realms of knowledge because of feelings of inadequacy and incongruency. The dominant culture reinforces the value on technical knowledge as a means of achieving hegemony. That is, positions of privilege and power are perpetuated by using existing systems, institutions, policies, approaches, and practices of education (Nesbit, 2005a).

Habermas' work in the three realms of knowledge, as well as his overall perspective of critical theory, is firmly grounded in communicative action (Brookfield, 2005; Connelly, 1996; Habermas, 1981/1984; Habermas, 1981/1987; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004; Ziegahn, 2000). Habermas describes communicative actions as:

> when the actions of the agents are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of
> success but through acts of reaching understanding. In communicative action
> participants are not primarily oriented to their own successes; they pursue their
> individual goals through the condition that they can harmonize their plans of action
> on the basis of common situation definitions (Habermas as cited in Ritzer &
> Goodman, 2004, p. 145).

Habermas (1996) writes that "communicative action or reason is the linguistic medium through which interactions are woven together and forms of life are structured. This rationality is inscribed in the linguistic telos of mutual understanding and forms of ensemble of conditions that both enable and limit" (p. 3-4). However, communicative action goes beyond linguistic action – it also includes symbolic action – that is, converting the meaning of sentences into actions and of actions into sentences (Habermas, 1971). "In the case of communicative action the interpretive accomplishments on which cooperative processes of interpretation are based represent the

mechanism for *coordinating* action; communicative action is *not exhausted* by the act of reaching understanding in an interpretive manner" (Habermas, 1981/1984, p, 101). An outcome of communicative action, the synthesis of linguistic and symbolic action, is a society engaged in decision-making processes on the basis of discussion free from domination (Habermas, 1971). The adult education classroom, then, has the potential to be a forum for this interaction and communication and, potentially, a mechanism for coordinating action.

Habermas also identifies three crises that he believes western society is facing – the decline of the public sphere, the threat to civil society, and the invasion of the lifeworld (Brookfield, 2005; Habermas, 1981/1984; Habermas, 1981/1987). "These crises all signify a loss in people's ability to apply reason to the discussion and resolution of common social problems" (p. 220). Many of these social problems are ultimately manifested in the working-class culture. Consequently, the inability to discuss and resolve these problems has a significantly greater negative impact on this social class as compared to those in the middle- or upper-classes.

The first crisis, the decline of the public sphere, highlights the lack of opportunities for public discussions. The public sphere was once the forum where people could discuss issues and propose possible solutions. Habermas (1962/1989) refers to the Greek interpretation to describe the public sphere as a realm of freedom and permanence – "citizens interacted as equals with equals (homoio), but each did his best to excel (aristoiein)" (p. 4).

However, power and money are overwhelming society at the expense of a public sphere where exchange of ideas and human interaction once were the dominant

discourse. Consequently, the opinion of the marginalized segment of society, such as the working-class, is becoming increasingly repressed. Habermas (1981/1987) argues that "the bureaucratic disempowering and desiccation of spontaneous processes of opinion- and will-formation expands to the scope for engineering mass loyalty and makes it easier to uncouple political decision-making from concrete, identity-forming contexts of life" (p. 325). Adult education can continue to contribute to the disempowerment of the public sphere or it can consciously seek ways to provide forums for discussion and understanding. Because of the nature of many adult education programs, such as evening classes where students commute, there is often little time for students to interact about social class issues. The adult educator has a responsibility to provide time for students to discuss issues and problems relating not only to society in general but also to the specific learning environment in order to express points of view and opinions. Unfortunately, many adult educators consider this opportunity outside the purview of formal education as well as an invasion of classroom time.

Brookfield (2005) defines the second crisis – the threat to civil society – as comprising a threat to "all those forms of collective human association not directly controlled by the state or corporations" (pp. 234-235). Examples of collective human associations include clubs and organizations such as American Association of Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE). The threat to civil society, and associated formal and informal organizations, is one of the causes of the decline of the public sphere. Habermas (1981/1987) writes that "identity problems are unavoidable only if there is an irresistible tendency to an ever-expanding bureaucratization" (p. 311). In other words, as the formal structures and organizations created and controlled by those in power (government and

economic) expand the social identity of those people and organizations that are marginalized, such as the working-class, will be threatened. Also, as our society becomes more and more immersed in technology such as television and other forms of media rather than face-to-face human interaction as a means of gathering information and forming opinions, the more civil society becomes threatened. This is especially significant when one considers that the media is primarily controlled by those with power and money. Those with monetary and cultural capital are influential in determining what is broadcast on television and the radio and what is published in newspapers and magazines. Again, adult education can continue to facilitate this threat or can become a tool to decrease the threat to civil society.

Money and power also invade the lifeworld – the third crisis occurring in Western society. "The lifeworld is chiefly a mental, even a psychic, phenomenon. It exists prereflectively, inside consciousness. The lifeworld is so engrained in our structures of perception and communication that we cannot stand outside it and reflect back on it" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 238). Habermas (1981/1984) describes the lifeworld as:

…the correlate of processes of reaching understanding. Subjects acting communicatively always come to an understanding in the horizon of a lifeworld. Their lifeworld is formed from more or less diffuse, always unproblematic, background convictions. This lifeworld background serves as a source of situation definitions that are presupposed by participants as unproblematic. In their interpretive accomplishments the members of communicative community demarcate the one objective world and their inter-subjectively shared social world from the subjective worlds of the individuals and (other) collectives (p. 70).

In essence, the lifeworld is how one views and interacts with the world – in short, one's identity. This interaction is based on the various lenses through which one views the world. These lenses have been created and maintained by life experiences. Respective lifeworlds are constantly being shaped and invaded by daily interactions with the dominant discourses of society. Habermas (1981/1987) further insists that "we must try to explain why media-steered subsystems (those subsystems driven by money and power) develop irresistible inner dynamics that bring about both the colonization of the lifeworld and its segmentation from science, morality, and art" (pp. 330-331). One, then, must have opportunities in the public sphere to reflect on these dynamics and assess their impact on his or her respective lifeworld. A critical perspective, brought to light in adult education, can illuminate the shadows of the lifeworld and expose potential invaders.

An examination of these three crises, in the context of our society and adult education, can facilitate a greater understanding of the blind spots and barriers to maintaining aspects of working-class identity. The understanding of incongruencies between working-class identity and the culture of formal higher education can lead to a more robust and inclusive learning experience for all students.

The ideas of Habermas and other scholars who studied at the Institute of Social Research have been primarily criticized from a couple of perspectives. First, critical theory generally ignores economic issues of power. Second, critical theorists have generally argued that the working-class has disappeared as a revolutionary force – a position in direct opposition to the traditional Marxian perspective (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). Despite these criticisms, critical theory remains a useful theoretical tradition and conceptual framework for adult educators and students.

Antonio Gramsci

Gramsci focused on collective ideas such as the concept of hegemony and the role of the organic intellectual rather than on specific social structures such as the economy. Gramsci believed that social revolution required action by the masses. However, a prerequisite to action was an awareness of the situation and system in which the masses lived (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). The masses, or proletariat and peasants, had a false consciousness enveloped in a bourgeois culture which represented a failure of awareness and comprehension. Once awareness and comprehension of the situation and system were achieved people could affirm control over their lives (Morgan, 1996).

Central to this awareness is the concept of hegemony. Hegemony is defined by Gramsci as "cultural leadership exercised by the ruling class" (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004, p. 136). Brookfield (2005) further defines the concept as "the process by which we learn to embrace enthusiastically a system of beliefs and practices that end up harming us and working to support the interests of others who have power over us" (p. 93). Gramsci viewed hegemony from two different perspectives; 1) "domination" such as physical coercion, and 2) "direction" or ideological manipulation. His goal was to explore and reveal the 'direction' perspective of hegemony which, he believed, traditional Marxists had virtually ignored. A major assumption of Gramsci's theory was that no society could sustain itself only through the use of domination – violence was a sign of weakness. Rather, a perspective on 'direction' or ideological manipulation was the more effective strategy for the long term survival of the dominant society (Boggs, 1984). Gramsci (1971/2003) believed that the functions of hegemony were comprised of 1) "the 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general

direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; and 2) the apparatus of state coercive power which 'legally' enforces discipline on those groups who do not 'consent' either actively or passively" (p. 12).

From Gramsci's perspective the first step in combating hegemony was awareness which needed to be generated by social elites and intellectuals. A "stable, disciplined and permanent organization of specialists (both working class and intellectuals) was necessary to mold these movements into a protracted, all-encompassing assault upon the State and the capitalist class" (Holst, 1999, p. 418). Gramsci referred to these intellectual specialists as organic intellectuals. That is, intellectuals that are part of the social class that is being oppressed within a society. Every social group creates intellectuals "which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also the social and political fields" (Gramsci, 1971/2003, p. 5). He advocated "working to produce elites of intellectuals which arise directly out of the masses, but remain in contact with them to become, as it were, the whalebone in the corset" (Gramsci, 2000, p. 340). Because they are situated within the oppressed class they have a deep appreciation and understanding of the plight of the working-class and can better compel awareness. Gramsci believes that all people have the capacity to be an intellectual and that the intellectual is not only someone who knows, but who also feels and understands (Coben, 1998). An organic intellectual, then, can be anyone who has the motivation to know, feel, and understand at a higher level than the majority of the oppressed population and has the desire to take action. A prerequisite, it seems, to evolving into a working-class, organic intellectual is a keen sense of one's own identity and how it differs from the middle- and upper-class cultures.

Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and the organic intellectual introduced a new, radical perspective in social interaction and power relationships. First, his writings revealed that hegemony was not only physical, but also ideological and that ideological hegemony was a more covert, effective, and enduring form of oppressiveness. Second, he suggested that all people are capable of becoming knowing, feeling, understanding intellectuals, not just the elite and those in the upper echelons of society. In essence, he was suggesting that all people are intellectuals; however, some people develop and nurture this capacity to a greater extent than others.

There are, however, some unanswered questions in Gramsci's ideas. First, he does not clearly or fully explain how one becomes an organic intellectual. What, specifically, are the knowledge, traits, skills, and abilities required for one to not only become an organic intellectual, but also to become a leader of the masses? This question, although touched upon periodically in his writings, is not fully answered. Second, there are ambiguities within Gramsci's thought. His notes were fragmentary and incomplete resulting in debate over the precise meaning of much of his work (Coben, 1998). For example, he used the term "intellectual" in various ways throughout his writing. Early in his writings (1917) he described intellectuals as thinkers rather than activists. In his later writings he described intellectuals as activists (organic intellectuals). Finally, Gramsci's goal was social revolution – the proletariat would revolt and seize power from the bourgeois. The end result, then, would be a new hegemonic order. Would not the bourgeois then suffer from ideological hegemony, oppression, and domination from the former proletariat? In the end, one group of people would still be dominated, both physically and ideologically, by another group of people. Inequity and injustice would still prevail.

Although Gramsci's writings are somewhat ambiguous and leave unanswered questions his concepts are applicable to adult education. Brookfield (2005) identifies three reasons why those in the adult education field should read and understand Gramsci (pp. 95-96):

- His understanding of hegemony as an educational relationship has justifiably captured the attention of adult educators.

- In his writing on how to identify and oppose hegemony he develops a theory of learning, particularly a theory of the formation and development of critical consciousness, which has relevance for contemporary work in transformative learning.

- In sketching out the ways education can be used to contest ruling-class hegemony he develops the concept of the organic intellectual – an activist and persuader who emerges from an oppressed group to work with, and on behalf of, that group.

Coben (1998) adds that Gramsci taught us that adult education "is a means through which revolutionary organic intellectuals may be developed and equipped to undertake the crucial, painstaking work of organizing revolutionary hegemony" (p. 50). Coben goes on to say, however, that there is no guarantee this effort will succeed – in fact, Gramsci failed to organize a revolution of the proletariat. However, Gramsci's persistence, determination, and intellectual energy are attributes that adult educators and students can admire and attempt to emulate, particularly those from working-class origins.

The writings of Habermas and Gramsci provide a critical perspective for adult working-class students to reflect on when experiencing feelings of inadequacy and incongruency particularly in terms of their identity. Understanding Habermas' realms of

knowledge, communicative action, as well as the three crises he believes Western society (and perhaps higher education) is facing allows the working-class student to analyze sources of power and its influence on self perception and learning.

Gramsci provides additional perspectives by introducing the concept of hegemony and the role of the organic intellectual. Hegemony, particularly ideological manipulation, can certainly cause working-class students to question the value of their identity. Understanding the origins and implications of hegemony allows working-class students, as well as others who are marginalized, to deal with its repercussions. Likewise, understanding the role of the organic intellectual may motivate working-class students to not only maintain aspects of their identity, but to also compel others to understand hegemony and its negative impact on learning. Those choosing to adopt characteristics of the organic intellectual may also take action in the working-class community by encouraging others to obtain higher levels of education and understand the differences between middle-class and working-class culture and identity in higher education institutions.

<center>Social Class Stratification</center>

Despite the writings of Habermas, Gramsci, and others with a neo-Marxian perspective, the subject of social class and the stratification between the classes is a topic that is often seen as not applicable to those residing in the middle- or upper-classes. Class is viewed as only applying to those in the working-class, in the same way as many view gender only applying to women or race only applying to minorities (Entin & Hanley, 2003). Another common perspective, particularly in the United States, is that social class stratification does not exist and everyone resides in the middle class (Nesbit,

2005a). Unlike gender and race, social class is often transparent and, therefore, does not receive the attention of other, more visible, forms of cultural differences.

There are two predominant and opposing perspectives regarding social class stratification (Ryan & Sackrey, 1984). The first, the structural functionalist perspective, is prevalent in the United States. Structural functionalists view social class stratification, and the relationships, interaction and order between classes as rational, ideally harmonious, and necessary for a healthy society. Entry into all social classes is possible if one is talented and motivated (Ryan & Sackrey, 1984) and functions associated with the higher classes are generally viewed as more important to society than those functions associated with the lower classes. The structural functionalist perspective of social class stratification has been subject to criticism. McCarthy (1978) contends that social conflicts and social change cannot be adequately analyzed from this perspective and that it has a conservative bias, therefore functioning as an ideology rather than empirical theory. Habermas (1981/1987) further contends the following:

> Social orders cannot be explained in terms of some collective instrumentalism; a de facto order issuing from the competition between purposeful-rational actors for power and/or wealth remains unstable so long as the moral moment of conscience and obligation – that is to say, the orientation of action in binding values – is missing (p. 215).

That is, the common values, harmony, and social order inherent in structural functionalism cannot be decreed. In order for a social order to be accepted those living in the social system must have a common understanding and acceptance of the values

inherent in the social order and act accordingly. Habermas (1981/1987) suggests that this is not possible.

Ritzer and Goodman (2004) also highlight the following issues (pp. 94-95):

- It perpetuates the privileged position of those people who already have power, prestige, and money by arguing that such people deserve these rewards and that this is good for society.

- It assumes that because a stratified social structure existed in the past, it must continue to exist in the future.

- The idea of functional positions varying in their importance to society is difficult to support. For example, nurses are more important to society than movie stars, but nurses have less power, prestige, and money.

- Many people are prevented from obtaining the training they need to achieve prestigious positions even though they have the ability. Those in privileged positions have a vested interest in keeping their own numbers small and their power and income high.

- It can be argued that power, prestige, and money are not the only motivators for people striving to occupy high level positions. People can be equally motivated by the satisfaction of doing a job well or of service to others.

The second perspective, conflict theory, was developed, in part, as a result of the criticisms of structural functionalism (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). Conflict theory is rooted in the work of Marx who stratified social class into two levels – the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The relationship between the bourgeoisie – those that own and control the means of production – and the proletariat – those that provide labor in the

production process – is in conflict. The bourgeoisie greatly profit from the labor of the proletariat. However, the proletariat is not allowed to share equitably in these profits. Considering social class from this perspective, only about 14.7% of those in the United States that are economically active constitute the bourgeoisie (owners of large, small and self employed businesses). In contrast the proletariat has grown from 5% in 1780 to over 85% in the 1990's (Belkhir, 2001). From a Marxian perspective, therefore, an ever increasing percentage of society is producing wealth for an ever decreasing percentage of those that are controlling the means of production. In short, the rich are getting richer and more powerful resulting in a widening gap and increasing conflict between the powerless majority – the proletariat, and the powerful minority – the bourgeoisie.

According to Ritzer and Goodman (2004), the problem with conflict theory is that it is basically structural functionalism turned on its head rather than a critical perspective of society. One of the major contributions of conflict theory, however, is that it laid the groundwork for neo-Marxian theories such as critical theory – the conceptual framework for this study.

The social class stratification perspectives of structural functionalism and conflict theory have a direct application to adult education. In terms of the structural functionalist perspective one could surmise that it is healthy for society that the middle- and upper-classes have better access to higher education and more prestigious schools than those in the working-class. However, if those in the working-class have the talent and motivation they may also earn access into higher education. Also, structural functionalists believe that this arrangement exists in a harmonious environment – those in the working-class (and middle- and upper-classes) accept this condition. Those in the working-class often

develop what Willis (1977) describes as a counter-school culture where academics and learning in school is viewed as alien and contrary to their values and worldview. This counter-school perspective results in working-class students looking at school as a necessary, or perhaps unnecessary, rite of passage before one engages in a job – normally low paying and manual. Again, from a structural functionalist perspective, and from the perspective of many in the working-class, this arrangement is acceptable, desired, and advantageous in terms of the well-being of society. It is simply the way things are and will always be.

Aspects of structural functionalism also exist within the higher educational university and college structure. There is a clear hierarchy of academic institutions in the United States with the Ivy League schools on the upper-class end of the spectrum and two-year community colleges and trade schools on the working-class end of the spectrum. Most students from working-class origin do not consider applying to an upper-end, high profile school because of lack of funding or a perception that they do not possess the intelligence and motivation to succeed. Consequently, for those that do decide to venture into college, attendance is often limited to community colleges or State colleges because that is where the working-class supposedly belongs. Currently, just three percent of students who attend the most selective schools come from the poorest socio-economic quarter of families while 74 percent come from the richest   However, contrary to the structural functionalist tradition, some high profile schools such as the University of Pennsylvania, Harvard, and Stanford are offering free room, board and tuition to those students who come from a family that makes less than $50,000 annually ("Penn Will Offer Free Tuition," 2006).

From the perspective of conflict theory, it will be interesting to see how these students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are accepted and integrated into schools such as the University of Pennsylvania, Harvard, and Stanford. A significant source of students for elite colleges and universities are private secondary schools which are primarily attended by the upper-class (Domhoff, 2006). Social class differences and friction are inevitable. Those that take a conflict theory view of education would argue that this friction between social classes in the academy is unavoidable and necessary for the well-being of education and society. Consequently, admittance into higher-end schools is only a first step and certainly not an end state. Strategies will need to be developed that will facilitate this friction allowing students of all social classes to embrace and examine this conflict in order to reveal opportunities for learning and discovery. Perhaps a next step in this journey, for those of all social classes, is an understanding of what it means to be working-class.

<div align="center">Various Definitions of Working-Class</div>

Various authors (Cheung, Rudowicz, & Lang, 2001; VanGalen, 2000) refer to Wright's characterization of social class as people's productive relation including ownership of capital or of the means of production, control of managerial functions, and possession of expertise. Social class hinges on an individual's occupation and function, and income is not necessarily a criterion to define class (Hart, 2005; Wright, 1994). Consequently, according to Wright, social class is defined by what one does not what one earns. Glaser (2002) expands on this notion by referring to Marx and Engels' differentiation of the bourgeois and proletariat in terms of examining relationships to the means of production. The bourgeois typically own the means to production compared to the proletariat who sell physical labor

for wages. Glaser agrees with Wright that social classes are not defined by wealth and income, but by power in the workplace. This power is often manifested by value appropriated to intellectual labor over physical labor. The middle- and upper-class typically use their mind and cognitive power in the workplace, whereas the under- or working-class use their bodies and physical power. VanGalen (2000) also agrees that income is generally an unreliable marker of social class citing that factory workers who have benefited from unionization may have higher salaries than many middle-class workers.

Bee (1996, p. 41) defines social class "in terms of three dimensions: education, income, and occupation." Bee goes on to define the characteristics of higher status individuals compared to those who are of lower status (pp. 41-42):

- In the United States, over the past several generations at least, the majority of both men and women end up in occupations at the same broad level of social status as their parents.

- Middle-class adults, as a group, marry later and have fewer children than do working-class adults. Both of these differences affect the timing of subsequent adult life experiences, such as the departure of the last child.

- The life course of middle-class adults is more likely to be advantaged in a variety of ways: they are less likely to experience periods of unemployment; they are healthier and live longer; they retain a higher level of intellectual functioning longer into old age; and they are, in general, more satisfied with their lives.

Bee's definition is expanded upon and refined by Longwell-Grice (2003) who defines working-class students as those who have parents that did not achieve a degree and who worked in jobs that did not require a degree, and who self-identified as working-class. He

describes social class as "a combination of one's economic status, values, beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions" (p. 42).

McCallum and Demie (2001) in their study of social class stratification, ethnicity, and educational performance offer another definition of social class using the following criteria: adults with at least a college degree; those belonging to ethnic minorities; unemployment; home ownership; those obtaining housing association property; automobile ownership; and households with one or more person(s) per room. A subjective spectrum of social class stratification can be developed using McCallum and Demie's criteria. On one end of the spectrum (upper-class) are those that are highly educated, Caucasian, employed in a high paying job, own a home with numerous rooms, and own at least two new automobiles. At the other end of the spectrum (working-class) are those that are not college educated, not Caucasian, employed in a menial labor job, rent an apartment, and do not own an automobile.

Egerton's (2001) unique definition generally divides social class into manual class (working-class), intermediate class (middle-class) and service class (upper-class). The manual class consists of manual industrial and agricultural workers. Small employers, own-account workers and farmers, junior white-collar workers, and foreman of manual workers comprise the intermediate class. Large employers, farm employers, managers, supervisors of non-manual workers and professionals reside in the service class.

The definition of social class, and the various levels of class, varied somewhat in the literature and shaped my definition of working-class which will be used in this study – those whose parents have not achieved a college education and have worked in jobs that did not require a college education (Longwell-Grice, 2003) and who self identify as

working-class based on their social class of origin, not necessarily based on the social class in which they currently reside. Consistencies in the literature include the defining of social class in terms of occupation and the social class of one's family. Differences include using income as a criterion to determine social class as well as ownership of property such as a home or vehicle. The differentiation of social class by considering one's source of power to achieve production – mental power or physical power – was a unique viewpoint. One aspect of the working-class that all the literature generally had in common was its lack of power and voice within the context of Western society. In a capitalistic society the working-class is often a means to an end – productivity and profit. When a member of the working-class decides to develop and exercise his or her mental power rather than physical power, by enrolling in formal higher education, a clash of cultures is often inevitable.

<div align="center">Social Class Identity</div>

In this study identity is defined as the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are manifested based on one's view of the world with the understanding that identity is not fixed – it evolves based on lived experiences. Ohmann (2003) takes this definition a step further by describing identity as "a bundle of habits and feelings and ways of relating lodged deep in your psyche and broadcast by your talk and conduct" (p. 11). He goes on to write, however, that people often do not identify themselves by class as they do with gender, race, or sexual orientation. Social class identification seems to occur when confronted by a stark contrast – walking by a homeless person or reading about the lifestyles of the wealthy.

For many adult working-class students this contrast occurs when attending higher education. A growing number of working-class students view education as an escape, an avenue for self fulfillment, or a combination of the two. Consequently, as Reay (2001) suggests, working-class students are attempting to negotiate a balance in a "new improved" identity while holding on to a cohesive self. A first step, it seems, is recognition of one's working-class identity.

Working-Class Identity

As was the case with definitions and characteristics of social class and working-class, the literature revealed differences in defining working-class identity. In most cases, however, the literature that addressed working-class identity did not define its characteristics – "an embarrassing absence of clear-cut class identities, despite persisting inequality" (Bottero, 2004, p. 987). Belkhir (2001) points out that, with the exception of work done at the Center for Working Class Studies in Formation at Youngstown State University, there have been no working-class studies regarding working-class identity. Perhaps a reason for this lack of working-class identity characterization is that class identity and culture cannot be defined as concretely as gender or racial identity. Working-class identity is a set of shared experiences (Lindquist, 2004).

Taken a step further, social class identity is viewed by some not in terms of distinct class identities, but in terms of individualized hierarchical differentiation (Bottero, 2004). That is, a shift from social class stratification and identification to a focus and awareness of an individualized stratification and identity in relation to one's hierarchical position in specific situations and relationships. Inequities and hegemony still exist, but not necessarily between classes, but between individuals. Using Bottero's construct identity,

then, is an individual phenomenon as well as a group phenomenon and differs for each person. There may be, however, some common characteristics among working-class adult students. This study explored these commonalities.

   Smith and Hanley (2003) touch on the subject of identity by suggesting that social class identity is not necessarily a social class position but "shared norms, values, lifestyles, and attitudes; working-class identity reflects identification with a coherent, bounded, integrated and integrating working-class culture" (p. 27).   These working-class norms, values, lifestyles, and attitudes are clearly evident in Willis' (1977) work and his description of "shopfloor culture." This culture consists of a "counter-school" attitude where work is often considered a more meaningful and productive endeavor than formal schooling. Working-class identity includes a sense of confidence, skill, and dexterity required to perform manual labor. Education, in contrast, requires an intellectual, rather than manual, confidence, skill, and dexterity.

   Working-class identity, according to Willis (1977), also includes the desire to take informal control of a work process – controlling the rate of production. His study revealed that working-class students with a counter-school attitude often attempted to control school schedules and routines by arriving late to class or skipping school. These behaviors were also related to the perception of working-class students that school was not real work. Real work was the hands-on, manual labor that resulted in an income to support one's family.

   Nakhaie, Silverman, and LaGrange (2000) further identified working-class values of present orientation, spontaneity, risk and thrill seeking, and physical prowess. Again, as is the case with student perceptions of education in Willis' (1977) study, these values are

contrary, or at least perceived as contrary by working-class students, to formal education resulting in counter-education attitudes.

In contrast to the working-class counter-education literature, which primarily centered on children, is the contention by Livingstone and Sawchuk (2000) that the adult working-class are at least as engaged in learning as those in the middle- and upper-classes. Learning, as defined in the Livingstone and Sawchuk (2000) study, is both formal and informal. The notion that those who remain in the working-class culture after high school are not interested in learning did not find support in their respondents. This is not to suggest that the identity of those adult working-class people involved in learning has changed, but perhaps, as Reay (2001) suggests, this engagement in learning and formal education is an attempt at an escape or self fulfillment. Additionally, working-class learning may be a result of an interest in a particular subject or a desire for higher academic qualification in order to obtain a specific job (Connor, 2001).

Recognizing and defining one's identity enables critical consciousness. Zandy (1995) suggests that "working-class consciousness includes identity, but it is not fixed on identity. It is an aperture. A radical, portable, alternative to the individualistic way out. It is that crucial attentiveness to others that fuels and enables resistance to injustice" (p. 2).

Working-class identity, then, is not clearly defined in the literature. For the purposes of this study identity was defined as the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are manifested based on one's view of the world. This study explored the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of adult working-class students within the context of formal higher education.

Working-Class Identity and Formal Higher Education Culture

Although definitions and characteristics of working-class identity vary somewhat in the literature, when they exist at all, it is clear that there is a difference, and often a conflict or incongruency, between this identity and formal higher education culture. This conflict exists because education is meant to inculcate middle- and upper-class values, not to confront them (Nesbitt, 2005a). Higher education poses a threat to authenticity and a coherent sense of selfhood for adult working-class students (Reay, 2001). Often these incongruencies, in terms of the behaviors required to "make it" in higher education compared to behaviors that allow students to be comfortable with working-class friends and family, are too great and result in the student dropping out (hooks, 1994) or in alienation from their working-class culture. This identity conflict occurs when "multiple dimensions of self come into conflict and dictate competing, incompatible courses of action. Identity conflict produces passivity, guilt, and feelings of being a traitor" (Buameister, 1995, p. 66). A professor of working-class origin described this conflict with formal higher education middle-class culture in the following way:

> I do not share the values of my colleagues, at least as I perceive those values. I have managed to make a certain level of contact with a few persons of similar backgrounds and I think similar attitudes. However, I can not see myself ever being a member with full honors. In fact, I think it would be terribly difficult for me to accept such membership even if so honored. I may have moved physically and economically into a new class, but my psyche is dragging (Ryan & Sackrey, 1984, p. 306).

The assumption of middle- and upper-class administrators and educators, hooks (1994) suggests, is that working-class students will willingly surrender their values and habits and assimilate into the dominant culture. This surrendering of identity often results in a "psychic turmoil" (p. 182). This psychic turmoil, or conflict, between identity and higher education culture can result in profound life changes for the working-class student. In a case study conducted by Bamber and Tett (1999) one of their respondents remarked that embarking in an educational program can result in "losing friends, family, and partners because it can be difficult for them to understand" (p. 470). Working-class students must not only deal with incongruencies between their identities and higher education culture, but also with conflicts and misunderstandings of friends and family.

So, it seems, that in order to reduce these incongruencies either formal higher-education must adapt to the needs of working-class students or working-class student must adapt to middle-class culture of higher education. Or, perhaps, the organizational culture must be inclusive of all students regardless of socioeconomic class. As discussed, in order for working-class students to adapt to middle-class culture they often feel they must compromise and, in some cases, lose their identity. Tett (2004) concludes that working-class students need assistance in negotiating challenges in order to build and integrate their learning. They also need this assistance to maintain aspects of their working-class identity. Educational institutions must provide tutor intensive and sustained support in order for this to happen. Perhaps, as Smith and Hanley (2003) suggest, the university must become a "site of political struggle" over the means of access for working-class students (p. 29).

Incongruencies and conflicts between the identity and culture of the working-class student and middle-class culture of higher education, as discussed above, result in a number of issues. These issues center on the academic institution and the working-class student him or herself, although the lines are blurred when discussing causes and potential solutions to these issues.

<div align="center">Institutional Centered Working-Class Issues</div>

As discussed, academic institutions are oriented and cater to the middle- and upper-classes. Consequently, factors arise that challenge the identity of working-class students. The literature reveals two of the major factors that are inherent in the academic institution – power issues and incongruent skills and abilities.

Power Issues

The first challenge for teachers and students of socially mixed classrooms is to acknowledge the presence of power and position issues. Teachers typically cannot determine the social class of a student by looking around the classroom. Scholars such as Chafel (1996) and Lipset (1995) suggest that drawing attention to social class is complicated by the widespread cultural belief that the United States is a classless society. hooks (1994) states that class is rarely talked about in the United States – nowhere is there a more intense silence about the reality of class differences than in educational settings. She goes on to identify a challenge for all professors –

> …we must assume that the academy will be full of students from diverse classes, and that more of our students than ever before will be from poor and working-class backgrounds. Any professor who commits to engaged pedagogy recognizes the importance of constructively confronting issues of class (p. 189).

Educators in universities have paid little attention to the complexities of social class and the working-class is nearly invisible in the multicultural education literature. Higher education institutions need to assist students "to anticipate the likelihood that they will be held accountable for navigating within an unarticulated culture of power when they enter the middle-class worlds of the academy" (VanGalen, 2000, p. 5). Glaser (2002) agrees that issues of social class are often overlooked in the classroom. She found that "even though academe intends and declares that it is disinterested in the backgrounds of prospective students certainly obstacles faced by students with the 'wrong' cultural capital make the continuation of their education more difficult" (p. 18).

Marks (2000) identifies structural problems for the working-class in terms of the nature of universities. He describes universities in the United Kingdom, such as Oxford and Cambridge, as symbolizing an 'aristocratic' ideal and the university system, in general, as highly elitist and exclusive. He further contends that universities need to embrace mature students from a variety of backgrounds. Also, people from the local community should be provided access to libraries, sports facilities, and other university services in order to facilitate the welcoming of the general population rather than fueling potential hostilities which prevail in many university towns. In short, he promotes a transition from the "elite" system to a "mass" system of higher education.

Soliday (1999) addresses the importance of equity of power in the classroom in regards to social mobility. She states that higher education is one of the few avenues available into the middle-class. In order to address the divisions between classes "we must question more vigorously what we mean by cultural diversity…we cannot afford to dismiss social class" (p. 739). In order to achieve this equity of power, the teacher,

according to VanGalen (2000), must experience, interpret, and address the social class related influences on the achievement of students because teachers occupy positions at the intersection of schooling and class. "Unless teachers understand the reality of students' economic, political, and social lives…professional good intentions and competence are likely to be, at best, painfully misguided" (p. 9).

Martin and VanGunten (2002) suggest a multicultural social reconstructionist (MCSR) approach to education in order to achieve equity of power in the classroom. MCSR education "attempts to transform traditional relationships of power and domination, attends to the representative voices of historically marginalized groups and calls for critical dialogue…" (p. 45). In their study they promote the awareness of positionality to help students identify social inequities and bolster frameworks for talking about ways of seeing and explaining social phenomena in schools. They attempt to resolve the issue of power inequity by invoking "a sense of personal consciousness regarding social justice issues and offering students ways to create personal initiatives as alternatives to political and societal structures that have impeded or marginalized some groups while empowering others" (p. 53).

Incongruent Skills and Abilities

The inequity of power revealed in the review of literature in the proceeding section often results in lack of acceptance of the current skills and abilities of working-class students. Additionally, the skills and abilities required for success in higher education are those that have typically been acquired by the dominant class. The working-class student, while certainly capable of developing these skills, is often lacking experience in

critical thinking, language skills, and knowledge in areas such as music, the arts, and social customs.

According to Cheung, Rudowicz, and Lang (2001) critical thinking is an important criteria of intellectual and academic achievement. The findings of their research reveal that social class in terms of the family's, father's, and mother's class, as well as their employment status, all contribute to the student's critical thinking skills and attenuate his or her extrinsic motivation. Consistent with Soliday's (1999) findings they conclude that the availability of resources, including time and material aid, appears to explain some of the effects of class. The following implications are surmised:

The class difference in favor of the bourgeois, leisured, or upper-class tends to be a reality for educational concern. This finding may discourage educators from holding excessive expectation of students from lower-class origin to commit themselves to learning and critical thinking. Class, rather than sex and age, would make a difference in the student's motivation, learning, and assessment…Hence, educators should not overly reward students who attain good performance because of resources afforded by their class origin. On the other hand, it is equitable to encourage students, particularly those coming from lower-class backgrounds, to study hard and think critically. The good performance of these students is worth rewarding because of the tremendous effort needed to compensate for their poor resources (p. 589).

Bamber and Tett (1999) agree with Cheung, Rudowicz, and Lang that the sheer effort made by individual working-class students is often under-played and that academic institutions need to take a more holistic view of education by recognizing that learning takes place in a social context. Bamber and Tett go on to say that, in order to overcome

the incongruency of skills and abilities, non-traditional students often need introductory courses that focus on learning to think sociologically, politically, and critically. Critical thinking needs to be emphasized in order to allow the working-class student to open up and re-examine experience. Gos (1995) suggests that working-class students' tendency will be to try to understand and memorize the meaning made by others rather than making their own meaning. "Memorization is often the enemy of working-class students engaged in meaning making. And yet, it is a common pedagogy in working class schools" (p. 34). He concludes that memorization diverts attention from more critical, higher-level skills such as synthesis and analogy.

Tobias (1998) takes a slightly different approach and claims that the patterns of individual learning of the working-class can be understood only in the context of their lifeworlds. Academic skills and abilities of the working-class are products of their respective lifeworlds and are different from the skills and abilities produced in the lifeworlds of middle- and upper-class students. Therefore, it is important to examine the forces that shape these life-worlds. His study reveals that the working-class makes a clear distinction between common sense knowledge – a skill that they deem as important in their culture – and school wise knowledge that is exercised by professionals and academics who primarily reside in the middle- and upper-classes.

Social class markers – patterns of behavior and communication – are another social class incongruence in the educational institution (Gos, 1995). Working-class students, he contends, must learn two languages – "public language" which is specific to their culture and "formal language," the language of the middle- and upper-classes and of the university. Working-class students often find their speech and writing to be obstacles

they must overcome in order to function in higher education. Zandy (1995) writes that she "learned early that school involved another language system; I learned later how language could be a weapon to demolish and oppress; and still later, I recognized language as a tool to reconstruct and reclaim" (p. 5). In short, working-class students are required to become, in a sense, bilingual because their language and dialect are marginalized in relation to the dominant form of language used in the classroom – their voice is not acknowledged (Tett & Crowther, 1998). Gos (1995) offers four recommendations to the teachers of working-class students (p.37):

- Teach to the conceptual nature of activities rather than allowing simple memorization of facts.

- Teach meaning making rather than allowing students to understand or memorize someone else's meaning – give greater emphasis to supporting ideas rationally rather than by authority.

- Explore the nuances of meaning and usage of new vocabulary words rather than allowing simple memorization of dictionary definitions and use of terms in a single sentence.

- Encourage Standard English in all classroom utterances, both verbal and written, by analyzing various dialectal contexts and by gently correcting errors.

Gos' recommendations, however, must be implemented with caution. Teachers must not cross the fine line of denying working-class students, or any students, their identity. For example, correcting dialectal errors in Standard English could be perceived by the student that their method of speech is wrong or inferior. Individual student identities must be considered when formulating teaching methodologies.

Institutional centered issues, specifically issues of power and incongruent skills and abilities, are yet another challenge the working-class student must overcome in order to be successful in higher education and, at the same time, maintain aspects of his or her identity. Although the challenges revealed in the literature may appear insurmountable many scholars from working-class backgrounds, such as Gos, have achieved an acute awareness and appreciation of working-class identity and are now conducting research in the field of social class and adult education.

<div align="center">Student Centered Working-Class Issues</div>

The challenges that working-class students face in higher education are initially manifested within their own culture. The literature revealed that social and economic factors inherent in the culture of many working-class students shape these challenges. The review of literature provided three primary areas of inquiry in terms of student centered issues that impact working-class students – implications of social class background, bridging cultures, as well as attitudes and motivation.

Implications of Social Class Background

The implications of social class background impacting working-class students included family backgrounds; the balance of family, work, and school; and the ever-increasing cost of higher education. A study conducted by McCallum and Demie (2001) provided evidence of substantial differences between the backgrounds of students and performance. The study explored the relationships between social class, ethnic background, and educational achievement. The findings indicated that student performance is strongly associated with home backgrounds and that differences between the performances at schools may be attributable to differences in backgrounds. Student

access to higher education is shaped by family background. Students from families in which a parent attended college are more than twice as likely to attend college as are students from working-class backgrounds (VanGalen, 2000). McCallum and Demie (2001) suggest a reason for this may be the attributes leading to higher social status, such as secure employment, enable parents to be more supportive.

More specifically, the educational attainment of a student's parents is related to progress and success in the classroom (Berker & Horn, 2003). Students who consider work as their primary effort and school as their secondary effort tended to have less educated parents than working students who considered school to be their primary focus. Berker and Horn's research also shows that having dependents other than a spouse is related to lower persistence and attainment rates. One reason for this, according to Connor and Dewson (2001), is the cost and potential guilt associated with placing children in daycare.

In a study focused on findings from a series of in-depth interviews and discussions with a group of metal workers, Bond (1999) found that the men in this study faced considerable difficulties in gaining access to impartial education, vocational and related financial information, as well as guidance and support. She goes on to state that

any ideas the men had about self-improvement or a shift of career direction were filtered through the lens of social relationships and household commitments which made risk-taking difficult and were focused on maximizing their incomes in the present to protect their and in some cases their family's future (p. 176).

This tenuous balance of number of hours worked, various family responsibilities, and attending school are correlated strongly with both the type of institution that students

attend and their retention rates (Soliday, 1999). Soliday goes on to contend that what most negatively affects academic achievement is outside work and the related stresses of commuting and maintaining a meaningful family life (Astin, 1993).

Arguably the most significant implication relating to social background is the cost of education. According to an article in *The Congressional Quarterly Researcher* tuition and fees at public colleges increased a record 14% in 2003 continuing a trend of higher education costs increasing faster than the rate of inflation (Price, 2003). Consequently, students from working-class and lower-income families are finding it difficult to afford college. Price points out that, although more money is available in grants and loans, there is a trend away from basing aid on need. Also, Pell Grants, the primary source of federal grants for low-income students, pay a smaller portion of the average student's expenses. The issue of cost is compounded when the student is the primary source of family income and must focus both on work and school often compromising opportunities in the workplace to work more hours in order to earn a promotion or pay increase (Bond, 1999). The implication of cost is tempered by Connor and Dewson (2001) who concede that cost is an important factor for people from working-class backgrounds deciding about higher education study, however, a report published by the Department of Education and Skills found that personal considerations such as confidence, stepping into the unknown, and family issues play an even larger role.

Bridging Cultures

The bridge from a working-class culture to an academic culture dominated by middle- and upper-class norms is a challenge for many working class students. Adults from working-class families who were the first to attend higher education often experience a

sense of alienation, loss and exhaustion (VanGalen, 2000). Issues such as incongruency of cultural capital, impostership, cultural suicide, and a lack of a cultural means of production are highlighted in the reviewed literature.

Cervero and Wilson (2001) suggest that students from middle- and upper-class backgrounds consistently do better as a group than working-class students because of cultural capital. Cultural capital refers to "the style and patterns of speaking, dress, and posture, the command of language, and the knowledge of cultural matters that one brings to an educational situation" (p. 214). Working-class students are "expected to deny and hide their working-class origins and internalize and display middle- and upper-class forms of cultural capital in order to succeed and be accepted in higher education" (Glaser, 2002, p. 1). In short, they are expected to mask, or abandon, their working-class identities. Those students with the "right" cultural capital in terms of dispositions, attitudes and tastes, and problem solving skills tend to fare the best in higher education (Tett, 2000). However, achieving the "right" cultural capital is difficult for students from working-class backgrounds and, perhaps, may not be a goal. Although their families may value and encourage attendance in higher education, parents who have not experienced college may not have the resources to help their children develop the cultural capital required for college admissions and success in the academic environment (VanGalen, 2000). Educators who share the same cultural capital of middle- and upper-class students may consider these students to be smarter. hooks (1994) elaborates on the cultural capital of the teacher by claiming that "there can be no intervention that challenges the status quo if we are not willing to interrogate the way our presentation of self as well as our pedagogical process is often shaped by middle-class norms" (p. 185).

Feelings of impostorship may also threaten a working-class student. "Impostorship is the sense among working-class students that they possess neither the talent nor the right to become college students" (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999, p. 146). Additionally, working-class students run the risk of committing cultural suicide – "the process whereby families, peer groups, and communities exclude from their midst students whom they see as changing in front of their eyes as a result of their engaging in learning" (p. 148). VanGalen (2000) contends that teachers' assessments of working-class students may be conditioned on these students distancing themselves from friends and family. She goes on to state that "for working-class and poor students, success in school often signals their distance and difference from those who love them" (p. 6). Brookfield and Preskill (1999) make three observations regarding these potential threats. First, teachers from working-class backgrounds can make their identity public by talking about their own struggles. Second, teachers can acknowledge and encourage various forms of expression in the classroom. Third, any norms, rules, or codes of discourse should address words people find offensive.

Soliday's (1999) research article regarding working-class students reveals further challenges. Many working-class students, as well as other non-traditional students, experience conflict when attempting to position themselves in the classroom in ways that don't violate their own cultural integrity and identity. Many working-class students drop out because they refuse to be absorbed into and acquire the cultural capital of the dominant culture in the classroom, thus potentially compromising their integrity and identity. She further states that working-class students' struggle to gain and sustain access to the cultural means of production (expensive books, personal computer,

uninterrupted time) creates education life narratives that sharply differentiate them from their bourgeois counterparts and that the number of hours worked and various family responsibilities are correlated strongly with both the type of institution that these students attend and their retention rates (p. 734). VanGalen (2000) adds that if all students are to reach their potential they must each have access to the same challenging curriculum and to the same resources.

Attitudes and Motivations

The attitudes and motivations of working-class students, in terms of returning to and attending higher education, are often times in stark contrast to those of middle- and upper-class students. Bond (1999) conducted a study exploring reasons why working-class men were reluctant to return to school. She found that a primary motivation for working-class men to return to school is to get a better job in order to make more money. However, this long-term goal is in direct competition with a day-to-day goal of maximizing current incomes to provide security to their families. One man commented that "it's a bit ridiculous to think of learning new skills when you are older because you won't get a return on investment if it takes three or four years to learn something" (p. 175).

This economic and utilitarian motivation for attending school was also found by Longwell-Grice (2003). His study revealed that first-generation higher education working-class students viewed education not as a life-altering experience, as many middle- and upper-class students view higher education, but as something to get out of the way in order to get a good job. Further, these students saw college as an adversary – "a filtering system where the goal was to actively place obstacles in the students' path,

making them prove themselves worthy of being there" (p. 50). According to Littrell (1999) this economic motivation towards higher education results in colleges and universities supplying vocationally oriented education, which their students demand, rather than a well-rounded, liberal education. Littrell contends that because of this shift of educational focus "few graduates of lower middle-class educational institutions have any chance to rise above the lower to lower middle-class jobs many of them already have" (p. 267).

Working-class motivation and attitude towards education can be further differentiated by gender (Bond, 1999; Marks, 2000; Tett, 2000). Bond (1999) suggests that because of working class social structures, where the male is traditionally the breadwinner and the female maintains the household, men often do not return to school because of a lack of income, time factors, and a lack of interest. Returning to school is viewed as something women can do more easily because it is a "step up" in terms of their status along with the perception that women have more time to attend school because they are not working outside the home. Women are "freer," having a choice whether to work or not, where men have no choice – they are expected to go into the workplace (Marks, 2000). It must be noted, however, that the observations from Bond and Marks regarding the traditional roles of working-class men and women are generalizations. In today's world many women also work in full and part time jobs. Traditional roles of men and women are increasingly becoming more difficult to define.

Men and women also have different expectations of education. As stated earlier, men primarily return to school in order to ultimately earn more money. Women, however,

often return to school for personal reasons such as "becoming their own person" and their narratives tend to be more about themselves in relation to others (Tett, 2000).

Because of this competition between education and work, working-class attitudes toward higher education are often negative. The working-class, particularly men because of their emphasis on masculinity and physical strength, view education as effeminate and not real work. Further they view education as boring, esoteric, and involving information that will not be used in the "real world" and that education is "part of the state machinery and state attempts to control the working-class and prevent them from taking what is rightfully theirs" (Marks, p. 304). Bamber and Tett (1999) also point out that attitude toward study is also a factor in success. Working-class students often view study as hard work resulting in a need to change their lives in contrast to many middle- and upper-class students who already consider education as an accepted part of their lives, not something in addition that is incongruent with the rest of their culture. Formal education plays a significant role in enabling the middle- and-upper classes to construct and maintain themselves whereas the working-class often experiences a sense of social distance and separation between home and school (Tobias, 1998).

The literature that focused on student centered issues – implications of social background, bridging cultures, in addition to attitudes and motivation – clearly highlighted challenges that an adult working-class student faces within the context of his or her culture and identity. The literature also reveals significant challenges centered within the educational institution, an environment that is predominantly a culture that caters to the needs and desires of the middle- and upper-class student.

Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter addressing the conceptual framework of the study, social class stratification and definitions of social class and working-class, social class and working-class identity, institutional centered working-class issues, and student centered working-class issues provided a deeper understanding and context regarding the challenges working-class students have maintaining aspects of their identity in a formal higher education environment. The literature also revealed inconsistencies, contradictions and, perhaps, raised more questions than answers regarding the incongruent nature of working-class identity and formal higher education. One possible reason for this could be that many of the scholars did not come from a working-class background and most were not residing in the working-class when publishing their works.

The review of literature first explored critical theory in terms of how and why this framework shapes and provides a lens for the study. The work of Jurgen Habermas and Antonio Gramsci are central to this framework. Habermas' three realms of knowledge – technical, practical, and emancipatory – which are grounded in communicative action provide a context for this study. His three crises to western society – the decline of the public sphere, the threat to civil society, and the invasion of the lifeworld – are as prevalent today, if not more so, than when he published his work on these concepts. These crises have particular consequences to those residing in the working-class. Gramsci provides a source of action to combat these crises, and inequities in higher education, through his emphasis on awareness of hegemony and the development of organic intellectuals. These intellectuals, who originate from the working-class and

therefore have a deep appreciation and understanding of their challenges and their identity, have the ability to compel action and develop a critical consciousness in others. This consciousness is a first step in understanding and dealing with the incongruencies experienced between adult working-class students and the formal higher education environment.

The discussion of social class stratification revealed one of these contradictions in the comparison and contrast between structural functionalist and conflict theories. The structural functionalist perspective appears to be the viewpoint of those residing in the upper- and middle-classes as well as those in the working-classes that have not developed a critical consciousness. Conflict theory, conversely, exposes inequities and conflict and lays the groundwork for critical theory, the conceptual framework for this study.

The various definitions of working-class found in the literature helped shape the definition used for this study - those generally engaged in manual labor, rather than intellectual labor, as a means of production and further characterized as those whose parents have not achieved a college education and have worked in jobs that did not require a college education (Longwell-Grice, 2003). Adult, working-class students self identify as working-class based on their social class of origin, not necessarily based on the social class in which they currently reside.

Based on this definition, the next question is what are the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are manifested in the working-class adult student based on his or her view of the world – their identity. As was the case with defining social class and working-class, characteristics of working-class identity were somewhat absent in the literature, and in those cases where it was addressed the characteristics and definitions varied.

However, regardless of how one characterizes working-class identity, the literature clearly revealed a conflict, or incongruence, between working-class identity and the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors expected and required in formal higher education.

Finally, these incongruences resulted in institutional and student centered working-class issues. Institutional issues included those associated with incongruent skills and abilities in terms of those needed to survive in higher education. The section on student centered issues focused on family background and educational attainment, costs associated with higher education, the ability or inability to bridge cultures, and attitudes and motivations.

As noted earlier, this review of literature provided a deeper understanding and context to the purpose of this study – to explore how working-class adult students maintain aspects of their identity in a formal higher education environment. However, based on the review of literature, the primary research questions for this study remain unanswered and even more pronounced:

- What does being working-class mean to working-class students?
- What are the experiences of adult working-class students attending formal higher education?
- How do adult working-class students maintain aspects of their identity?

In answering these questions this study filled a significant gap in the literature and provides adult educators and students a deeper understanding of social class issues in education, particularly in terms of identity. This understanding is significant because understanding what factors contribute to students maintaining aspects of their working-class identity may ultimately result in working-class students enrolling and remaining in

formal higher education thereby providing all students a richer and well-rounded learning

experience as well as personal and professional growth.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I discuss the purpose of the study and the questions that guide the research as well as provide an overview of qualitative research, specifically the fundamentals of phenomenological and heuristic inquiry. This chapter also addresses my background, participant selection, and data collection procedures and methods. Other issues such as data analysis procedures and verification are presented.

Research Purpose and Problem

The purpose of this study was to explore how adult working-class students maintain aspects of their identity in a formal higher education environment. Nesbit (2005a) suggests that "education is meant to inculcate dominant values, not confront them" (p. 10). Further, he points out that because educational institutions are generally middle-class, policies and practices are weighted strongly in favor of middle-class values. Consequently, many working-class students, as well as students from other marginalized segments of society, do not maintain aspects of their identity; rather they adopt the values, beliefs, and behaviors of the dominant culture.

Others, however, are able to somehow function in the middle- and upper-class environment of formal education and, at the same time, maintain their working-class identities (Archer & Leathwood, 2003). Having the discipline and perseverance to resist adopting a dominant culture identity, and maintain aspects of working-class identity, appears to be conscious and deliberate undertaking. How this undertaking is accomplished has not been studied. While the literature has highlighted social class issues in adult education, little is known about why and how some working-class students

maintain aspects of their identity while some students choose to abandon their working-class roots and attempt to assimilate into the dominant, middle-and upper-class culture of formal education.

Recent literature (Nesbit, 2005a/2005b) has centered on class concerns and adult education, specifically social class and adult education policy, literacy issues, pedagogical issues, as well as the intersections of class, gender, and race. Although this and other research has explored adult working-class issues and challenges in the formal education environment, little attention has been paid to the problem that this study addressed - how adult working-class students make meaning of and maintain aspects of their identity while immersed in the middle- and upper-class culture of formal higher education.

Research Questions

This study explored the following questions: What does being working-class mean to working-class students? What are the experiences of working-class students attending formal higher education? How do working-class students maintain aspects of their identity?

Qualitative Research

This study used a qualitative research methodology. Creswell (1994) offers reasons for selecting either the quantitative or qualitative paradigm. In terms of the nature of the problem, a quantitative paradigm is appropriate if the problem has been "previously studied by other researchers so that a body of literature exists; there are known variables and existing theories" (p. 9). Conversely, a qualitative approach is appropriate if the problem results in "exploratory research where the variables are unknown and the context

is important" (p. 9). Studying how an adult working-class student maintains aspects of his identity in a formal, higher education environment was highly contextual. Additionally, a body of literature does not exist regarding adult working-class identity and education. Qualitative research was also appropriate because this study was interested in meaning – how adult working-class students make sense of their educational experience in terms of maintaining aspects of their identity. Finally, I as the researcher was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, the research involved fieldwork, and the research was descriptive and inductive (Creswell, 1994).

According to Patton (2002) "a well-conceived strategy, by providing overall direction, provides a framework for decision making and action. It permits seemingly isolated tasks and activities to fit together, integrating separate efforts toward a common purpose" (p 39). Patton's categories of qualitative inquiry – design strategies, data collection and fieldwork strategies, and analysis strategies – provided a strategic framework for this study.

Patton (2002) identifies three design strategies that must be considered when conducting qualitative inquiry. The first, naturalistic inquiry, suggests an openness in studying real-world situations as they naturally unfold. Another key component of naturalistic inquiry is a lack of predetermined expectations or preconceived notions of the findings of the study. The second design strategy, emergent design flexibility, is the ability to adapt inquiry and design as understandings deepen or change. In qualitative inquiry the researcher should be willing and able to pursue new paths of discovery as they emerge. Purposeful sampling is the final design strategy offered by Patton.

Sampling should be purposeful – that is, the sample should be selected because it is information rich and can provide insight to the phenomenon being studied.

Date collection and fieldwork strategies include qualitative data, personal experience and engagement, empathetic neutrality and mindfulness, and dynamic systems. Qualitative data is in-depth inquiry based on interviews about personal perspectives; case studies; and careful document review. These observations, according to Patton (2002) "yield detailed, thick description" (p. 40). Personal experience and engagement suggest that the researcher's insights and experiences are important to the study. Consequently, the researcher should be immersed in the study in terms of the participants, situation, and phenomenon. The qualitative researcher should also display empathetic neutrality and mindfulness. Patton (2002) suggests that this empathetic approach is manifested by displaying openness, sensitivity, respect, awareness, responsiveness, and by being fully present. The researcher, however, must also be attentive to the process. The dynamic systems strategy reminds the researcher that systemic and situational changes occur during the course of qualitative inquiry that may result in a change or adaptation to the methodology.

Finally, Patton (2002) offers five useful analysis strategies. A unique case orientation assumes that each case being analyzed is special and unique. The first level of analysis involves capturing the details of the individual cases. The second level of analysis looks at details across the various cases, however, the quality of this cross-case analysis is based on the thoroughness and effectiveness of the first level of analysis. A second analysis strategy, inductive analysis and creative synthesis, requires an "immersion in the details and specifics of the data to discover important patterns, themes, and

interrelationships" (Patton, 2002, p. 41). This immersion concludes with a creative

synthesis of these patterns, themes, and interrelationships. The holistic perspective

analysis strategy is a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied in terms of a

complex entity rather than simply a sum of its parts. It is having an awareness of

complex interdependencies and system dynamics. The fourth strategy, context

sensitivity, "places findings in a social, historical, and temporal context" (p. 41) and

avoids generalizations to other contexts. The final analysis strategy – voice, perspective,

and reflexivity – suggests that the qualitative researcher must have the ability to reflect on

his or her own voice and perspective and have an awareness of how voice and

perspective impact the inquiry process and analysis.

The Fundamentals of Phenomenological and Heuristic Research

I am an adult working-class student attempting to make sense of my attempts to

maintain aspects of my working-class identity in the middle- and upper-class

environment of formal higher education. Consequently, phenomenology, and specifically

heuristic inquiry, was appropriate because this form of inquiry brought to the fore my

personal experience and insights (Patton, 2002).

Phenomenological enquiry, a form of qualitative inquiry, is "an attempt to deal with

inner experiences unprobed in everyday life. Phenomenologists are interested in showing

how complex meanings are built out of simple units of direct experience" (Merriam &

Simpson, 2000, p. 90). Patton (2000) poses the central focus of phenomenology as the

"meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience" of a particularly phenomenon

for a specific person or group of people. This study focused on the lived experiences of

adult working-class students in terms of maintaining aspects of their identity within the context of the middle- and upper-class dominant culture of formal higher education.

The data of phenomenological inquiry are the conscious experience of phenomena and essential to this method of qualitative inquiry are the descriptions of these inner experiences (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Phenomenologists strive to synthesize these experiences in order to make sense of some aspect of the world and, as a result, develop a worldview. A significant assumption of the phenomenological approach is that there is an essence to shared experiences (Patton, 2002). This study sought to understand the lived experiences of adult working-class students, it terms of their identity, and how their respective identities are maintained.

Heuristic inquiry, a form of phenomenological inquiry, brings to fore the experiences and insight of the researcher (Patton, 2002) unlike pure phenomenological inquiry where the researcher is separate, or bracketed, from the sample. Heuristic inquiry is based on a question that is a personal challenge – in this study, my attempts to maintain aspects of a working class identity in a middle- and upper-class environment – and a desire to understand one's self and the world in which one lives (Moustakas, 1990). "The heuristic process is autobiographic, yet with virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social – and perhaps universal – significance" (p. 15). Patton (2002) defines the foundational question of heuristic inquiry as being "what is my experience of this phenomenon and the essential experience of others who also experience the phenomenon intensely" (p. 107).

I considered Moustakas' (1990) concepts and processes of heuristic research – identifying with the focus of the inquiry, self-dialogue, tacit knowing, intuition,

indwelling, focusing, and the internal frame of reference. I implemented Moustakas' six phases of heuristic research: 1) initial engagement, 2) immersion, 3) incubation, 4) illumination, 5) explication, and 6) creative synthesis.

Concepts and Processes of Heuristic Research

Moustakas' (1990) concepts and processes of heuristic research provided a deep understanding of the essence of this particular type of inquiry as well as laying the foundation for a meaningful and thorough study. The first and arguably the most critical concept is that of identifying with the focus of inquiry. As discussed earlier, the researcher is at the forefront of a heuristic inquiry. Consequently, it was imperative that I was able to not only understand the focus of the inquiry, but was able to "get inside the question, become one with it" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15). Part of identifying with the focus of the inquiry required self-dialogue. When engaged in heuristic research, with the goal of revealing the essence of the study, I first engaged with myself. "In self-dialogue, one faces oneself and must be honest with oneself and one's experience relevant to the question or problem" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 17). Before interviewing other adult working-class students, I engaged in self-dialogue about what working-class identity meant to me, what my experiences were in the adult education doctoral program and how I have maintained aspects of my identity. I conducted self-dialogue by reflecting and writing about my reactions regarding the research questions.

At the base of all heuristic discoveries is the power of tacit knowing. The tacit dimension guides the researcher to untapped meanings and directions (Moustakas, 1990). Because the heuristic researcher is at the forefront of the research, identifies with the focus of inquiry, and has engaged in self-dialogue he or she may have a great degree of

tacit knowledge. Moustakas describes a bridge that is formed between tacit knowing and knowing that is observable and describable. This bridge is another concept of heuristic research – intuition. "In the intuitive process one draws on clues; one senses a pattern or underlying condition that enables one to imagine and then characterize the reality, state of mind, or condition" (p. 23). As is the case with tacit knowing, intuition may open up new and unexpected avenues of discovery and knowing. The researcher must not disregard these concepts because of a perceived lack of logic or reasoning.

Indwelling, yet another concept of heuristic inquiry, requires "turning inward to seek a deeper, more extended, comprehension of the nature or meaning of a quality or theme of human experience" (p. 24). In the case of this study, indwelling required me to deeply reflect about my experiences as a working-class student as well as reflecting on the experiences and underlying themes of the participants of the study. Indwelling is much more than self-dialogue. It involves a deliberate, painstaking immersion into a specific facet of the research until a fundamental understanding is achieved. I conducted indwelling by reading and reflecting on my written self-dialogue and the transcripts of my participants in an attempt to read between the lines. Why did my participants and I focus on certain aspects of my working-class experiences and identity? What did we omit and why? These questions and others were pondered in order to identify the second and third order effects of my self-dialogue.

Somewhat related to the concept of indwelling is the concept (and process) of focusing. Moustakas (1990) identifies the steps involved in focusing:

- Clearing of an inward space to enable one to tap into thoughts and feelings that are essential to clarifying a question.

- Getting a handle on the question.

- Elucidating its constituents.

- Making contact with core themes.

- Explicating the themes.

Focusing facilitates the identification of core themes and, therefore, allows the researcher to disregard information that may be extraneous to the study. Where indwelling is a divergence of the interpretation of thoughts, experiences, meaning, and associations, focusing helps the researcher to converge and make contact with the core themes.

Finally, the internal frame of reference is an essential concept of heuristic research. Not only is it important for the researcher to have this frame of reference, but the subjects involved in the study must also embrace this internal perspective. "Only the experiencing persons – by looking at their own experiences in perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and sense – can validly provide portrayals of experience" (Moustakas, 1990, p.26)

Phases of Heuristic Research

The six phases of heuristic research guided research design and provided a methodological framework for implementation of this study (Moustakas, 1990). Although presented in a linear fashion, it must be noted that these phases overlapped and occurred concurrently. The researcher 'cycled' through these phases a number of times while conducting the study. The first phase, initial engagement, involved the discovery of an interest or concern that not only had personal implications, but also had social meanings and implications. The maintenance of aspects of working-class identity, the experiences of working-class students in formal higher education and how students maintain aspects of their working-class identity are important to me. These issues also

have implications in a society where these incongruencies may result in a student outside the dominant culture refraining from attending school.

After the question is formulated, terms are defined, and assumptions made the researcher becomes immersed in the question. "Primary concepts for facilitating the immersion process are self-dialogue and self-searching, pursuing intuitive clues or hunches, and drawing from the mystery and sources of energy and knowledge within the tacit dimension" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28). The immersion phase was followed by incubation where the researcher disengaged with the topic at least in terms of his or her immediate awareness. In this phase learning and understanding was taking place, but at the tacit and intuitive levels. When one forgets a name, for example, it often comes to mind when one's focus is on another topic. Likewise, the incubation phase allowed ideas, insights, and understandings to surface as the researcher refrained from immersion in the topic.

Ideally, the illumination phase results from immersion and incubation. The illumination phase "may be an awakening to new constituents of the experience, thus adding new dimensions of knowledge, or the illumination my involve corrections of distorted understandings or disclosure of hidden meanings" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29). The illumination phase is where breakthroughs of understanding and awareness occurred. As is the case in all the phases of heuristic inquiry, an open and receptive mind was critical to success. Explication, the next phase in the process, was an attempt to make meaning and sense of the understandings and awareness achieved in the illumination phase. It was in this phase where themes and essences were discovered.

The final phase of heuristic inquiry was creative synthesis where the researcher expressed the core themes in a manner which effectively portrayed the essence of the research. Moustakas (1990) suggests that the form of this creative synthesis can be a narrative depiction, poem, story, drawing, painting, or some other creative form. For the purposes of this study, the creative synthesis was in written form with vignettes of interviews that represented key themes of the research.

Background of the Researcher

I am an educator, student, and a retired career military officer who originates from a working-class background. Neither of my parents attended a college or university, or had military experience, although they encouraged me to do so. My hometown of Janesville, Wisconsin is the home of a General Motors Assembly Plant which was the place of employment of many of my family as well as my friends and their parents. I grew up in a predominantly white, working-class environment that valued hard work and hard play.

After graduating from high school with honors I had two primary options – go to work in an automotive factory (my father worked at a Chrysler assembly plan in northern Illinois) or attend a nearby state university. I opted for college partly because of the belief that based on my success in high school; I could easily succeed at the college level.

Life at the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater was a mix of confusion, frustration, discovery, and achievement. This mix of emotions resulted in a mix of grades. I started out relatively strong in my first semester earning a 3.0 grade point average. However, by the end of the second semester of my freshman year, I found myself in serious academic trouble mainly attributable to a lack of study and commitment. Support, advice, and

encouragement from my family were nearly non-existent not because of a lack of caring, but because of a lack of experience and understanding.

The summer after my freshman year of college was a turning point in my life. My father stated that he was no longer funding my college education; however, he would find me a job at a Chrysler automotive plant for at least the summer so I could pay for the next semester if I decided to return. I found myself at a crossroads situated between two worlds. In some ways I felt comfortable and at ease working on an automotive assembly line. In other ways I was the "college kid" who was an outsider. I was torn between maintaining aspects of my working-class identity and, at the same time, venturing into a strange, new world – that of higher education. As I was becoming more and more comfortable with life on the assembly line, and reconsidering my plans to return to college, I was counseled by an unlikely fellow.

Snake had worked in the assembly plant his entire adult life. Covered in leather and tattoos, and proud of his affiliation with the Harley-Davidson sub-culture, Snake was an informal leader in the plant. Based on his physical presence and sometimes surly demeanor I did not attempt to associate with him. However, one day I found myself assigned to a job located next to Snake – a job I would have for a couple of weeks. Snake began to initiate communication by asking why I was at Chrysler and what my plans were. I responded by saying that I initially was working here on a temporary basis but was considering applying for a permanent job – a response that, based on Snake's background, I was sure would receive positive reinforcement. Instead, Snake shook his head and told me I was going down the wrong path. During the next two weeks Snake

counseled me on the importance of returning to school. Snake's advice and words of wisdom convinced me to return to school.

Because of my experience that summer, I was able to return to college in the Fall with a renewed sense of purpose and perspective. I discovered that, through my experiences at the assembly plant and my interaction with Snake and others, I could exist in a middle- and upper-class environment while maintaining aspects of my working-class identity. In fact, I could use many of my working-class attributes such as persistence, determination, and perspective, to help me cope with some of the confusion and frustration I was experiencing in college. I have used many of these attributes in other situations in my life since then.

I believe that many social ills can be cured by educating those that are marginalized. Adult working-class students, as well as other students that are not in the dominant culture, must have an awareness of their identity. They must understand that feelings of confusion, frustration, and inadequacy are partly a result of incongruencies and frictions between their working-class identity and the values, norms, and behaviors of the middle- and upper-class culture.

I, and other working-class adults involved in higher education, have a responsibility to take advantage of the educational opportunities we currently have, while at the same time being cognizant of the challenges, in order to improve the educational experiences of all students. We must realize that education can counter hegemony by helping working-class adults understand how they might resist and challenge social structures (Nesbit, 2005a). Again, we also must be cognizant of our working-class identity – those values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that shape our view of the world – and not

unintentionally compromise this identity in order to assimilate into the dominant culture of formal adult education. It is our responsibility to not only maintain aspects of our working-class identities, but to facilitate change in academic institutions resulting in a more inclusive and equitable environment for adult students of all social classes to learn and thrive.

<center>Participant Selection Procedures</center>

Heuristic inquiry refers to a "process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9). This process of internal search is realized during the immersion phase – the second of the six phases of heuristic research – when the researcher comes to intimate terms with the question by exploring various possibilities of understanding to include engaging with people who have had similar experiences.

Consequently, a purposeful sample was utilized in order to select individuals who shared a common background and perspective. Purposeful sampling was selected because of its emphasis on in-depth understanding and its goal of learning a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of this research (Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling offers various sampling strategies. This study employed homogeneous sampling in order to provide focus, depth, and reduce variation.

The use of purposeful, homogeneous sampling is consistent with heuristic inquiry where the researcher is embarking on a personal, internal search to answer a specific question – how did I and other adult working-class students maintain aspects of our identity in the middle- and upper-class dominated culture of formal higher education? In

order to explore this question within a heuristic context the study participants reflected specific characteristics of the researcher. Consequently, for the purposes of this study, white males were asked to participate in the study in order to fully focus on, perhaps, a sole primary characteristic – working-class origin – that is not a characteristic of the dominant culture. Being able to focus exclusively on this characteristic regarding what it means in terms of identity, experiences in formal higher education, and how one maintains aspects of this identity provided rich information.

Qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on small, purposeful samples (Patton, 2002). Consequently, a sample of six participants was selected and interviewed. I found participants by networking in social and professional circles. They had the following characteristics:

- Adult, white, and male.

- Originated from a working-class background. Working-class students can be characterized as those whose parents have not achieved a college education and have worked in jobs that did not require a college education (Longwell-Grice, 2003). Working-class adult students self identify as working-class based on their social class of origin, not necessarily based on the social class in which they currently reside.

- Past or current attendance in a formal higher educational institution.

- An awareness of what it means to be working-class and the challenges associated with learning in the middle- and upper-class culture of formal higher education.

- A desire to maintain aspects of working-class identity.

Compliance with the Pennsylvania State University Office of Regulatory Compliance was achieved by protection of participants' rights. An informed consent was signed by each participant before the interview process and the confidentiality of participants was maintained throughout the research process.

<div align="center">Data Collection Procedures and Methods</div>

This study utilized open-ended interviews as the primary means of collecting data. The procedure was consistent with the phenomenological, heuristic approach to research. Patton (2002) identifies three approaches to collecting qualitative data through open-ended interviews. The first, the informal conversational interview, relies on dialogue and the spontaneous generation of questions. Of the three approaches the informal conversational interview is the least structured in terms of format and pre-designed questions. The second approach, the general interview guide, involves developing a general set of issues that are used as a guide for asking questions and maintaining focus during the interview process. The standardized open-ended interview, the third approach, is the most structured utilizing carefully worded questions. During the interview process questions are asked in the same order and manner to each subject with little or no variation.

This study used the informal conversational interview approach centered on general topic areas (personal background, working-class meaning, experiences in higher education, maintaining aspects of working-class identity). Referring to Patton's three basic interviewing approaches, Moustakas (1990) suggests that the informal conversational interview is the most appropriate for the rhythm and flow of heuristic inquiry. Ideally, the informal conversational interview will evolve into a dialogue that

"encourages expression, elucidation, and disclosure of the experience being investigated" (p. 47). This approach allowed me, as a participant in the study, to engage in conversation and dialogue rather than primarily asking questions.

However, I was cognizant of some challenges and disadvantages of informal conversational interviewing. First, in order to achieve effective dialogue, trust needed to be achieved between me and my study participants. With the exception of one person, my participants were acquaintances so this trust already existed. In the case of my other participant, I conducted an informal preparatory meeting in order to develop a level of trust that facilitated dialogue and openness. Second, as Patton (2002) acknowledges, this approach to interviewing was more time consuming because it required several conversations with several people before a similar set of questions or topics were posed. Third, the analysis of data was difficult, relative to more structured approaches to interviewing, resulting in me devoting more time discovering emerging patterns. I considered these challenges during the conduct of data collection and analysis.

One method to determine problems with interviewing techniques was to conduct a pilot interview. I selected one participant who possessed all of the characteristics required of study participants. A pilot interview was conducted to allow me to experience informal conversational interviewing and to rehearse the mechanics of capturing data during the interview process. Also, feedback was solicited from the pilot interview participant regarding the effectiveness of interviewing techniques and my ability to create an environment that facilitates openness and a willingness to share experiences.

Because of the nature of informal conversational interviewing, as well as the nature of heuristic inquiry, interviews were conducted face-to-face. Although information could have been obtained by telephone interviews, on-line threaded discussions, or other interviewing techniques, these methods were not ideal for the spontaneous, personal nature of conversational interviewing.

The number of one-on-one interviews required for each participant depended on their respective experiences, energy, and volume of input regarding working-class identity in formal higher education. In this study I conducted two one-on-one interviews with each participant. I terminated each session when mental or physical fatigue was apparent. The follow-up interviews were conducted to validate and clarify data. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. I listened to the tapes before and after the transcription in order to obtain accuracy and as a method for further immersion in the data. I also asked each participant to read their respective transcripts to ensure accuracy. Field notes were made during and immediately after each interview. These notes consisted of significant statements made by the participant as well as observations and impressions regarding non-verbal communication that impacted the analysis of the data. Finally, a group session was conducted where the core themes of the individuals and group as a whole were discussed and validated. The interview participants were asked to complete a consent form prior to beginning the interviews in accordance with Pennsylvania State University Internal Review Board requirements.

<div align="center">Data Analysis Procedures</div>

"Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. No formula exists for that transformation. Guidance, yes. But no recipe. Direction can and will be offered, but

the final destination remains unique for each inquirer, known only when – and if – arrived at" (Patton, 2002, p. 432).

Moustakas (1990) provides guidance for those researchers embarking on a heuristic inquiry journey. His outline guide of procedures for analysis of data (pp. 51-52) provides a useful framework. The following are the procedures, based on Moustakas' outline, which were implemented in this study.

1. Gather all the interview data from the one participant to include recordings, transcripts, and field notes.

2. The researcher will then immerse himself in the data until the participant's experiences and input are understood.

3. The data will then be set aside in order to allow renewal of energy and a fresh perspective. The researcher will then again review the data from the individual participant identifying trends and themes and developing an individual depiction of the interview experience.

4. Return to the original data of the individual participant to determine if the individual depiction fits the original data upon which it was constructed. If so, the researcher will move on to the next participant's data. If not, the individual depiction must be revised to include or exclude elements of the original data.

5. Continue implementing the above steps with each participant until an individual depiction of each participant's experience with maintaining aspects of his working-class identity is constructed.

6. A composite depiction, using elements of each of the individual depictions, is then constructed. This is achieved by the researcher again entering an immersion process,

with intervals of rest, until the themes are thoroughly understood. The composite depiction includes narratives, conversations, and excerpts that represent the essence of the themes derived from the individual depictions that comprise the composite depiction.

7. The researcher then returns to the raw data of each individual participant as well as the individual depictions to select participants who clearly represent the group. Individual portraits of these individuals are then constructed that portray both the common themes of the research as well as characteristics of the individual participant.

8. The final step, creative synthesis, characterizes what working-class identity is and how adult students maintain aspects of this identity. This synthesis of the knowledge that has been gained through immersion, illumination, and explication will be expressed in writing.

Again, as Patton expressed in the above quote, these steps provided guidance, not a recipe. By generally following these steps I attempted to discover the lived experiences of adult working-class students and how they maintain their individual identities.

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

As Creswell (1994) writes, qualitative research is interpretive research and subject to the values, biases, and judgment of the researcher. Merriam and Simpson (2000) add that the key philosophical assumption of qualitative research is that one's view of reality is constructed by interaction with his or her social world and, consequently, there are many realities. Therefore, because of this wide variance of values, biases, judgments, and realities it was necessary for me to verify my data and findings. Four ways to verify the quality of the research was through an analysis of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability.

Credibility

The credibility of qualitative research – the accurate identification and description of a phenomenon – can be enhanced by engaging in rigorous research methods, achieving credibility as a researcher, and having a philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002). I achieved rigor in my research methods by utilizing analyst triangulation.

All field notes and transcripts were verified after each interview with the respective participant by conducting follow-up interviews. Interpretations of individual data and individual depictions were also verified with each individual. Finally, as I constructed a composite depiction of the group and embarked on a creative synthesis, I brought all participants together as a group to check on themes and interpretations.

I also attempted to use multiple researchers to review the findings in order to achieve credibility. Because of the nature of heuristic inquiry I utilized participants to review the findings in order to achieve analyst triangulation.

Dependability

I also attempted to achieve dependability in the study. Dependability, in short, is accounting for changes or inconsistencies that may occur in the research process. The researcher considers whether the construct of the methodology would make sense to other researchers. Variations to the design and implementation of the methodology, if any, should be identified and explained.

In order to ensure dependability I used analyst triangulation in order for other researchers, professors, or peers to review the processes and procedures used in the study. Analyst triangulation identified potential issues of methodological inconsistency and

allowed me to further explain the rationale for the inconsistencies or allow me to readdress changes that may not have been necessary. In order to facilitate analyst triangulation I recorded each interview and created an audit trail of procedures used in data collection, analysis, and formulation of findings.

Transferability

Transferability involves providing thick descriptions that will allow other researchers or those interested in the study to determine whether they can transfer the findings to another situation that is similar in context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thick descriptions provide rich, detailed, and concrete descriptions in such a way that one "can understand the phenomenon studied and draw interpretations about meanings and significance" (Patton, 2002, p. 438). Participant narrative and anecdotes, along with descriptions of data collection and analysis procedures, were provided in this study in order for readers to judge the usefulness and transferability of the findings.

Confirmability

Confirmability – the ability to exhibit an objective and logical approach to data collection, analysis, and interpretation – was the final goal in the verification process. This study achieved confirmability through the use of an audit trail. I documented how data was collected, analyzed, and interpreted as well as noting feelings and reflections during the research process. In addition, analyst triangulation assisted in determining confirmability by obtaining viewpoints of others regarding the objectivity and logic of the study.

Summary

This chapter provided the methodology of the study. After describing the research purpose and problem an overview of qualitative research and the fundamentals of phenomenological and heuristic research were provided.

The use of a heuristic approach to this study not only yielded significant findings, but also resulted in various levels of participant critical consciousness. This phenomenon was not a purpose of the study and the use of critical change criteria with the intent to "critique society, raise consciousness, and change the balance of those less powerful" was not a goal (Patton, 2002, p. 548). In short, the purpose of this study, and my intent as the researcher, was heuristic in nature – to make sense of my attempts to maintain aspects of my working-class identity in the middle- and upper-class environment of formal higher education by bringing to fore my personal experiences and insights a well as experiences and insights from those that have a similar social class background. The use of critical inquiry as a methodology, and the subsequent acquisition of critical consciousness by the participants, was not the intent of the study, but rather an interesting by-product of the interview process.

Finally, the chapter described my background and detailed participant selection procedures, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. A strategy was then offered for achieving credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter provides a summary of the findings from interviews with six men of

working-class origin who attended higher education. It includes a group sketch of the

men and accounts of their perspectives of working-class identity, to include a discussion

of maintaining aspects of working-class identity, as well as their experiences with higher

education. The chapter ends with their perspectives on the responsibilities of both those

in higher education institutions and of the working-class student.

Sketches of the Participants' Working-Class Background

This section provides a background sketch of the participants' working-class

background in terms of family, parents' occupation, pastimes, and overall attitudes and

feelings of being raised in a working-class family. The background sketches will provide

context and perspective regarding subsequent discussions of working-class identity and

meaning, experiences with higher education, and the responsibilities of higher education

and the working-class student.

Ron

Ron was born and raised in Dayton, Ohio along with three brothers and one sister.

His father initially worked in a small printing company and was responsible for running

and maintaining printing machines. He was eventually promoted to a local salesman.

Ron's mother did not work outside the home and was responsible for maintaining the

household, preparing meals, and caring for the children. For most of his childhood,

Ron's family owned one car. This resulted in Ron, his mother, sister, and brothers

staying home when Ron's father was at work. It also caused Ron's mother to do her

grocery shopping and errands on Friday night and Saturday. The norm in Ron's family, as well as the other families in the neighborhood, was that Saturday revolved around family-oriented activities and Sunday was focused on church activities. Along with church, the social centers of the neighborhood were the local bowling alley and the neighborhood tavern.

When Ron was growing up Dayton was an automotive town with the majority of men working in an auto factory or for auto parts companies. Although Ron's father did not work in the automotive industry, the expectation was that Ron and his siblings would someday be involved in some aspect of automobile production as was the case of the majority of those in the neighborhood. Consequently, education and good grades were not a priority, particularly in terms of going on to college. The priority was getting a job after high school which Ron's sister and three brothers accomplished. His sister is currently employed as a bookkeeper in an auto parts store; one of his brothers is a forklift operator at a box factory; and his other two brothers are manual laborers. Ron's sister and three brothers continue to live in Dayton. Ron was the only one in his family to attend formal higher education and eventually move out of the area.

Ron is currently a Colonel in the United States Army and is a doctoral candidate. He is on the staff and faculty of the United States Army War College.

Hank

Hank was raised on the south side of Chicago along with one brother. Both of his parents worked – his father as a time keeper managing time cards and his mother as an office worker in various hospitals in the Chicago area. The primary motivation for their work was to be able to send their two boys to college.

Hank attended a Catholic grade school and a Christian-based, college preparatory high school. In both schools students wore uniforms, so a common indicator of social class – style and type of clothing – was not a factor in determining which children were working-class and which were middle- and upper-class. Other factors, however, were noticeable such as the year and model of the automobiles parents and students drove; the types of vacations the students went on during school breaks; and whether students had to work. Hank did own an automobile, however, he had to work to purchase it and to afford the insurance.

Hank's parents, particularly his mother, placed a priority on education and attending higher education resulting in Hank's older brother attending college. However, his older brother attended a public high school, not a college preparatory school, because of the cost of tuition. According to Hank, there was a significant difference in focus, in terms of class selection, at the two schools. The college preparatory high school had many more liberal arts requirements while the public high school was more trade focused offering classes such as auto repair and wood working.

In order for Hank to attend a private high school he worked numerous jobs from the time he was fifteen years old. Often, he was required to work until midnight and then wake up early for school or sports.   Hank was able to co-exist with his middle- and upper-class school mates through his own hard work and sacrifice as well as that of his parents.

While his parents were highly supportive of his enrollment and attendance in college Hank did not enjoy the same level of enthusiasm and support from when attending

graduate school. His parents did not understand why he needed to further his education when he already had an undergraduate degree and could get a good job.

Hank is currently a Colonel in the United States Army and a doctoral candidate at Temple University. He is on the staff and faculty of the United States Army War College.

Bob

Bob is very proud of his working-class origin and the fact that he is a third generation Italian-American. His paternal grandfather, an Italian immigrant, had an eighth grade education and joined the United States Army shortly after World War I. He eventually became a tailor. Bob remembers his grandfather not having much money but, because of his occupation, he was always well dressed. His maternal grandfather had a sixth grade education and labored as a sheet metal worker and later worked in a radiator shop. He vividly remembers his grandfather's large, soiled hands. As a boy he asked why grandpa's hands were always dirty. He did not realize until later that they were permanently stained from working with metals and radiators. Although he had little formal education, Bob's grandfather had an intellectual curiosity and fascination with learning to the point that he took the time to read an entire dictionary in order to increase his vocabulary. In additional to this intellectual curiosity his grandfather was also gifted physically and had the reputation as a formidable opponent in bar fights.

Bob's father and uncle were veterans of the Korean War. Bob remembers his grandfathers, father, and uncles as always being patriotic and having a desire to serve their new country in part because of the oppression their family suffered in Italy before immigrating. They felt the United States offered them a new beginning and an

opportunity to earn a living in order to provide for their families. Bob's father eventually worked in an office job in a finance company while his mother worked as a secretary in a bill collection company.

Bob and his brother were raised in a cabin in northern Illinois that was built in the 1930's. While growing up family events and gatherings were a priority. Although money was scarce, the love, protection, and support of Bob's family resulted in fond memories of his childhood. He vividly remembers that his family was very frugal. Twice a year he and his brother received gifts – Christmas and their birthdays. They were required to eat everything on their plate and nothing was thrown away. Bob also remembers that his mother always made sure he and his brother were clean before they went to school. Although they did not have new or brand name clothes (Bob received his first pair of Levi jeans in high school – a significant memory) the clothes they did wear were always clean and pressed. His mother also instilled in Bob and his brother that they should never look down on those that are less fortunate than they are. This is an attitude that Bob possesses to this day.

Until Bob attended college, no one in his family had considered formal schooling beyond high school. His parents were extremely supportive of him attending college. Bob felt that by going to college he was fulfilling his parents' dream, not necessarily his dream. He enrolled in college because he was told to do so by his parents. In order to help pay for college, he had various jobs including working at a box factory and a pizza restaurant.

Bob graduated from college and also earned a master's degree – an endeavor that was not an expectation of his parents, but a personal and professional desire. He is currently a

Colonel in the United States Army and assigned to the Pentagon in the Office of Army Public Affairs.

Don

Don is an only child and was born in Long Island, New York. Being the son of a career Marine Corps Master Sergeant, he was raised in various locations around the United States, however, he considers Long Island his real home considering both sets of grandparents were from the area. His mother did not work outside the home. His parents were children of the Depression and knew what it was like to struggle for basic needs and feel the pangs of hunger. They hoped that their son would not have to live through these experiences. One path to ensure prosperity and opportunities, they believed, was formal higher education.

From a young age Don understood that he would someday go to college. This understanding was continuously reinforced by his mother, who did not have the means to attend college, but immensely enjoyed reading, writing, and other aspects of informal learning. His father supported his son attending college, although sometimes reluctantly. Don's father did not graduate from high school and did not fully appreciate formal higher education. He did understand, however, that higher education did lead to more opportunities in terms of jobs and earning money and, consequently, an easier life. Although they did not attend formal higher education, Don's parents, particularly his mother, instilled in him a thirst for knowledge and an enjoyment of learning and exploring. His mother also emphasized to him that although he may not have as much money or material possessions as other children, he could still achieve his dreams if he dedicated the appropriate time and effort.

In order to help finance a college education Don worked at service station pumping gas and changing oil. He eventually learned how to do other mechanical procedures to the point where he considered becoming a mechanic. The man who owned and operated the gas station commented to his parents that Don had tremendous ability and the potential to become a master mechanic. Don's parents did not tell him about this conversation until years later because of being fearful that he would drop out of college to pursue a career as a mechanic. To this day, Don admires and appreciates mechanics and others who work with their hands. Part of him wishes that he would have become a mechanic.

Don went on to earn three Masters Degrees and serve as an officer in the Marine Corps. After his service in the Marine Corps he gained employment in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Don is currently the CIA representative at the United States Army War College. He commented that if his dad were still alive he would be very surprised and proud of his accomplishments.

Mack

Mack, along with his sister and three brothers, was raised in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. His father dropped out of high school his senior year and later earned a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) in the Army. He then worked briefly as a steel worker followed by twenty years in a sewage treatment plant where he retired and received a small pension. He then bought and operated a bar/restaurant. Mack vividly remembers the time when his dad was laid off from work and, as a result of having little income, traveled with his mother to the Government Surplus Warehouse for food. Mack's mother was the youngest of eleven children. She passed away when he was 10 years old. His

father remarried three years later to a registered nurse. Work in Mack's family was considered a job, not a profession. That is, working was simply a means to an end – earning adequate money to support the family was the sole purpose of work.

Mack, along with his four younger siblings, attended Catholic grade school. Although this school was considered private, tuition was based on family income. Because Mack's family was not well off financially, tuition was minimal. Mack excelled in the Catholic school system and desired to attend the local Catholic high school where tuition was much more substantial. His father agreed to send him to the high school only if Mack worked in order to help with tuition costs. Mack labored for four years as a janitor at the high school working on weekends stripping, buffing, and waxing floors along with other basic maintenance responsibilities.

Not all of his siblings had the opportunity to attend Catholic high school. Mack believes that his parents were forced to make financial decisions on who attended private schools, and who did not, based on their best estimation of intellectual ability. They chose to invest their limited money based on the academic potential of their children. Two of his brothers did not do well in grade school and middle school and, consequently, one attended public high school and the other attended a vocational technical high school.

An expectation of most students attending the Catholic high school was subsequent enrollment into college. Initially, Mack was planning to enter the workforce in order to save money for eventual enrollment in college, a course of action his father approved of. Much to Mack's surprise and delight, however, he was accepted into the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point, New York. His attendance at the USMA

alleviated the requirement to finance his college education. Mack also considered

acceptance to USMA as at least five years of employment.

Mack graduated from the USMA as a distinguished graduate and enjoyed a successful

career in the United States Army retiring as a Colonel. He subsequently earned a Masters

Degree in Mechanical Engineering. He is currently a professor in the Center of Strategic

Leadership in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

Dan (The Researcher)

I was raised in Janesville, Wisconsin along with my two younger brothers.   My father

earned a trade as a tool maker and started his working life in a pen factory, eventually

being employed by and retiring from an automotive assembly plant. I remember my

father working many hours. This was particularly apparent when my father worked the

night shift because he slept during the daytime hours and, consequently, my brothers and

I only saw him a few minutes each day. My mother stayed at home when I was young

and spent the most time with me and my brothers. My home environment was the

stereotypical 1950-1960's family – the father worked and the mother stayed at home,

cooked the meals, and was responsible for the house work. Once her boys were in school

my mother worked part time in a plastics factory eventually earning a retirement.

I lived in a working-class neighborhood – most homes were small and one story. The

neighbors across the street, a family consisting of seven children, had a two-story house –

the largest in the neighborhood and the hub of activity when playing as a child. Their

father owned and operated his own landscaping company. About four blocks away, up

on a hill near the golf course Country Club, was where the middle- and upper-class kids

lived. Their parents had predominantly professional jobs such as doctors and lawyers.

Occasionally I would get invited to one of the middle/upper-class homes to play or stay over night and was always overwhelmed with the size of the homes and yards. It is interesting that when I go back home and drive through these neighborhoods the homes do not seem as big as they were when I was growing up.

Life generally revolved around family activities and sports. My family and I spent every Sunday afternoon going for a ride culminating with a visit to my grandparents. Summers consisted of endless hours playing pickup football, basketball, and baseball games with the numerous neighborhood children. I never remember needing anything in terms of clothing or food. Being the oldest boy had its advantages – I received the new clothes and my brothers received my "hand-me-downs." Going out to eat or having my father come home with hamburgers and fries from the local "Burger Chef" was a rare luxury.

School was relatively easy to me, even though my study time competed with playing numerous sports and working throughout my high school years. I was consistently on the honor role and was also a member of the National Honor Society although I did not consider myself overly intelligent. Attending college at the local State school seemed to be a logical progression out of high school as was the case for a number of my working-class friends who also earned good grades. Those with marginal grades or with no desire to attend college normally went to work at the local automotive assembly plant – an option that I seriously considered.

My parents encouraged attendance in college and initially helped to finance my enrollment. I also contributed to educational costs by working in the summer months as a roofer as well as a laborer in the same automotive assembly factory where my father

worked. I also enlisted into the Army National Guard to help defray costs. While attending college I was surprised to learn that my grandmother had attended the same college and had been one of the first female graduates. Up until that point I was not aware of relatives attending college except for a couple of uncles.

I graduated from college, eventually earned two Masters Degrees, and am currently a Doctoral Candidate. I retired from the Army National Guard as a Colonel and am employed as a consultant specializing in strategic planning, leadership, education, and training.

Summary of Participant Sketches

Moustakas (1990) suggests that heuristic inquiry is "a way of self-inquiry and dialogue with others aimed at finding the underlying meanings of important human experiences" (p. 15). In order to discover underlying meanings in this study it was essential that human experiences originate from a common family background.

Like myself, all participants in the study originated from a working-class background and were male, Caucasian, and generally the same age (mid-forties to mid- fifties). There were also some unintended similarities such as all the participants eventually becoming officers in the United States Armed Forces (Army & Marines). Also, all the participants were born in the Midwest (Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin) or Eastern (Pennsylvania, New York) portions of the country. No one was born west of the Mississippi River; however, one of the participants (Don) lived in various parts of the United States as a result of his father changing duty locations in the Marine Corps. The participants were all married, currently residing in the middle or upper-middle class, and had some level of

consternation that their children did not have a full appreciation of working-class values and identity.

As a result of the participants being either active or retired military officers, all had graduate degrees. This was primarily a result of opportunities offered in the military to continue education and the requirement to obtain a graduate degree to earn promotions to higher ranks. For example, I earned my first Master's degree by taking classes at night while teaching for the Army Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC). As a result of serving as an assistant professor of military science, I had the opportunity to take classes at a reduced rate. My second Master's degree in Strategic Studies was awarded because of my attendance at the U.S. Army War College. It is doubtful that I would have pursued a graduate degree without the opportunities presented to me as a result of my military service. This was generally the case for other participants in this study. My pursuit of a doctoral degree, however, was a personal choice and not influenced by my military career aspirations.

The most profound consequence of the interview process was a discovery and awakening of all participants. None of the participants had ever engaged in focused discussions on working-class identity and meaning, experiences with higher education, or the responsibilities of higher education and the working-class student. As a result many emotions such as frustration, elation, sadness, and happiness were exhibited during the interview process. All recalled aspects of their working-class background and experiences that had been repressed. In the end, all had a greater knowledge and appreciation of their working-class self and the consequences of the intersection between social class and higher education. The goal of heuristic inquiry – finding underlying

meanings of human experiences – was certainly achieved at both the individual and collective levels. These meanings will be further explored in the subsequent sections of this study.

<div align="center">Working-Class Identity and Meaning</div>

This section describes the themes that emerged regarding the meaning of working-class and specific characteristics of working-class identity. The three primary themes discussed are 1) characteristics of working-class identity; 2) maintaining aspects of working-class identity; 3) roles, responsibilities, and meaning of work; and 4) perspectives of social class intersection.

Characteristics of Working-Class Identity

For the purposes of this study working-class identity was defined as the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are manifested based on one's view of the working-class world. This identity was instilled in the participants while growing up in a working-class family.

Values and beliefs regarding the type of work that define the working-class were consistent during the interviews. Participants had both positive and negative perspectives about how their fathers, and in some cases their mothers, earned a living and defined their identity in terms of the nature of work they performed. Those in their families worked hard in manual and often routine and mundane jobs. They possessed a strong work ethic and, along with working hard, they also played hard. They produced tangible products that one could see and feel. In short, those in the working-class were described as the "salt of the earth."

Working-class jobs are more direct, rote, hands-on type work. Their work doesn't involve a lot of autonomy or creating, unless they are in a guild type job like a plumber or electrician. Pretty much you do what you are supposed to do. Work is pretty routine. There is not a lot of critical thinking that goes on necessarily in the work and sometimes it is just mundane. I think another part of working-class identity is work ethic. You know the Protestant work ethic – you work for what you get and you are supposed to work hard in life. You work hard and do a good job. (Hank)

I think the working-class is actually the work force that produces something. You make things, you produce things, you fix things, you do things with your hands at a certain level and it doesn't mean you can't graduate to another job because of those skills and be recognized. That has happened to a lot of folks in my family. My grandfather, who ended up working in the sheet metal business, had been a supervisor, crew chief, and a foreman based on things he could do with his hands. The working-class are productive members of society, kind of salt of the earth so to speak. (Bob)

The working-class performs more of a physical labor job, working with your hands or your back or physically creating, physically doing something as opposed to a more intellectual job of managing, planning, and leading in an effort to accomplish a task. I guess that is the first thing that comes to mind in terms of defining the working class. The breakpoint I guess being physical labor from mental labor. In terms of values and beliefs, part of me wants to say immediately that there really are no difference in values between the two classes (working-

class and middle-class) or at least I don't think there should be and maybe that is because I think it is obvious that you should work hard, be honest, have integrity, and support your family. Those are the kinds of core American values that I think that I grew up with. I would like to say that those are the kinds of core values that every American family enjoys, and I know now from experience that that is not always the case. (Don)

I guess those in the working-class are people who work in…I don't want to say low skill jobs because that is not necessarily true. I have uncles who are draftsman and brick layers and things like that, so I don't know if that is low skill but it certainly is manual labor. It is going out and doing things with their hands for the most part. It may not be unskilled labor but it is manual labor. We fix things, we work hard, and we play hard. Inherent to the working-class is that we always had a strong work ethic. I always had to work for what I got. (Mack)

My father instilled a work ethic in me of an "honest day of work for an honest day of pay". To this day when I am being paid to perform a service I often feel guilty if I take too long of a break. To me working-class means people that are hard-working, hard-playing, down to earth, and proud that they work hard for their money. The work is generally physical rather than mental. (Dan)

Participants in the study were proud of the work ethic that is part of their identity. They often described themselves, and other males in their families, as self confident. However, this self confidence often masked strong feelings of inadequacy and fears of failing – a significant part of their identity which impacts all aspects of their lives to this day.

My parent's influence on me instilled a certain level of self confidence and by that I mean the typical parental expression of, 'you can do anything you want to do, son, if you put your mind to it', or in one fashion or another 'he or she is no better than you are.' They may have more money or they may have material things or they may have an education but there is nothing that you can't do if you want to put the effort and the time into it. So I guess as an underlying theme in my experience that is probably the major driver and motivator is the belief that there is nothing that you can't do if you don't work at it, put your mind to it, if you are tenacious enough, if you strive. Anybody can be a quitter; anybody can do the easy thing and not try. It is Teddy Roosevelt. It is the Man in the Ring. It is the Man that is Bloody. My mother and father made sacrifices on my behalf. I didn't want to disappoint them. I didn't want to let them down. I am going to work hard and do my best to succeed. (Don)

I was in constant fear of failing and I don't know how people can truly understand that but again that goes back to the way I was raised. It was like you have to bust your ass at everything you do. Nothing in life is easy. You can't fail. I don't know…I didn't want to be working-class, honestly. When I was growing up, my dad would help me get these jobs and they were always the shitty jobs. I mean like literally digging graves in a graveyard. I was worried about failing and that followed me through a good part of my career. At some point in my career I became comfortable with myself and I didn't worry about it anymore maybe because it didn't matter personally. I was able to slough that off somewhat and I had achieved a position where I didn't need to be anything else,

but that drove me in college. I was driven. I've always had sort of like an

anchor hanging from me that I am concerned about letting people down. (Mack)

Working-class jobs typically did not pay enough money for participants' families to

enjoy the luxuries that those in the middle- and upper-class thought of as routine such as

brand name clothes, family trips outside the United States, and new cars. Family income,

coupled with attitudes toward family income in previous generations, resulted in

participants and their families being fiscally conservative. Although all the participants

in the study now reside in the middle-class this behavior is still evident in discussions and

is an attitude that they are attempting to instill into their middle-class children.

I'm currently financially comfortable, but my attitude is that I don't need to

always be purchasing something. There are some new things you like to get,

obviously, especially when you can afford it, but I tend to be much more financial

conservative than my wife who was raised in an upper, middle-class family. I

always save for tomorrow and I think I have an appreciation for some of the

smaller things. I remember when I was a kid there was only twice a year that you

got any presents. It was your birthday and Christmas, that was it, period. Now

there may have been times when we received a couple sets of new school clothes

or something. I sometimes asked my mother if I can have certain items and my

mom would tell me that we can't afford it right now. My father made me work

for everything and we never threw anything away. I remember as kids when

something was on your plate, you had to eat it all. (Bob)

Part of my working-class identity is I have always been very conservative with

money. I have always been worried about making enough money and God knows

I make enough money now, I really do, and we live in a modest house in a middle-class neighborhood. The reason we live in a relatively modest house is that I worry about spending money on a mortgage and whether we can really afford that and certainly we can. We could have moved to a much nicer neighborhood in a much nicer house and we would have been fine, but I always have that worry about money in the background of my mind. I always purchase small cars, always getting them so I don't have to pay for three years and then trading them in. Now I am on a rotation cycle where I pay one off and keep it for an extra year. The thought in my mind is don't get into too much debt, never get something that you may not be able to pay for because you never know what tomorrow is going to bring. I have made a few financial moves here recently where I am stepping out of this behavior, but it will always be something that makes me a little nervous. (Mack)

It was a huge treat when dad brought home Burger Chef (fast food) about once a month. Quite a change to what my kids are used to. Also, I was the oldest child so I normally got the new clothes – my brothers got my old clothes along with new clothes at Christmas and other special occasions such as birthdays. My youngest daughter would not believe me if I told her she had to wear her big sister's hand-me-downs. I also vividly remember a time when my father told my mother that we were broke causing my mother to cry. They were discussing this in the kitchen and were unaware that I heard the conversation. (Dan)

The rich kids were given a car and got to drive to school and got gas money. If I wanted a car I had to get a part time job at night and I had to pay for the car the

gas, the insurance, and the upkeep on the car. I also recall that every summer the man who owned the small printing company that my father worked at would have all the employees and their families out to his house where he lived – a big house out on a private golf course and again I remember thinking that, wow, I'm crossing the line. (Ron)

I worked and, in fact, the last two years in high school I paid my own tuition. The rich kids that had their own cars in high school and their parents paid for their school trips. Most of the working-class kids either paid for the trip themselves or they didn't go just because they had a limited amount of money. I didn't go on my high school trip, it was a cruise, because I didn't want to spend the money for it, but my buddies and I would commute into Canada. You could tell the difference. You could tell which people had money. My friend's dad was a doctor and we would go up to his house. It was a huge ranch style house out in the suburbs – probably about 4000 square feet. We lived in a little 1500 square foot house. My friend drove a brand new car. I had a used car but really I didn't find it to be a big problem. I look at my own kids. They don't have the same drive I had. I think in some ways not being from a working-class background puts my kids at a disadvantage because they don't have the same intensity I had. (Hank)

Because money was often scarce families relied heavily on each other for support, not only financially, but also socially and emotionally. A prominent attribute of working-class identity was having a family orientation. In short, family was the centerpiece of working-class existence. Activities, including work, were focused on improving the

emotional and material condition of the family. However, the emotional and material needs of the working-class family were often in conflict – long hours of work resulted in less family time and long family vacations resulted in less income. This tenuous balance is still a concern of many of the participants in the study.

I was blessed and fortunate to have the parents and the family I did because it was from that family and from the environment they created that I got what I consider to be core fundamental values, one of which is a family orientation. The working-class guy, in my mind, gets up Monday through Friday, or more routinely Monday through Saturday, goes to work, puts in his time, gets his paycheck, and converts that into benefits for the family. (Don)

In my world the family is what life centered around. We had this routine – we ate together, we fixed things, we worked hard, we played hard. While growing up we kind of had an extended nuclear family. My uncles were all blue collar workers and their wives, for the most part, were homemakers. My cousins were my best friends. On the weekends our families would go to each other's houses. The adults would play cards and the kids would play in our pajamas and fall asleep on the floor. (Mack)

I remember that my dad worked a lot. This was particularly apparent when he was working the night shift because he slept in the day and we didn't see him too often. My mom stayed at home when we were young so she spent the most time with us. (Dan)

Both my parents worked, so they weren't always there to take me different places – we had to find our own entertainment a lot. (Hank)

> I was raised in a family that considered blood more important than anything
>
> and when my parents get old I will take care of them, I will do what I got to do.
>
> When I was growing up I knew that is the way it was going to be. (Bob)

Along with family orientation, the characteristics of working-class identity included being self confident, but with a deep seated fear of failing or disappointing loved ones; and being fiscally conservative. Other characteristics of working-class identity mentioned throughout the interviews were being hard working, as well as being honest and having integrity. The most significant characteristic of working-class identity, however, was the ability and stamina to perform physical, rather that intellectual, labor. In general, the participants in this study, and their families, took satisfaction in a hard days work, but also desired to make life better for their children in terms of physical and emotional needs.

Maintaining Aspects of Working-Class Identity

Certain aspects of working-class identity, and the characteristics that define identity, have been maintained and discarded by the participants in this study. All stated that obtaining, maintaining, and discarding aspects of identity has been an unconscious, not a conscious, endeavor. A common criterion for maintaining aspects of working-class identity is keeping characteristics that facilitate survival in the middle- and upper-class worlds.

> I think I have maintained my working-class identity primarily in terms of my
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> world view of things. The Officer Corps in the Army is, I think, statistically a
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> conservative group of people and so I took on that characteristic as I grew up in
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> the Army. When I retired from the Army I did a little bit of a retrospect. I sat

down with a piece of paper and took a list of major issues and wrote down what my position was and found out that a lot of my positions hearken back to the world I was brought up in, that had defined me. So I think today I have a fairly moderate view, much less conservative than I used to. I moved from right to center or even center left. I think the reason for this is based on how I was brought up which was more of a social democrat. Another aspect of my identity that I have maintained is being very conservative with money fiscally. (Mack)

I have maintained aspects of my working-class identity. Specifically, I have maintained my attitude of persistence, hard-work, and feeling fortunate to be in a doctoral program. In many respects, I have come to embrace my working-class identity and have a greater respect for those in the working-class who excel at their job and take pride in their work. I feel that having an extensive education coupled with a working-class background allows me to be able to relate to people from all walks of life – from a company president to the man who is painting my house today. I still have the impression at times that people that originated from the middle- and upper-classes often lack the 'common sense' that those in the working-class generally possess. I often witness those from the middle- and upper-classes marginalizing people that are 'serving' them such as waiters/ waitresses, drivers, those working in their homes, etc. This is not to say that all those in the middle- or upper-class possess these traits, just as it is not fair to suggest that all those in the working-class are persistent and hard-working. Initially, I don't think I consciously tried to maintain aspects of my working-class identity. However, since thinking, reading, and writing about working-class

identity in higher education I have certainly been bringing aspects of my identity,

and their relationship to my educational experiences, to the forefront of my

thinking. I believe that I unconsciously maintained the aspects of my working-

class identity that resulted in success in coursework and discarded those aspects

that caused challenges. An example of the later is the attitude that reading and

writing were not 'real' work. In undergraduate school I sometimes hid the fact

that I liked to read and write from my working-class friends. I also considered

school work a necessary evil and, consequently, a low priority behind partying,

and participating in sports. This attitude changed when I had problems in school

(an "F" in Astronomy my freshman year) and when I was rewarded for studying.

My poor grades resulted in my father getting me a job in an auto factory. It is

interesting that, because of my working-class attitude toward school (not 'real'

work), I ended up doing 'real' work to help pay for my college. This work

experience also validated that I didn't have a desire to do 'real' work, at least in

the body shop of a car factory, for the rest of my working life. It ended up

reinforcing my motivation to get a college degree. (Dan)

Maybe I am unconsciously trying to step away from some aspects of my

working-class identity. I don't consider myself working-class anymore. But, you

know, maybe I am not trying to completely cut all the ties to my identity. I think

it is all unconscious. (Ron)

I think the biggest aspect of working-class identity that I maintained is

responsibility for lifting myself up. I am not going to feel guilty when I am

working hard. I have gotten this opportunity to go to school. I think I need to

take advantage of it. I think that is part of the working-class ethic. When you get opportunities, you have to make the best of it and I think I have retained that piece of my identity the most. It is just part of who you are. For me it is a positive identity. I am proud of where I came from and I am not embarrassed. (Hank)

I would say yes and no in terms of maintaining my working-class identity. Yes in the sense that when I see people who are from the working-class I appreciate and respect them. For example, I see the janitors in the morning and will talk with them. I don't look down at the enlisted soldiers. They appreciate it because a lot of people don't talk to them – they will walk by like they don't matter. I have maintained an appreciation for the working man and woman to this day and I think that has helped me. I guess what I am saying is I feel comfortable with my working-class identity, but also am comfortable with my identity in the middle-class. I really think I have had a richer experience in life having originated from the working-class. I honestly believe that. I think if things had been handed to me I wouldn't have appreciated things in life that much. I had never really thought about maintaining my working-class identity until this interview. (Bob)

In terms of values, beliefs, or behaviors I am unaware of anything that I would say I have seen in the working-class that I don't want to be…as I talk my way through this question let me change my answer a little bit. Yeah, there are things that I have seen that I don't want to maintain. It fascinates me when I see working-class people that are not curious, that don't want to somehow do better, be better, and learn more. I have a hard time understanding that simply because it

is not me and so I guess I am expecting people to be like me. I have to try to figure it out or make some sense out of it, or understand it, or do it. I do look at some working-class people and I say I don't want to be like that guy. So maybe my answer is yes and no in terms of maintaining aspects of my working-class identity. I look at people and I see them do things that go against what I consider working-class values, beliefs, and attitudes, such as being dishonest, distant, or standoffish, and I consciously don't want to be like that guy. If there is a perception by somebody else that I could be seen, viewed, or perceived like that guy, I want to make an effort to change. I want to be open, approachable, kind and friendly, not haughty or distant. The one thing I have learned that comes directly from my working-class background and academic background is that I don't think I have ever met anybody that I couldn't learn something from. The aspects of my working-class identity that I have maintained permeate my life everyday. They are a filter for my perspectives, thoughts, and actions. (Don)

Roles, Responsibilities, and Meaning of Work

Working is a means to an end in the working-class world. The end is providing for one's family by earning a paycheck. Although those engaged if physical labor are generally proud that they work hard, they do not necessarily take satisfaction that their labor results in generating a product and profit other than recognizing that if the company does well they will retain their job. In short, they are defined by their families and activities outside the workplace, not by their job – work is what one does, not who one is. The participants in this study also drew clear lines of distinction between the roles and

responsibilities of family members in terms of their work both outside and inside the home.

> Our home environment was the typical 1950-1960's family – the father worked and the mother stayed at home, cooked the meals, and was responsible for the house work. My mother did not work while my two younger brothers and I were at home. She eventually worked part-time in a plastics factory, but was still responsible for maintaining the household. (Dan)

> My mother didn't work. Her place was in the home taking care of the kids. (Ron)

> Women occasionally worked outside the home but, for the most part until my generation, it has mostly been men who earned money to support the family. My mom worked in an office, but mostly the men were the breadwinners, the hard workers. You hear folks saying that the working-class are lazy – there was not any of that kind of stuff in my house. Everyone worked. (Bob)

Because the men generally had the significant responsibly for earning money to support their families' basic needs their focus and perspective on work and life was internal and near-term. Life was generally defined by the work week – get through the week so they can enjoy time with family and friends. Work was necessary, but separate from play. Clocking out with a time card and walking out of the factory was not only a physical act, but also a psychological bridge to family, play, and leisure.

> My father had to go out and earn a living. Dads worked Monday through Friday, Moms stayed home, kids went to school. Saturdays were family days, and Sunday we all went to church. That is just the way it was. (Ron)

Many of my working-class friends and family really have no view beyond their little neighborhood or maybe the company they worked for. They talk about their job or their family or some little issue in the town that they live in, but they really don't know the rest of the world exists. Psychologically they don't really think beyond the confines of a work day or a work week and I know that is very true with all three of my brothers. Their life revolves around how many hours they are going to work this week and trying to get overtime to make more money. This seems to be a narrow view of the world. They are hard working but they don't see that working even harder can actually lead to advancement. Advancement for one of my brothers was working up from being one of forklift operators to the primary forklift operator in this small plant – that was as far as his horizon was. All three of my brothers seem to have a big focus, especially come Monday morning, on how fast they can make Friday come because then it is the weekend and on Friday night they can go drink beer. This routine hasn't changed in 30 years. They do the same thing week in and week out. They don't try to experience new things. (Ron)

The working-class guy in my mind gets up basically Monday through Friday or more routinely Monday through Saturday, goes to work, puts in his time, gets his paycheck, and converts that into benefits for the family. A manager (middle-class) fundamentally does the same thing except when his eight or ten hour day is over, he is probably not taking the same kind of break that the manual laborer (working-class) is. I can leave my shovel at work and go home, I am not going to dig anything at home, whereas an intellectual laborer commuting to and from

work is probably still processing information, thinking about the job. I don't

think it is as easy to turn off in that sense. Consequently, I think that there may be

some additional workloads on the manager, the leader, the intellectual laborer that

don't burden a physical laborer. You have people (intellectual laborers) that are

dealing with grand concepts to which there may be multiple answers and none of

them may be right or completely right or total in their scope. That is very

different than moving an object from point A to point B. The manual laborer can

clearly see what needs to be done. He might have to figure out how to do it, but

he clearly knows when the job is done and his reward is accomplishing that job

and taking the compensation from doing it. The intellectual laborer may never be

done with his job in his entire lifetime and so he is going to have to take his

satisfaction, his solace, his reward, in a different way. (Don)

   I think that in the working-class is, the job is a job. It is not a profession. It is

not something that your life centers around and in fact in my world the family is

what your life centered around. The job was a means to support your family. I

have a brother-in-law who has worked in textile mills, worked there all his life,

and I started to talk to him about my job and I started asking him about his job

and he said I don't want to talk about my job. My job is what I do for eight hours

before I can go home and play with the kids and fix the house and do the things I

want to do. When I think about growing up that is the way I our life was. As

soon as you walked out of the factory door you are not thinking about that job

until the next day and then the next day it is the same shit all over again. (Mack)

To the working-class the job is a means to an end, not a profession. In other words those in the working-class view their work as a way to make money – satisfaction is derived from earning a check, not necessarily performing work tasks. As an example, I was working in a car factory (the same factory as my dad) in the summer during college. The jobs I did were monotonous and physical. Although I tried to do a good job, I did not consciously link my actions with building a quality car – I was just a cog in the machine looking forward to a break, quitting time, and getting a pay check. I did not enjoy the work and did not take satisfaction with my role in building cars and helping the company make a profit. I did take great satisfaction in receiving a pay check. So, I took satisfaction in working hard for my pay. (Dan)

The working-class are generally near-term focused (pay check at the end of the week; sometimes living pay check to pay check). Looking long-term, holistically about the future is often difficult. It is tough to self-actualize when one is trying to provide for the basic needs of his family. (John)

The clearly defined roles and responsibilities, in terms of work inside and outside the home, coupled with a job being considered a means to an end, resulted in the working-class being somewhat isolated. That is, recreation and other activities outside of the workplace centered on one's family and neighborhood. The participants in this study, all now positioned in the middle-class, appreciated and understood why their fathers, uncles, and brothers led this isolated and internally focused existence. However, some were also frustrated that their families accepted this existence, particularly in terms of working long, physically demanding hours so that others could profit. These perspectives have

further shaped the working-class identity of the participants which are manifested today in behaviors and attitudes towards people of various social classes.

Perspectives of Social Class Intersection

The participants in this study have come to an intersection in their identities – they are living a middle-class existence, but are of working-class origin. This dichotomy results in friction, confusion, enlightenment, empathy, understanding and a range of other emotions and perspectives that were described during the interviews. These emotions and perspectives were formulated by the attitudes the participants and their families had toward those in the middle- and upper-classes.

> I remember in high school there were these cliques. The rich kids would look down at you. I saw some guys driving nice cars and I didn't even have a car. The difference was unbelievable and that was the first time I was ever aware of anything about social class. I had buddies of mine that were so called hicks. They would hang out on burn-out hill, but they were my friends and guys that I played football with criticized me for hanging out with those guys. So it was kind of weird because I got along with everybody. That is when I started becoming painfully aware that some people were really looking down at other folks and I am not saying I was perfect but if I ever did anything that was mean to other kids I would regret it later – that goes back to the way I was raised. I remember telling my mom and dad how cliquish high school was for me. Even though I got along with people, you could feel the friction. (Bob)

> I think there are people that attain positions of authority or influence perhaps, whether it is because of money or authority in a job or a billet, that do not treat

people working for them or at a lower level in the organization with respect. I think the same is true in reverse. I think there are people in the working-class that look at people in positions of management or leadership and maybe those that are educated with a certain level of suspicion and distrust because of that authority, because of that education. Perhaps someone in authority has not been polite to them. Someone in authority has not shown a certain deferential respect for that working-class individual. (Don)

I think working-class people take much less for granted than the privileged. Working-class people either recognize that they have to work hard for everything they do, nothing is easy and nothing is going to be handed to them or given to them – they have to earn it. In fact I think this is what defines me today. I don't think that is a bad thing. I have run across many people who come from more privileged upbringings and I really do have a sense that, maybe not explicitly, they conduct themselves in a way that implies that somebody owes them something or that they don't need to work as hard. I often think that they are less sensitive about other people's feelings. They sometimes appear to be a bit more aloof and distant to other people's needs than the working-class person is. It is just that working-class people have been through a lot. When your dad is laid off for six months and your mom is taking you to the Government Surplus Warehouse for Spam and Cheese you have a different perspective. It wasn't a big deal when you were a kid because you didn't know any better but in retrospect it is pretty amazing. A person who has never had to go through that and has lived in a nice house with two cars and was given their own car when they turned sixteen,

and had college tuition paid for doesn't have this perspective. You can't help but think you are different. You are different. (Mack)

I think that many in the working-class are often close-minded about those outside the working-class. Perhaps there is a feeling that those outside the working-class do not work as hard for their money as those within the working-class. They haven't paid their dues. This attitude often manifests itself in a lack of desire to experience things associated with the middle/upper-classes such as new technology, certain kinds of entertainment (opera, plays), or certain kinds of sports (golf, tennis). I think the same close-minded attitude can be found in the middle/upper class towards those in the working-class. (Dan)

Based on the participants' attitudes, perspectives, and experiences with the working-class while being raised as well as their current experiences in the middle-class they had a great deal of empathy for those in the working-class. Also, the definition of being successful was not necessarily tied to income or social class, but to the level of competence and motivation one had towards their current endeavor.

One of the things that I think I have achieved, and I attribute this to my parents' and my upbringing, is the ability to work with a working-class individual whether he is a rifleman, a ditch digger, a mechanic or being able to work with an Ambassador, a military general officer, and an academic on the other end of the spectrum. I think I can talk to, get along with, socialize with, and live with people on those different ends of the spectrum because I have done it and the truth of the matter is I enjoy it for various reasons. I have a friend that is a manual laborer. He is a mechanic for an airline. I enjoy his company and learn a lot from him.

On the other end of the spectrum I have friends that I have worked with –
Ambassadors, general officers, and academics – that I enjoy for different reasons
and I have no problem bringing both of these groups together. It pleases me
because I feel I can walk in almost anywhere, such as a working-class bar, and get
along with people or attend any Embassy function around the world and fit in.
(Don)

When I am with working-class guys that are good mechanics, I am frankly
envious. I appreciate and admire what those guys do and if I could take a course
in the evening it would be woodworking or auto mechanics simply because I am
interested in it. On the other end of the spectrum, I thoroughly enjoy reading,
studying, and academic challenges. The analogy of straddling a fence – having
one foot in each camp (working-class and middle-class) – and not fitting perfectly
in either is a good one, and I am not sure of where I am most comfortable, of
where I want to be. I like spending time in both camps, but I don't know that I
want to live exclusively in one or the other which is evident in the different
hobbies and the different people I enjoy. I ride my motorcycle and fly my airplane
and shoot. I have fun with some of the physical things. On the other hand I enjoy
reading – I finish every day with a book or a magazine, so I thoroughly enjoy who
I am and where I am. (Don)

I often wonder what motivates people. I don't think I have ever met anybody
that I couldn't learn something from, whether it was a mechanic on how to do a
job or a philosopher that thinks grand thoughts. I am just interested in people and
while I may not be interested in doing that person's job or living in that person's

neighborhood, that person has different experiences than I do and there is something in their experiences that are useful, educational, and enlightening, so I think maybe I tend to enjoy people in general and enjoy meeting people that do different jobs. (Don)

People in the middle- and upper-class often don't consider the impact of the things they say to those that work for them. They don't seem to want to check to see what is going in their lives of their employees. However, they can be the nicest people in the world; they just don't know that they are being that way. They don't know that they are appearing aloof, it is just the way they are. I think those of working-class origin are much more sensitive to the personal situation of the people they are dealing with and tend to be kinder in their approach. There is no blame put on people for their current social status or personal situation. I think there is recognition that one can be a very good person, work very hard, and it is just the gifts God gave you or the position you have been put in that results in not making much money. I know raising my kids I was always really adamant about never identifying people as something beneath them and emphasizing that as long as you are doing honest work, you are okay. Work is honest as long as no one is doing anything that is wrong. They are earning an honest living and you respect that. Having money or being middle-class doesn't give you additional privileges. Having a working-class background instills in you that no matter where you are in life, there is a way you should act and it is a respectful way that doesn't appear arrogant or aloof. I think it goes directly to the values and culture that were instilled in my upbringing. It is a really deep seated emotion that I have. (Mack)

I have an admiration for those that excel in their field of endeavor whether that is a CEO of a large corporation or a trash collector. One should have respect and appreciation for those in all walks of life that are not privileged as a result of income. However, one should also have respect and appreciation for those that have achieved middle- or upper-class status as a result of hard work. I guess I define success as working hard and being persistent regardless of what job one has. (Dan)

As far as identity, I think that, as someone from the working-class, you can relate better to people and have more empathy for people who wash dishes or work in a factory. You had those types of jobs at gas stations so you know what it is like to be on the other side of the counter, so maybe you have a little more empathy for them. I think that is a good value. (Hank)

I don't judge people by their worldly possessions or how much money they make, I honestly don't, but there are people that do. There are people who are possessed with it. It is kind of opposite with me. That is just the way I am. It is not bragging. It is just how it is. I was raised to not treat people poorly that are worse off than you, don't look down at them, don't make fun of people who have any sort of physical or mental abnormality or are not well off financially. These values and attitudes have got a great deal to do with who I am today as far as being considerate of others. (Bob)

I think overall I am better well-adjusted than most people. I think I turned out okay and I definitely attribute that to humble beginnings, low expectations, and a great appreciation for what I have. I come from a humble background and I am

not pretentious. I feel uncomfortable with servitude. I know I am a supervisor and I will get busy and I will accept that it is necessary but I don't expect people to do things for me from an egotistical standpoint. I expect it from a mission essential standpoint. In other words if things are slow, I don't expect someone to get me a cup of coffee. Now if we are having a business conference and I want a pot of coffee for everybody, that is one thing, but I can help myself. Just because I am a supervisor doesn't mean I am better than anybody else. This attitude goes hand-in-hand with that not taking advantage of people below you. It sounds corny, but I really believe this stuff. (Bob)

    I will see like the janitors in the morning and I will talk with them. I also don't look down at the enlisted soldiers. They appreciate it because a lot of people will pass them like they don't matter. I feel comfortable hanging out with people of all walks of life. I think it would have been harder for me to have had a silver spoon in my mouth and then try to blend in with people. I really think I have had a richer experience being raised in a working-class family. I honestly believe that. I was born into what I was born into; I love my life. There are things that were messed up but there are things messed up in everybody's lives. I am a pretty humble guy and it is funny that a lot of times I don't appreciate how far I have come and how much I have accomplished until I sit back and reflect on it – it goes back to that grounding I had coming from an honest, hardworking background. (Bob)

Working-class identity and meaning, then, can be defined not only in terms of characteristics, but also by examining roles and responsibilities of the family members

both inside and outside the workplace as well as considering the intersection of social classes. Participants in the study identified the primary characteristics of working-class identity as being hard working and engaging in physical rather than intellectual work; appearing self confident, yet having a fear of failing; being fiscally conservative; placing high value on the family; and practicing honesty and integrity. This working-class identity still impacts the day-to-day actions and perceptions of the participants. Don captured the significance of identity when he commented that "working-class identity permeates my life everyday – it is a filter for perspectives, thoughts, and actions."

The roles and responsibilities of the working-class family typically were centered on the father earning an income to provide for the basic needs of the family and the mother working at home, at least until the kids moved out of the house. Work for the father was strictly a way to earn money – it generally did not satisfy a higher need to help the company make a profit. Working was separate and distinct from family and leisure time. Clocking out of the factory was both a physical and a psychological act.

The intersection of working-class background and middle-class existence resulted in a mix of emotions and experiences – both positive and negative. The participants initially had negative perceptions of those in the middle- and upper-classes, however, these perceptions often changed as they entered these social classes. Also, because of their working-class origin, the participants possessed a great deal of empathy and respect for those residing in the working-class.

The formulation of working-class identity and meaning began during adolescence, further developed in grade and high school, and crystallized as a result of experiences in higher education. The participants in this study have maintained various aspects of

working-class identity, often unconsciously, to this day. The interview process unmasked their identity and allowed them to consider why they maintained certain aspects of their identity and discarded others. The roles, responsibilities, and meaning of work added further texture to working-class identity and meaning particularly regarding work as a job, not a profession. Finally, the intersection of social classes, in terms of working-class background and current existence in the middle-class, resulted in specific attitudes and perceptions and attitudes of the middle- and upper-class as well empathy for those residing in the working-class. Discussion of working-class identity and meaning began to facilitate recognition of challenges and opportunities in higher education as a result of originating from a working-class background. This recognition led to a critical consciousness of ones' place in the academic hierarchy.

Experiences with Higher Education

The higher educational experiences of students from working-class origin are ripe with stories of pain, sacrifice, and frustration as well as stories of elation and discovery. In short, the each participant experienced an identity crisis, to various degrees, while attending formal higher education. As is typically the case when experiencing crises in life, the participants emerged stronger and with a deeper appreciation of self and their working-class backgrounds. This section reveals parts of these stories by examining expectations and motivations for attending higher education; the challenges of the working-class student; and attitudes, attributes, and motivations while engaged in the higher education. Common themes clearly emerged from each of these areas that enhance an understanding of and appreciation for the day-to-day challenges and opportunities of the working-class student.

Attendance in Higher Education – Influences and Motivations

For many young men residing in the working-class attending higher education is not a consideration. Often the expectation is attainment of a job after high school in order to support a family or to build financial security for a prospective family. However, there are others that, for various reasons, do consider furthering their education. The participants of this study identified influences and motivations that compelled them to attend college – normally a lower or middle tier school. Family influence, particularly parental influence, was a primary factor for attending higher education. Because this support was motivated by the prospects of a better job and more income immediately after undergraduate school, not necessarily intellectual development and self growth, the idea of attending graduate school was not viewed by some families as a worthwhile endeavor.

My parents, especially my mom as I was growing up, emphasized to me that I had to go to college. That was never a question. That was a given. I was going to college. My brother was going to college and they put a lot of emphasis on education because they thought it was a way to move up and get better jobs. You can do whatever you want to do, so they were very positive about going to college, especially my mother. But later on my mother asked why I was going back to school (graduate school). The idea of continued education is foreign to her. Why are you still going to school – you are 40-something years old? My parents really don't understand why. They don't say you shouldn't be doing it, but definitely they don't understand continuing education – going back for your Master's Degree, going back for your Doctorate. It is hard to explain to them

why am I going back for my doctorate and what that will offer me. If I was 23 years old and going for my doctorate I think the pressure would have been a lot higher from my parents not to attend. Why aren't you out working? My wife has a working-class background too, but her dad was a professional. He could see the advantages of people who had degrees so he really pushed his kids to continue their education as well. So my wife is very supportive. She understands and she has earned her Master's Degree. My wife is a professional. She has a Master's Degree so she understands why I am at this. (Hank)

When I got that degree it was almost more of my parent's degree than it was my degree. I lived my mom and dad's dream of getting a college education. That was not necessarily my own dream. My mom and dad didn't give me good guidance on where to go to college or what to study because they didn't know. However, they were smart enough to know that going to college was the way of the future and they wanted something better for me than what they had. My parents were always my biggest supporters. They wanted me to go to college and I did. Really that is what it was. I went to college because I was told to go to college and then later on I figured out how to get a job. (Bob)

For about as long as I can remember, my mother talked about when I was going to college. It was never a matter of if you were going to college; it was always a matter of when you graduate from high school you go to college. My mom didn't have the opportunity to go college and I think that was something she wanted to do. So maybe in a sense my mom was living vicariously through me – I was doing something that perhaps she wanted to do but didn't have the

opportunity to do. My mom was the principle driver and my dad basically was a supporter. From a very young age it was instilled in me that going to college was the normal progression which was interesting to me because neither my mother nor my father followed that progression. It never dawned on me as youngster that mom and dad had never done this so why is this normal progression. (Don)

I think that my father and mother were realists and, without being cruel, looked at the potential of their children to go to college in terms of their intellectual ability and then made some decisions on who they would support and who they wouldn't support in terms of higher education. I was one they supported. (Mack)

My parents were very supportive of attendance at college – there never seemed to be a question about me attending higher education. I also received significant support from my grandmothers. My paternal grandmother was very interested in my courses. My maternal grandmother told me she was one of the first females to graduate from the college I was attending. I didn't even know she had a college education! (Dan)

Family support and student motivation for attending formal higher education was primarily based on the expectation of graduating and finding a job that paid well, or at least better than what the parents were earning. A college degree was viewed as a ticket out of the working-class world.

My dad was not a big fan of formal education, but I think he always in a sense admired people that didn't have to work with their hands to the point where he

wanted his son to work with his brain and not with his hands. I think my dad was much more a realist than my mom as far as going to college in order to get a good job. I think it was my upbringing and the input from mom and dad from the time I can remember about the importance of school, the importance of education, the importance of bettering yourself, kind of the American Dream. They wanted more for their children than they had. I think as children that could certainly remember the Depression times and they saw themselves as the embodiment of what it felt to live the American Dream. I give my folks a lot of credit for instilling that in me. (Don)

   I was looking to punch the college ticket and then get a high paying job. I remember my dad telling me that I should be making in thousands what my age was. So when I graduated from college at the age of 21 I should find a job that pays at least $21,000. I don't think this formula applies today! My original major was accounting – I thought I could get a relatively high-paying job with this degree. The problem, though, was that my strengths and interests were in writing and education. I ended up with graduating with a degree in education majoring in journalism – so much for a high paying job in the business world. My last couple of years I realized that college was much more than punching a ticket – it was also about learning and expanding interests. (Dan)

   The only thing I think I knew for sure is that I didn't want to go into the auto parts factories. I had been in them and saw people standing in the same place while the conveyor belt went by and they would perform the same task thousands of times in a shift. By the end of their shift they looked like zombies, so I knew I

didn't want to do that but I wasn't really sure what to do, so I started school. I realized that education could open doors and that is why I started college but then I started to experience other things and talk to other people. I saw people graduate and go off to jobs and heard about what they were getting paid, and I thought well my Dad is earning about what they are making and this person is just starting. My dad has been working for 20 years and these college graduates are making the same or maybe even a little bit more. (Ron)

Once the decision was made to attend college, families and prospective students had to decide which schools they should apply to. In most cases the upper tier schools that were far away from home were not considered. Applying for scholarships was often something the middle- and upper-class students did, not the working-class student. In short, working-class students and families generally did not feel they deserved to attend and could not succeed in the upper tier universities such as Ivy League schools.

When I wanted to shop for colleges, I didn't know what I was looking for. My parents didn't care they just wanted me to go to college. I ended up going to college at one of the lower level State schools where everybody was the same and I actually fit in. I remember a bunch of these guys I hung out with were regular guys from pretty much working-class backgrounds and I thought we are all college kids and all this stuff about having money is going out the window. (Bob)

I probably didn't apply to the best graduate schools. I went to a good graduate school for engineering, but I didn't try to go to MIT and, you know, I always had this question about whether I was up to the challenge, whether I could really succeed in upper tier schools so I attended good schools, but they weren't the best

schools. In retrospect I think I could have gone to the best. I know I could have gotten accepted to them because my undergraduate grades were great. There was no reason I couldn't have attended the best schools except for this nagging feeling in me that I was just not good enough and I needed to go somewhere where I knew I could succeed because I can't fail. (Mack)

I attended the same school as my some of my working-class buddies who decided to go to college – a State school 12 miles from home. It was less expensive that the some of the other schools and I could go back home on the weekends. I never considered going to a school far from home. Maybe I had doubts about succeeding in college and dropping out of a school closer to home would be less stressful. (Dan)

I went to good schools but they weren't nationally recognized schools. Most of them were catered to blue collar students. I had pretty good scores and good grades. If I was raised in a professional family, maybe I could have gotten into a better school…Northwestern or University of Chicago. For example, getting into nursing school at Temple is pretty competitive – you have to have a 3.6 GPA. Seven miles away Widener University has a big, expensive nursing program. The kids that attend Widener have parents with money. If their scores aren't so good their parents can pull some strings and get them admitted. (Hank)

The influences and motivation that compelled the participants in the study to attend formal higher education primarily centered on family support, particularly from parents, and the belief that higher education was an avenue to better income and a more comfortable life. The participants generally attended middle and lower tier schools in

terms of cost and reputation. There were many reasons for this such as cost and friends attending the same school, however, the primary reason was a deep seated belief that an upper tier school might be too difficult resulting in failure both in school and family expectations. This is but one of many challenges facing the working-class student in formal higher education.

Challenges of the Working-Class Student

The challenges of the working-class student in formal higher education continued after the decision was made to attend school. The feelings of impostership, which were first evident in decisions not to pursue attendance in upper tier schools, continued to impact self perception and the successful integration into the higher education environment. Impostership was often accentuated by a lack of cultural capital.

> I was in a brand new environment – a dorm with a roommate and no family
> support. I worked my butt off but there were still things in the first semester of my
> freshman year that I just didn't get and I thought, oh my God, I am not cut out for
> this. I am not prepared for this. I am in the wrong place. It was, I think; support
> from back home, tenacity, and my working-class values that got me through that
> first semester. I literally muddled my way through my first year of college. I
> stuck to it and marginally got through that first semester and then things started
> making more sense or I started figuring out what was required. I think that is all
> part of the education process for the working-class student. (Don)

> I had feelings of inadequacy in graduate school especially when I started. I
> really felt inadequate and I had been out of school for awhile. I felt people were
> so far advanced in terms of where I stood in my abilities. I graduated from

graduate school with a 3.88 or something. I got all A's and one C in Theoretical

Physics which I squeaked by in, so I wasn't ever in danger of failing but again it

wasn't a pleasant experience for me because I always felt like I wasn't equal, in

terms of ability, to the other students. This perception of myself made me work;

it was the thing that drove me to work very, very hard. I spent one hell of a lot of

time in professor's offices always trying to make sure I knew what I was doing,

whether it was right or not, and what I could do to get ahead. I latched on to

friends, but I don't know if they were necessarily friends initially. They were

smart people that I wanted to latch onto because they would help me

academically. I remember the first course I went to, it was the summer graduate

level math course and we all introduced ourselves at the first class and there were

five Mr. Kim's in my class and I knew I was in trouble since I was in the minority

as the only white American working-class male in my class. So I latched onto

one of the Mr. Kim's who dragged me through the course and taught me about

nodal analysis and 4 A series and all the math that doesn't have any numbers in it.

We worked our way through that course. (Mack)

Entering a doctoral program surfaced some of my working-class feelings of

inadequacy and impostership. This was a different ball game than attending a

State school with my working-class friends. Did I have what it took, in terms of

intelligence, reading, writing, research, and speaking ability? Could I hang with

the other students? Did I deserve to be here? Did I deserve to be called Doctor of

Education at some point (still a question that enters my mind)? Looking back on

this I realize that I had issues (and still do to a certain extent) with self-efficacy

and impostership. To compensate for these feelings of inadequacy I initially went overboard with assignments. I remember my first online discussion – I drafted my response, did a thorough proofread, wrote a final draft, and then pasted it to the online discussion. My professor explained to me that this was not necessary. This forum was meant to be an on-line discussion – it wasn't necessary or appropriate to write polished articles. I also noticed that some of my classmates seemed to have a more extensive vocabulary and were able to think deeper about topics in class. I couldn't help but think that they were probably raised in a family that sat around the dinner table dialoguing about esoteric and philosophical topics while my family talked about the next football game and what was on TV that night. (Dan)

My first couple of years I struggled a lot in college. I think there were probably some times especially during the first couple of years where I didn't think I belonged at school. Outside the small group that I ended up hanging out with, most of which came from working-class backgrounds, there were other kids who, from the time they were freshman in high school, knew they were going to college. Dad told them what college they were going to because he had gone there and Grandpa had gone there. When I went for a Master's Degree and then when I started my doctoral program I had the same kind of thoughts, you know, why am I doing this. Do I really belong? I am not an academic, but then you figure out that maybe you are. I have gotten a little bit smarter. I eventually figured it out and developed some sense of belonging. But earning a doctorate degree still seems incongruent to my background. People who earned doctoral

degrees were from the upper-class – people who had lots of time and money on their hands. It definitely wasn't something that someone from a blue collar family did. (Ron)

I think if you grow up around professional parents vocabulary is probably different, the ways you do things are different. I can see that. Especially in my doctoral program I have felt a little inadequate and out-of-place and maybe it was because I was out of academia for a long time. Some of the students had gone from undergraduate to graduate programs so they are well versed in the jargon. (Hank)

I struggled my first couple years in college. My grades weren't that good at first because I didn't know how to get good grades, how to study, how to do this college thing. One of the challenges is that we spoke a kind of different language. I remember engaging in conversations with people who used a lot of big words. Even to this day, for example, a lot of people will say things that are part of their regular vocabulary that I don't quite understand. I came from pretty plain speaking people. My grandparents spoke with an Italian accent. I felt there were times when I felt inadequate and maybe my way of coping with it was to consider school not that big a deal. I remember especially as a freshman I dropped a bunch of classes because I was kind of taken aback. There are feelings of inadequacy initially, but you get over it like anything else, you adapt to it. Initially it was a little bit of cultural shock. (Bob)

Also adding to the challenges of the working-class student in higher education was the incongruency between existing in the middle-class college environment and having a

desire to be appreciated and accepted in the working-class environment. Straddling both worlds was often difficult, confusing, and was typically at the center of the identity crisis that the participants were coping with.

Intellectual work, such as reading and studying, or not working regular hours is often not considered real work to those in the working-class. At first I also had this attitude. I have heard comments such as 'reality will hit him when he has a family – he'll need to get a real job' or 'he has his head in the clouds – he has book smarts, but no common-sense'. In truth, I have often thought that when interacting with academics or people that did not have to work hard to lead a comfortable life. I sometimes hid the fact that I liked to read and write from my working-class friends. I also initially considered school work a necessary evil and, consequently, a low priority behind partying, and playing and watching sports. This attitude changed when I had problems in school my freshman year and as I was rewarded for studying. My poor grades resulted in my father getting me a job in an auto factory. It is interesting that, because of my working-class attitude toward school (not 'real' work), I ended up doing 'real' work to help pay for my college. (Dan)

I got this job at a box factory during college and I worked there two or three summers in a row. They saw me as a college kid. It was really weird for me being labeled as a college kid. College kid – you talking about me man? It was all so insulting. Why did you just call me a college kid? It was almost like I was more proud of working my butt off. I had an opportunity to get a permanent job at the box factory working 40 hours a week, and when a big job came, working

time and a half overtime. The company had a policy where you could work 10

hours a day and have a three day weekend. I remember thinking, man, I could

handle this. I told my dad about this and he emphasized that I was working at this

box factory to earn money for college. (Bob)

I was conscious about not being stuck up to the guys I worked with and my

friends from back home. They were probably a little jealous because I got the

opportunity to go to college. I felt kind of guilty – here I am going to college and

my buddies are back home working. Maybe I felt guilty because they didn't

understand what was going on in my mind and my new world and I didn't know

how to explain it. But I didn't feel sorry for them because I envied them in some

ways. Life for them was pretty simple. (Bob)

I feel stupid going back home and not being able to do some sort of work with

my hands – men are expected to be able to do physical work. (Bob)

Impostership, lack of cultural capital, and incongruencies between the environment in

which one was raise and the middle-class environment of formal higher education are

challenges the participants in this study faced while attending college. In short, these

challenges were the crux of their identity crisis. It is important to note that these

challenges, for the most part, did not subside as the students moved through the higher

education degree hierarchy from a Bachelor's degree to a Master's degree to, in the case

of three participants, a Doctorate degree. The challenges, particularly impostership, were

embedded deep within the self perceptions of the participants.

Attitudes, Attributes, and Motivations While Engaged in Higher Education

The participants in this study were able to overcome, to a certain extent, the

challenges they encountered, and deal with their identity crisis, because of the attitudes,

attributes, and motivations instilled in them as a result of their working-class origin.

Many were able to discern a significant difference between their attitudes, attributes, and

motivations and those of their middle- and upper-class classmates. One difference was

the participants' attitude about higher education. Working-class students considered

attendance in higher education a privilege, while others outside the working-class seemed

to view higher education as an entitlement.

> I found people from middle- and upper-class backgrounds were more critical
>
> about the quality of education or the type of service they were getting where I was
>
> just happy to be there. There was this scholarship organization that I was on that
>
> helped determine who received college scholarships. At the time I had most of my
>
> college paid for – I was on a National Guard scholarship and I was working – so I
>
> didn't really feel like I needed a scholarship. When it came time to apply for
>
> scholarships I didn't apply because I felt others needed the money more than I
>
> did. A buddy of mine who came from a very wealthy family asked me why I
>
> didn't apply – it is free money. He couldn't understand and appreciate my
>
> reasons for not applying. In my mind the scholarships was not an entitlement and,
>
> from my perspective, accepting the scholarship when I didn't need it would be
>
> like stealing. I also wasn't entitled to a college degree. My attitude was that I
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> have this opportunity to go to school. I need to take advantage of it. I think that is
>
> part of the working-class ethic. When you get opportunities, you have to make

the best of it. I also am not entitled to good grades. For example, there was a student that came into class at Temple with her mom because she failed an exam. I would never think about doing that. If I failed an exam, it's my problem. I would go in there and talk to the instructor if I thought it was unjust, but nine times out of ten I would have known it was my fault and sucked it up where this person came in with her parents. I don't know what her background was, but bringing my mom is something I never would have done. (Hank)

I was always humbled by the chance to go to college – it was an opportunity and a blessing. (Bob)

Perhaps the biggest difference in attitude between my classmates and I was my attitude towards attending a doctoral program. I felt honored and privileged to participate in the program. I didn't feel like the university owed me anything. On one occasion members of the cohort complained to the professor about having too much work. Many of my classmates expressed their frustrations. I remained silent. I did not feel that I deserved to complain about the amount of work. Being involved in this program was a great opportunity. If it was easy, what would be the value of the doctorate degree? Others, it seemed, had the opposite attitude. Because they, or their company, were paying significant amounts of money to attend graduate school they felt, perhaps rightfully so, that the institution should consider their needs in terms of work load, scheduling, etc. They felt that the institution owed them something. Often, when there as a problem with grades, attendance, etc. their attitude was that it was not the student's fault, but a problem

with the institution or program. Perhaps this is an attitude that I should have had, but I was just happy and grateful to be allowed to participate. (Dan)

An additional motivation for doing well and staying in college were the sacrifices that the participants' families had made that allowed them the privilege to attend higher education. Often times, the family also had someone who served as a role model and mentor that helped and encouraged the participants with their challenges and struggles.

It probably wasn't until I got to college really that I realized how much my parents had sacrificed for me. I remember how proud my parents were when I graduated from college. It was a big deal because nobody in my family had ever gone to college before and I actually graduated. I was the first blood relative to earn a degree in my family. Thinking back on my experience, I think what hurt me is I that I never had any educational role model from my family. (Bob)

I recognized that my mother and father were making sacrifices for me and the pressure, then, was the internal feeling of wanting to succeed. My mother and father had instilled in me a thirst for knowledge, a quest for knowledge, and the enjoyment of learning and exploring, but my mother and father were also making a sacrifice on my behalf – I didn't want to disappoint them. I didn't want to let them down. I was determined to work hard and do my best to succeed. The objective was first to get into college and then to do well in college. Where my mother and father couldn't help me at all was the college experience. Neither one had been to college. I am not sure that my mother and father knew what I was getting into and they certainly couldn't help me with the course work or the experiences. I was fortunate to have this cousin that was a role model for me.

He was the one that my parents would turn to and say, you know, your cousin

has just graduated from high school and he is going to college. Since he was a

role model for me, it was like validation of what mom and dad had been saying

about the value of higher education. I was fortunate to be able to talk to my

cousin about what college is, what does going to college mean, and how it is

different from high school. He was a big help to me in that sense and that

worked out so well we are like brothers today. I think he had a fairly significant

influence on my life because he was a couple of steps ahead of me and I could

turn to him and ask what does this mean, how does this work. (Don)

I remember talking to my dad my junior or senior year of high school about

joining the Army, getting the GI Bill, and then going to school. There was no

discussion with me about going to school right immediately after high school. He

thought that joining the Army in order to get the GI Bill was not a bad idea. It

was about money which was tight. (Mack)

It would have been disappointing to me not to finish college because I think

that my parents were heavily invested in me doing well just from an emotional

perspective. If I didn't finish I would have felt that I let people down. I would

have felt like, though my parents did not push me to go to college, that I had

failed. I had failed and let them down and let myself down. (Mack)

I felt like I had an obligation to finish my doctoral degree because I was

receiving tuition through the GI Bill. The citizens of our nation were funding

this experience. I also owed it to my family to do the best I could and finish the

program. The numerous mornings, evenings, and weekends spent reading,

studying, and writing meant time away from my family. I spent two weeks one

summer writing my comps while my family went on a vacation. During my

undergraduate experience, once I found out that my grandmother had attended

the some university, I also felt an obligation to carry on her legacy. I am the first

one in my family to earn a doctorate degree so I really don't have anyone that

serves as a role model or mentor in terms of family. I do have a number of

colleagues and friends who have earned their doctorates – many have come from

a working-class background. They have been a tremendous help through this

experience both emotionally and practically. I take a great deal of satisfaction

helping others and giving advice, particularly to those from working-class

backgrounds. (Dan)

Attributes, characteristics, and values of the working-class, such as working hard,

persistence, and a short term perspective also helped the participants survive in higher

education. Similar to their experiences with different attitudes towards college

attendance, the participants in the study were surprised that many of these working-class

attributes were not common to students of other social classes.

If you apply honesty, integrity, hard work, a sense of objective and a desire not

to disappoint, you can apply that to a job, you can apply that to education, you can

apply that to relations with other people. I think that these core working-class

values are the things that helped me in education. In my first semester of college,

I frankly worked my butt off. My attitude was if he can do it, I can do it. I

readily recognized that there were people that were intellectually my superiors

and had a lot more brain power than I was ever going to have. Although I may be

the dumbest guy at this university they let me in. So somebody, some system, thinks that I am capable of doing this and I am going to give it my best shot. I am going to be tenacious. There is also a certain amount of self pride. I am not going to lose. I am not going to quit. I am not going to walk away from this without giving it my best shot. (Don)

I think inherent to the working-class is a strong work ethic. I always had to work for what I got, and it was no different in graduate school. I was always very disciplined. Again, that goes back to my working-class background and being disciplined helped me in graduate school. I really don't think any attitudes or attributes I acquired based on my working-class background hindered me. (Mack)

I recall an issue I had with a professor. He was a well-known, established professor in the Journalism department (my major) and I had him as my instructor in a couple of courses. I always thought of myself as a good writer so I was shocked when he told me that I should consider pursuing another major. For some reason he did not like me – it may or may not have been class related. Another journalism professor encouraged me and said I had a future in Journalism – not sure why he liked me – perhaps he had a working-class background? I do recall that the rejection I received from the first professor resulted in a determination to prove him wrong – perhaps a trait of the working-class. I was more pissed off than discouraged. I also realized that another advantage that I had as a result of my working-class identity was the ability to work hard and be disciplined in terms of setting time aside to read and write. I also seemed to be more organized and structured that most of my classmates. In

fact, I was surprised how unorganized and unstructured many of my classmates were. I had a schedule for the semester and set milestones to accomplish readings and finish papers. (Dan)

I think what finally got me through college was the realization that it would take hard work to succeed. You can be brilliant or you can work hard or some kind of combination of the two can get you through college. For me it was just a lot of hard work – working harder than most people. Studying and research took a little bit longer for me. I worked a series of near term goals, get to the next paper that was due, and got through the semester. I time lined the semester out and I knew what I had to do. My attitude was a hard working, short term/near term kind of outlook. (Ron)

I think one of the advantages I have is my work ethic. That is a real big advantage, I think. A lot of folks who are from working-class backgrounds seemed to manage the work load well. (Hank)

In summary, the experiences of working-class students with higher education centered on the influences and motivations for attending college; the challenges encountered while transitioning from a working-class environment to the middle-class environment of higher education; and the attitudes, attributes, and motivations of working-class students while engaged in higher educations. In terms of influences and motivations for attendance in higher education, the family was significant. The parents influenced their working-class sons to attend higher education as a means to 'open doors' in order to have more opportunities for better paying jobs. Because parents and students lacked finances; knowledge concerning admission criteria and scholarship opportunities; and confidence

regarding academic abilities none of the participants pursued admission in higher-tiered schools, such as Ivy League universities. Many of the participants now realize they had the ability to succeed in these schools.

The participants in this study encountered numerous challenges and experienced, at some level, an identity crisis. All had issues with impostership, particularly in their first year of school. Many had significant challenges learning how to read, write, and study at the college level. The participants all lacked the cultural capital needed to smoothly transition from a working-class environment to the middle-class environment of higher education. Incongruencies in speech and dress were dealt with to various degrees. Understanding the admission and course selection process took time and effort. A further challenge, in addition to acquiring academic and social acceptance into the environment of higher education, was maintaining acceptance back home, particularly when attending graduate school. Explaining to friends and family why they decided to attend college and not stay in their working-class environment was a challenge to the participants. Many found that going back home on the weekends and talking about issues at college resulted in deafening silence and blank stares – friends and family did not understand and could not relate to these experiences.

The attitudes, attributes, and motivations of working-class students engaged in higher education somewhat compensated for the challenges the participants encountered. They coped and adapted using skills and attributes they had acquired while being raised in a working-class environment. There were many surprises and revelations, such as the difference in attitudes between social classes regarding attendance in higher education. These working-class students were honored and humbled to attend college – "just happy

to be here" – whereas many of the middle- and upper-class students felt that they were paying for a service and had the right to demand better curriculum and professors.

The working-class students also were acutely aware of the emotional and financial sacrifices their families had made in order for them to attend higher education. This added pressure compelled them to work diligently to succeed not only for themselves but, perhaps more importantly, for those that had made the sacrifices. Failure and success was shared throughout the network of family and friends.

Another revelation was how the participants' working-class attitudes and attributes could facilitate success in higher education and help with coping with the crisis they encountered between their working-class identity and the middle-class world of academia. Their work ethic, coupled with sound organizational skills and a near term focus; enabled the participants to compensate for many of the challenges they encountered during the college experiences.

Discussing these experiences brought out a range of emotions in the participants. A mixture of joy, remorse, frustration, and revelation were apparent during all of the interviews. All, however, had overcome their challenges, survived, and graduated. Many had not consciously attributed some of their successes and failures to their working-class background until during the interview process.

Responsibilities of Higher Education and the Working-Class Student

The participants of the study agreed that, in order for the working-class student to integrate into higher education and cope with their identity crisis, both the institution of higher education and the working-class student must take responsibility. Integration, survival, and eventual graduation is contingent on both higher education and the

working-class student developing an awareness of the threats and opportunities of social class differences and then taking action to alleviate the threats and enhance the opportunities.

Higher Education Responsibilities

Institutions of higher education are responsible to create an environment conducive to learning for all students. Inherent in this responsibility is meeting the physical and emotional needs that impact learning. The participants of this study identified a number of approaches that higher education can adopt to meet the needs of the working-class student.

Colleges and universities must make the effort to develop ties and relationships to the working-class student and the world they come from. They have a responsibility to convey to all social classes that academia is an opportunity for everyone, not just rich, white people. (Ron)

High schools also have a responsibility. It would be helpful to develop a 'College Prep Night' program at local high schools to begin the orientation process for working-class students considering higher education, particularly in terms of learning how to fill out applications and applying to colleges. Higher education institutions should have 'Freshmen 101' courses where working-class students can learn how to take tests, for example. Colleges and universities also need to develop a strong advisor program by educating advisors about the challenges of the working-class student. Also, there needs to be more information and dialogue between colleges and the parents of working-class students. I know

that some educational institutions have initiated some of these programs, but often it is lip service with no real action. (Hank)

Teachers and advisor must be role models. They should take an active interest in students and break down barriers relating to social class. They need to be approachable and encouraging. They need to sincerely want to get to know students. Teachers and administrators also need to focus on teaching and learning regardless of appearance, one's clothing, manner of speaking, or background. They also need to reflect on the impact they have on students and be accountable for their teaching methods. One size doesn't fit all. (Don)

Social class diversity in higher education needs to be addressed – there needs to be dialogue. One way to initiate this dialogue is to deliberately incorporate working-class perspectives and experiences in the classroom. Gender and ethnicity perspectives and experiences are often addressed, but social class is neglected. The bottom line is that the gap between the 'have's' and have not's' needs to be decreased. (Mack)

Higher education institutions need to understand that culture and diversity does not just apply to ethnicity, race, gender, and sexual orientation – it also applies to social class. This understanding can be enhanced by incorporating working-class cultural studies into applicable curriculum, developing organizations for working-class faculty and students, and by hiring more administrators and educators from working-class backgrounds. (Dan)

Working-Class Student Responsibilities

Students from working-class origins must have an awareness of the challenges and opportunities offered by attending higher education. They, too, have a responsibility, not only to themselves and their working-class friends and families, but also to higher education institutions and their fellow students.

Working-class students must be prepared to work hard – higher education doesn't owe anyone a degree. They have to be able to pull themselves up – when things get tough they must have the maturity to work themselves out of the challenging situation. One way to do this is to take a proactive approach to requirements and continually seek out information. (Hank)

You need to ask questions based on your working-class perspective. Be proud of who you are. Be honest, speak up, voice your concerns, and give feedback. Understand that education is a two-way street – you must give in order to learn. (Don)

Capitalize on your working-class values and ethics, particularly the inclination to work hard. Realize that you won't be given anything and you don't deserve anything you don't work for. Fulfill your obligation to yourself and your family. (Mack)

As a working-class student you need to take responsibility for yourself by seeking out mentors, thoroughly researching prospective colleges, and learning application procedures. Attempt to overcome feelings of impostership and issues with self efficacy by asking questions, providing feedback, and interacting with other students. Accentuate the positive aspects of working-class origins.

Working-class students have a responsibility to not only learn, but to also teach. They must develop a critical consciousness and use the awareness as a motivator to teach and learn. Finally, they must fully understand the implications of quitting in terms of the impact on their lives as well as the lives of their working-class friends and family. (Dan)

The working-class have a responsibility to try higher education – just make the attempt. This can be done by taking advantage of opportunities such as scholarships, the GI Bill, grants, and loans. (Ron)

An underlying theme in the participants' discussion on responsibility is the impact of graduating, or quitting, on their circle of friends and family back home. This is a perspective that is important for administrators and educators to understand. Equally important is understanding the impact of graduating, or quitting, to our society. Higher education is a tool to close the gap between social classes and enhancing understanding and appreciation of what all social classes contribute to education and society as a whole.

Summary

This chapter provided a summary of the findings from interviews with six men of working-class origin who attended higher education. It included a group sketch of the men and accounts of their perspectives of working-class identity, to include a discussion of maintaining aspects of working-class identity, and experiences with higher education. The chapter ended with their perspectives of the responsibilities of both higher education and of the working-class student.

Working-class identity and meaning centered around four themes – characteristics of working-class identity; maintaining aspects of working-class identity; roles,

responsibilities and meaning of work; and social class intersections. The characteristics of a working-class identity included a work ethic in terms of physical work rather than intellectual work, self confidence which often masked a fear of failing, fiscal conservatism, and a strong family orientation. The participants maintained some, but not all, aspects of their working-class identity. This maintenance, prior to discussion in the interview process, was an unconscious undertaking. The participants did not deliberately decide to maintain their aspects of their identity. The characteristics they maintained are generally those that facilitated survival and success in higher education and those that were discarded often resulted in barriers and challenges. The discussion of roles, responsibilities, and meaning of work focused on the distinct roles of men and women in the working-class family as well as the perspective of a job being a means to an end, not a calling or profession. Finally, social class intersections resulted in specific attitudes towards the middle- and upper-classes and a strong empathy for those currently residing in the working-class that the participants interacted with on a day-to-day basis.

Experiences with higher education focused on influences and motivators that impacted attendance in higher education; the challenges of the working-class student; and the attitudes, attributes, and motivations of working-class students while engaged in higher education. The influences and motivators that impacted attendance were strong parental support particularly, in most cases, by the mother. Working-class students and families also viewed education as a stepping stone to the middle-class and a more comfortable life. However, students and families did not attend higher tier colleges and universities. Often they could not financially afford to attend these schools. Also, many of the participants initially felt that they could not succeed at these schools. This feeling of

inadequacy was one of many challenges the working-class student experienced. Others included feelings of impostership, lack of cultural capital, and conflicts between the middle-class academic world and their working-class origins, including interactions with friends and family. Once engaged in higher education the participants in the study exhibited unique attitudes and attributes that facilitated coping with their identity crisis manifested by the challenges they encountered. Unlike many of the middle- and upper-class students, they were happy, honored, and humbled to have the opportunity to attend higher education. They did not feel they were owed a college education. The participants also recognized the significant sacrifice their parents had made, both financially and emotionally, that allowed them to attend higher education. This recognition resulted in a high degree of pressure to finish school. This pressure was often alleviated by role models and mentors, often from the extended family, who provided information and support. The participants also identified positive working-class attributes that contributed to their survival and eventual graduation such as a strong work ethic, working-class values, and strong planning and organizational skills.

The participants of the study also identified specific responsibilities of those in higher education institutions, such as administrators and educators, and of working-class students. A general awareness of the differences, perspectives, and needs of the working-class student was a primary responsibility of higher education. This awareness should be followed-up by action such as incorporating social class cultural studies and discussion into the curriculum. Responsibilities of working-class students centered around an awareness of challenges and opportunities and the requirement to capitalize on their work

ethic. The participants identified an engaged, proactive approach to higher education and

learning as a key responsibility of working-class students.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter provides an analysis of significant findings. After discussing consistencies with reviewed literature, the chapter explores areas not addressed in the current literature related to social class identity and findings on how working-class students maintain aspects of their identity while adopting aspects of middle-class identity as well as how critical consciousness is developed. Other areas expanded upon will be the challenges of the working-class student, specifically feelings of impostership, lack of cultural capital, and cultural suicide. Finally, the chapter examines how students of working-class origin coexist in the working- and middle-classes with a focus on opportunities versus threats and their role as intellectual laborers and organic intellectuals. The chapter concludes with implications for research and higher education.

Consistencies with Reviewed Literature

The findings of this study validated the results of several studies highlighted in Chapter 2 – Literature Review. Ohmann's (2003) definition of identity as "a bundle of habits and feelings and ways of relating lodged deep in your psyche and broadcast by your talk and conduct" (p. 11) was consistent with how the participants described the origin of their respective working-class identities. Ohmann (2003) also contends that people often do not identify themselves by class as they do with gender, race, or sexual orientation. Social class identification seems to occur when confronted by a stark contrast. This study and, specifically, the interview process provided the contrast for the participants. Discussions during the interview process were the first time they had considered the impact of their experiences in higher education on working-class identity.

The findings were also consistent with Smith and Hanley's (2003) contention that social class identity is not necessarily a social class position but "shared norms, values, lifestyles, and attitudes; working-class identity reflects identification with a coherent, bounded, integrated and integrating working-class culture" (p. 27). The norms, values, and attitudes described in the individual interviews that shaped working-class identity were generally consistent and shared by all who participated in this study. These consistencies in working-class norms, values, lifestyles, and attitudes were confirmed during the group session.

The findings of this study also supported the contention by Livingstone and Sawchuk (2000) that the adult working-class are at least as engaged in learning – defined as both formal and informal – as those in the middle- and upper-classes. The parents of the participants did not have formal education beyond high school; however, all had a desire to learn. Because of financial barriers, children, and other issues common to the working-class these parents did not attend higher education. They engaged in informal learning and, ultimately, saw their dreams of a formal college education become a reality for their children. The motivation for parents to encourage their children to attend college was primarily to ensure that their children had a better life than they had in terms of opportunities for well-paying jobs. This motivation is consistent with Conner's (2001) contention that working-class learning may be a result not only of an interest in a particular subject, but also a desire for higher academic qualification in order to obtain a specific job. The participants all stated that a primary motivation to attend higher education was to get a good job in order to provide a comfortable life for their families. This finding also supports studies by Bond (1999), Littrell (1999), and Longwell-Grice

who concluded that a primary motivation for working-class men to return to school is to get a better job in order to make more money.

This engagement with formal higher education, however, came with costs, not only financially, but perhaps more significantly, in terms of psychological and emotional turmoil. hooks (1994) writes that the assumption of middle- and upper-class administrators and educators is that working-class students will willingly surrender their values and habits and assimilate into the dominant culture. This surrendering of identity often results in a "psychic turmoil" (p. 182). This psychic turmoil, or crisis, between identity and higher education culture can result in profound life changes for the working-class student. The participants in this study all experienced life changes as a result of this identity crisis. Some attempted to compartmentalize their working-class identity and their emerging middle-class identity; however, all eventually learned that these identities cannot be mutually exclusive. They learned to capitalize on aspects of their overall identity – a merging of their working-class origin and their middle-class existence – in order to thrive in both cultures. This dynamic will be discussed further in the chapter.

The psychic turmoil, or identity crisis, experienced by the participants was in part of result of incongruency with social class markers – patterns of behavior and communication (Gos, 1995). Consistent with Gos' (1995) study and the writings of Zandy (1995) the participants in this study had to learn two languages to various degrees – "public language" which is specific to their culture and "formal language." In short, working-class students, including the participants of this study, were required to become, in a sense, bilingual because their language and dialect were marginalized in relation to the dominant form of language used in the classroom (Tett & Crowther, 1998).

Another significant finding that was consistent with the reviewed literature (Cervero and Wilson, 2001; Glaser, 2002; hooks, 1994; Soliday, 1999; Tett, 2000; VanGalen, 2000) was the participants' relative lack of cultural capital compared to those from the middle- and upper-classes. Knowledge of registration processes, classroom protocol, proper dress, expensive books, personal computers, and other aspects of cultural capital were issues with the study participants. This lack of cultural capital resulted in feelings of impostership.

Finally, findings related to attitudes towards studying and writing were significant and consistent with previous studies. Bamber and Tett (1999) found that working-class students often viewed study as hard work resulting in a need to change their lives in contrast to many middle- and upper-class students who already considered education as an accepted part of their lives, not something added to their lives that is incongruent with the rest of their culture. The participants in this study had similar experiences. Many noticed the ease at which their middle-class academic peers seemed to be able to study and write in contrast to the time and effort they had to dedicate in order to pass classes. As Tobias (1998) wrote formal education plays a significant role in enabling the middle-and-upper classes to construct and maintain themselves whereas those from working-class origins often experience a sense of social distance and separation between home and school.

Along with supporting many of the findings detailed in the review of literature, this study also revealed significant findings that were not found in the literature relating to social class identity, challenges of the working-class student, as well as challenges and threats regarding coexistence in the working- and middle-classes. The remainder of this

chapter will explore these insights and conclude with implications for research and higher education.

<div align="center">Social Class Identity</div>

One of the primary questions explored in this study is how do students maintain aspects of their working-class identity. The way the question is written leads to the assumption that working-class students do maintain aspects of their working-class identity and do not adopt a middle- or upper-class identity. This assumption was only partially correct. Further, the question implies that the working-class student has some level of critical consciousness and has deliberately maintained their working-class identity. Again, this implication is not entirely correct. This section of the chapter will explore these issues.

Maintaining Characteristics of Working-Class Identity

Bottero (2004) contends that, in most cases, the literature that addresses working-class identity does not define its characteristics – "an embarrassing absence of clear-cut class identities, despite persisting inequality" (p. 987). This study helped to fill this void by identifying the characteristics of working-class identity as being a family orientation; outward displays of self confidence, but with a deep seated fear of failing or disappointing loved ones; fiscal conservatism; honesty and integrity; and the ability and stamina to perform physical labor. In general, the participants in this study, and their families, took satisfaction in a hard days work, but also desired to make life better for their children in terms of physical and emotional needs.

This study found that, although the participants could easily and enthusiastically identify characteristics of working-class identity, they were much more introspective

what asked how they maintained this identity. Maintaining working-class identity was not a yes or no proposition. Some characteristics of working-class identity were maintained, but not all, and maintaining working-class identity was not a conscious act.

I don't think I consciously tried to maintain aspects of my working-class identity. However, since thinking, reading, and writing about working-class identity in higher education I have certainly been bringing aspects of my identity, and their relationship to my educational experiences, to the forefront of my thinking. I believe that I unconsciously maintained the aspects of my working-class identity that resulted in success in coursework and discarded those aspects that caused challenges. (Dan)

Maybe I am unconsciously trying to step away from some aspects of my working-class identity. I don't consider myself working-class anymore. But, you know, maybe I am not trying to completely cut all the ties to my identity. I think it is all unconscious. (Ron)

The comment by Ron is the only instance where one of the participants acknowledged that there are also negative characteristics of working-class identity. Ron described the working-class as sometimes being too short-term oriented and as physically being "dirty with a beer gut." He is attempting to discard these and other negative aspects of his working-class identity. With the exception of Ron, all the participants described the characteristics of working-class identity in positive terms. These positive characteristics have been, for the most part, also maintained. It appears that the participants of this study have unconsciously discarded what they consider negative aspects of working-class identity and maintained positive characteristics. These positive characteristics have also been instrumental to surviving in the middle-class world of higher education. So, it

seems, the unconscious maintenance of working-class identity is focused on those characteristics that facilitate adaptation to higher education culture. Those characteristics of working-class identity that do not have utility to surviving in higher education have been discarded.

Adopting Characteristics of Middle-Class Identity

Reay (2001) suggests that working-class students attempt to negotiate a balance in a "new improved" identity, that of the middle- or upper-class, while holding on to a cohesive self. With the exception of Ron, the participants in this study did not describe the merging of identities formed as a result of their working-class origin and participation in higher education as "new and improved" but as necessary to survival. They valued aspects of their working-class identity and background.

> I have gotten this opportunity to go to school. I think I need to take advantage of it. I think that is part of the working-class ethic. When you get opportunities, you have to make the best of it and I think I have retained that piece of my identity the most. It is just part of who you are. For me it is a positive identity. I am proud of where I came from and I am not embarrassed. (Hank)

However, as Reay (2001) contends, working-class students do attempt to negotiate a balance between their working-class identity and middle-class identity. The participants in this study, similar to identifying their working-class identity, did not consciously negotiate this balance. They experienced confusion, frustration, and feelings of impostership, but did not consciously attribute these feelings to social class incongruencies.

Reay (2001) further states that higher education poses a threat to authenticity and a coherent sense of selfhood for adult working-class students. The findings of this study suggest that this is true if one views working-class identity and upper/middle-class identity as mutually exclusive. The participants in this study did initially experience a threat to their working-class authenticity, but eventually transformed their selfhood into a merged identity. So, the threat to selfhood is real, however, there also exists opportunities to grow and transform without compromising one's working-class identity and authenticity.

> I feel comfortable with my working-class identity, but also am comfortable with my identity in the middle-class. I really think I have had a richer experience in life having originated from the working-class. I had never really thought about maintaining my working-class identity until this interview. (Bob)

This tenuous balance between abandoning certain characteristics of one's working-class identity and adopting characteristics of a middle-class identity should be considered though a lens of critical consciousness. Blindly discarding and adopting aspects of one's identity based on how higher education or other upper- and middle-class institutions define success is a real threat to working-class authenticity and selfhood.

Developing Critical Consciousness

Critical consciousness – the ability to think critically about power and control in formal higher education in terms of one's class position – was another perspective that the participants in this study had not considered. In order to obtain critical consciousness one must have an awareness of hegemony which Brookfield (2005) defines as "the process by which we learn to embrace enthusiastically a system of beliefs and practices

that end up harming us and working to support the interests of others who have power over us" (p. 93). Learning to think critically about power in formal higher education and learning how to recognize working-class position, identity, and political interests is a powerful skill that had not been developed, and in some cases even considered, by the participants of the study.

An appreciation and understanding of critical consciousness was readily accepted during the respective participant interviews. However, it is important to note that the acquisition of critical consciousness was not the purpose of this study, but rather an unintended consequence of the open-ended interview process and the group session. The concept of power relationships appeared to be lurking in the back of the participants' thinking – they acknowledged that some students had more power and privilege than others, but had not thought about why or how this privilege existed, particularly in terms of social class. A common attitude was that this power and associated privileges in formal higher education were "just the way things are" and, as a result, those without power and privilege needed to work harder to survive and graduate. Until the interviews for this study, the participants had not fully thought about or questioned whether this power was legitimate and justified.

These discussions of power relationships in formal higher education, and the impact on students of working-class origin, generated discussions on how the participants' children are situated in terms of social class. Ironically, the children of all the participants are middle-class and lack some of the working-class background, identity, and perspectives of their fathers. This was a concern to some of the participants.

I look at my own kids. They don't have the same drive I had. I think in some ways not being from a working-class background puts my kids at a disadvantage because they don't have the same intensity I had. (Hank)

I know when raising my kids I was always really adamant about never identifying people as something beneath them and emphasizing that as long as you are doing honest work, you are okay. Work is honest as long as no one is doing anything that is wrong. They are earning an honest living and you respect that. Having money or being middle-class doesn't give you additional privileges. (Mack)

The participants not only desire to continue to develop their own critical consciousness, but also will strive to develop the critical consciousness of their children. Critical consciousness does not apply only to those that are oppressed; it is also the responsibility of those that are privileged to consider power relationships and their repercussions regarding formal higher education and life in general.

In summary, the findings regarding social class identity revealed that maintaining characteristics of working-class identity and adopting characteristics of middle-class identity are not fully conscious acts. The participants in this study did not abandon their working-class identity. Rather, they maintained aspects of their identity that facilitated survival in formal higher education and abandoned those aspects that hindered progress. Likewise, they adopted aspects of middle-class identity that assisted in adjusting to the middle-class culture of higher education. In short, they developed a merged identity while still maintaining the integrity of their working-class origin.

The notion of critical consciousness in terms of power relationships and privilege in

formal higher education was a concept that was nestled in the back of the participants'

mind, but had not fully surfaced until the interviews. They had an awareness that

privilege existed, but had not quite thought of this privilege in terms of social class and

legitimacy. This awareness and development of critical consciousness was an unintended

and interesting result of the interview process and subsequent discussions. The

participants are committed to ensuring that their middle-class children develop a critical

consciousness as well as an appreciation for their privileged social class status and the

impact it has on others.

<div align="center">Challenges of the Working-Class Student</div>

This study examined the impact of working-class identity across the entire continuum

of formal higher education. The participants in this study not only had undergraduate

degrees, but also graduate degrees with three of the six participants engaged in doctoral

programs. Consequently, the interviews captured insights and yielded findings from both

undergraduate and graduate experiences – a unique perspective that was not addressed in

the literature reviewed for this study. These findings centered on impostership, cultural

capital, and cultural suicide.

Impostership and Lack of Cultural Capital

Impostership – the sense among working-class students that they possess neither the

talent nor the right to become college students (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999) – was a

dilemma for all participants of the study. As Soliday (1999) found the working-class

students in this study experienced conflict when attempting to position themselves in the

classroom in ways that did not violate their own cultural integrity and identity. However,

the findings of this study suggest that impostership is not limited to early experiences in undergraduate studies. It is also a challenge that must be addressed at the graduate level.

There was no reason I couldn't have attended the best (graduate) schools except for this nagging feeling in me that I was just not good enough and I needed to go somewhere where I knew I could succeed because I can't fail. (Mack)

I had feelings of inadequacy in graduate school especially when I started. I really felt inadequate and I had been out of school for awhile. I felt people were so far advanced in terms of where I stood in my abilities. I graduated from graduate school with a 3.88 or something. I got all A's and one C in Theoretical Physics which I squeaked by in, so I wasn't ever in danger of failing but again it wasn't a pleasant experience for me because I always felt like I wasn't equal, in terms of ability, to the other students. (Mack)

Entering a doctoral program surfaced some of my working-class feelings of inadequacy and impostership. Could I hang with the other students? Did I deserve to be here? Did I deserve to be called Doctor of Education at some point (still a question that enters my mind)? Looking back on this I realize that I had issues (and still do to a certain extent) with self-efficacy and impostership. (Dan)

When I went for a Master's Degree and then when I started my doctoral program I had the same kind of thoughts, you know, why am I doing this. Do I really belong? I am not an academic, but then you figure out that maybe you are. I have gotten a little bit smarter. I eventually figured it out and developed some sense of belonging.   But earning a doctorate degree still seems incongruent to my background. People who earned doctoral degrees were from the upper-class –

people who had lots of time and money on their hands. It definitely wasn't

something that someone from a blue collar family did. (Ron)

All of the participants of this study attended graduate school later in life. They did not

progress immediately to graduate school after earning their undergraduate degree.

Perhaps these feelings of impostership which surfaced again in graduate school were

accentuated as a result of time away from formal higher education.

A cause of impostership is a lack of cultural capital – the style and patterns of

speaking, dress, and posture, the command of language, and the knowledge of cultural

matters that one brings to an educational situation (Cervero & Wilson, 2001). According

to Glaser (2002) working-class students are "expected to deny and hide their working-

class origins and internalize and display middle- and upper-class forms of cultural capital

in order to succeed and be accepted in higher education" (p. 1). In short, they are

expected to mask, or abandon, their working-class identities. Achieving the "right"

cultural capital is difficult for students from working-class backgrounds and was certainly

a challenge for the participants in this study, not only in the early stages of formal higher

education, but also at the graduate level. Different forms of cultural capital were required

at each level of education. Consequently addressing and resolving issues of cultural

capital at the undergraduate level did not resolve issues at the graduate level.

This (doctoral program) was a different ball game than attending a State school

with my working-class friends. Did I have what it took, in terms of intelligence,

reading, writing, research, and speaking ability? (Dan)

I think if you grow up around professional parents vocabulary is probably

different, the ways you do things is different. I can see that. Especially in my

doctoral program I have felt a little inadequate and out-of-place and maybe it was

because I was out of academia for a long time. Some of the students had gone

from undergraduate to graduate programs so they are well versed in the jargon.

(Hank)

The time between undergraduate and graduate level experiences also contributed to

challenges with cultural capital, particularly in terms of cultural means of production

(Soliday, 1999). For example, all of the study participants attended undergraduate school

before the use of a computer was a common practice. Papers were written long hand or

on a typewriter. However, during graduate school use of a laptop computer, online

discussions, and research via the internet were common practices and a requirement. The

participants of this study dedicated numerous hours learning how to use a computer. I,

for example, had not experienced online, threaded discussions until participating in this

doctoral program. The use of ANGEL was initially an intimidating and frustrating

experience which amplified my feelings of impostership.

Impostership and cultural capital are not only issues with young working-class

students entering college, but also with the adult working-class student studying at the

graduate level. As I write this thesis feelings of self doubt and impostership enter my

mind and often disrupt my thinking. Impostership, cultural capital, and cultural means of

productions are manifested in different forms at each level of the academic hierarchy.

Consequently, these issues must be addressed and resolved throughout the entire formal

higher education experience.

Cultural Suicide

Brookfield and Preskill (1999) define cultural suicide as the "the process whereby families, peer groups, and communities exclude from their midst students whom they see as changing in front of their eyes as a result of their engaging in learning" (p. 148). VanGalen (2000) further contends that "for working-class and poor students, success in school often signals their distance and difference from those who love them" (p. 6). While the participants in this study rarely experienced full-blown cultural suicide – total exclusion from families and working-class peer groups – they did feel a growing distance and difference from friends and family back home. Also, the findings suggest that aspects of cultural suicide did not subside as the participants progressed up the ladder of formal higher education. In fact, the opposite occurred – the psychological and emotional distances and differences between the working-class student and family and friends increased. The family and friends of the working-class student understood, as best they could, and supported the participants' participation in undergraduate school. However, attending college was strictly a stepping stone to a relatively high paying job and better lifestyle in support of a family or prospective family. College was a means to an end. The expectation of family, friends, and initially the student was that college would be completed a quickly as possible in order to get back to the "real world" of work and providing for the family. Formal education beyond undergraduate school was deemed as unnecessary and frivolous.

> The idea of continued education is foreign to her (mother). Why are you still
> going to school – you are 40-something years-old? My parents really don't
> understand why. They don't say you shouldn't be doing it, but definitely they

don't understand continuing education – going back for your Master's Degree, going back for your Doctorate. It is hard to explain to them why am I going back for my doctorate and what that will offer me. If I was 23 years-old and going for my doctorate I think the pressure would have been a lot higher from my parents not to attend. Why aren't you out working? (Hank)

I was conscious about not being stuck up to the guys I worked with and my friends from back home. They were probably a little jealous because I got the opportunity to go to college. I felt kind of guilty – here I am going to college and my buddies are back home working. Maybe I felt guilty because they didn't understand what was going on in my mind and my new world and I didn't know how to explain it. (Bob)

Resolving and reconciling aspects of cultural suicide is the responsibility of both family/friends and the working-class student. Once the working-class student develops some level of critical consciousness an awareness of cultural suicide, and its causes, can be reflected and acted upon. Cultural suicide is often manifested in a "stand-off." Family and friends are reluctant to interact because of the perception that the working-class student is smarter then they are and has chosen to abandon their working-class roots. The working-class student perceives this lack of interaction as a signal that family and friends do not have a desire to interact and understand their educational experiences. Opening up lines of communication is a first step towards dealing with aspects of cultural suicide.

The findings of this study have illuminated challenges of the working-class student in a new light, specifically feelings of impostership, lack of cultural capital and cultural

means of production, and cultural suicide. These challenges are not only the plight of the young, working-class undergraduate student, as has been prevalent in the existing literature, but are also problems that appear to escalate and change as one progresses up the hierarchy of formal education. Recognizing and addressing these challenges are keys to surviving in formal higher education while maintaining aspects of working-class identity as well as integrity.

<div align="center">Coexistence in the Working- and Middle-Classes</div>

The participants of this study were born and raised in the working-class but currently reside in the middle-class. As adult learners they have developed a merged identity by maintaining aspects of their working-class identity that are deeply imbedded in their value system or that have helped them survive in higher education. They have also adopted and developed characteristics of the middle-class that do not directly compete with their working-class background and that assist in some level of acculturation into the middle-class.

This merged identity often caused incongruencies. The findings of this study suggest that as the adult working-class student matures and develops a critical consciousness these friction points between social class cultures become viewed as opportunities for learning and understanding rather then threats against one's identity. Specific characteristics of working-class identity become useful tools that assist in dealing with the middle-class culture of higher education. In short, the participants in this study valued their role as an intellectual laborer and developed, to various degrees, into organic intellectuals.

Opportunities versus Threats

Reay (2001) suggests that working-class students are attempting to negotiate a balance in a "new improved" identity while holding on to a cohesive self. As mentioned earlier in this chapter the results of this study show that a different identity develops, not necessarily a "new improved" identity in terms of becoming identified more as middle-class than working-class. Adult working-class students are able to hold on to their cohesive selves, and their integrity, while adopting characteristics of middle-class identity.

Reay (2001) further contends that higher education poses a threat to authenticity and a coherent sense of selfhood for adult working-class students.   The literature also states that social class incongruencies, in terms of the behaviors required to "make it" in higher education compared to behaviors that allow students to be comfortable with working-class friends and family, are too great and result in the student dropping out (Bamber and Tett, 1999; hooks, 1994). Working-class students do drop out of higher education because of these social class incongruencies, however, the findings of this study suggest that if the working-class student becomes aware of his identity and develops a critical consciousness this authenticity and sense of selfhood provides tools and opportunities to thrive in formal higher education. Adult working-class students discover that certain characteristics of their working-class identity can provide opportunities, rather than threats or barriers, for survival and success in terms of graduating from formal higher education.

> I realized that an advantage that I had as a result of my working-class identity
> was the ability to work hard and be disciplined in terms of setting time aside to

read and write. I also seemed to be more organized and structured that most of

my classmates. In fact, I was surprised how unorganized and unstructured many

of my classmates were. I had a schedule for the semester and set milestones to

accomplish readings and finish papers. (Dan)

I think the biggest aspect of working-class identity that I maintained is

responsibility for lifting myself up. I am not going to feel guilty when I am

working hard. I have gotten this opportunity to go to school. I think I need to

take advantage of it. I think that is part of the working-class ethic. When you get

opportunities, you have to make the best of it and I think I have retained that piece

of my identity the most. It is just part of who you are. For me it is a positive

identity. I am proud of where I came from and I am not embarrassed." (Hank)

I think one of the advantages I has is my work ethic. That is a real big

advantage, I think. A lot of folks who are from working-class backgrounds

seemed to manage the work load well. (Hank)

I have maintained an appreciation for the working man and woman to this day

and I think that has helped me. I guess what I am saying is I feel comfortable

with my working-class identity, but also am comfortable with my identity in the

middle-class. I really think I have had a richer experience in life having

originated from the working-class. I honestly believe that. I think if things had

been handed to me I wouldn't have appreciated things in life that much. (Bob)

I think overall I am more well-adjusted than most people. I think I turned out

okay and I definitely attribute that to humble beginnings, low expectations, and a

great appreciation for what I have. I come from a humble background and I am

not pretentious. (Bob)

If you apply honesty, integrity, hard work, a sense of objective and a desire not

to disappoint, you can apply that to a job, you can apply that to education, you can

apply that to relations with other people. I think that these core working-class

values are the things that helped me in education. (Don)

I think inherent to the working-class is a strong work ethic. I always had to

work for what I got, and it was no different in graduate school. I was always very

disciplined. Again, that goes back to my working-class background and being

disciplined helped me in graduate school. I really don't think any attitudes or

attributes I acquired based on my working-class background hindered me. (Mack)

I think what finally got me through college was the realization that it would

take hard work to succeed. You can be brilliant or you can work hard or some

kind of combination of the two can get you through college. For me it was just a

lot of hard work – working harder than most people. Studying and research took

a little bit longer for me. I worked a series of near term goals, get to the next

paper that was due, and got through the semester. I time lined the semester out

and I knew what I had to do. My attitude was a hard working, short term/near

term kind of outlook. (Ron)

Another characteristic of the adult working-class student that was unique and

prominent in this study were initial attitudes towards attendance in higher education.

While their middle- and upper-class classmates generally appeared to approach

attendance in higher education as an event in their lives that was expected and routine,

the participants in this study were humbled. They considered higher education a unique

opportunity.

> I found people from middle- and upper-class backgrounds were more critical
>
> about the quality of education or the type of service they were getting where I was
>
> just happy to be there. (Hank)
>
> I was always humbled by the chance to go to college – it was an opportunity
>
> and a blessing. (Bob)
>
> I felt honored and privileged to participate in the doctoral program. I didn't
>
> feel like the university owed me anything. Others, it seemed, had the opposite
>
> attitude. Because they, or their company, were paying significant amounts of
>
> money to attend graduate school they felt, perhaps rightfully so, that the
>
> institution should consider their needs in terms of work load, scheduling, etc.
>
> They felt that the institution owed them something. (Dan)

These feelings of humbleness, honor, and privilege, although admirable characteristics

particularly form the perspective of the professors and the institution, often amplified

feelings of impostership and impeded development of critical consciousness. Indeed,

higher education is certainly an opportunity, especially for those from a working-class

background, but students must approach this experience balancing these feelings and

attitudes with a critical perspective.

Role as an Intellectual Laborer and Organic Intellectual

Perhaps a first step in achieving this balance is to consider that the working-class

adult student has an obligation to his family and community. This study found that,

because of emotional and financial support, working-class students have a feeling of indebtedness to family and friends.

> When I got that degree it was almost more of my parent's degree than it was my degree. I lived my mom and dad's dream of getting a college education. That was not necessarily my own dream. My parents were always my biggest supporters. They wanted me to go to college and I did. (Bob)

> For about as long as I can remember, my mother talked about when I was going to college. It was never a matter of if you were going to college; it was always a matter of when you graduate from high school you go to college. My mom didn't have the opportunity to go college and I think that was something she wanted to do. So maybe in a sense my mom was living vicariously through me – I was doing something that perhaps she wanted to do but didn't have the opportunity to do. My mom was the principle driver and my dad basically was a supporter. (Don)

> I think that my father and mother were realists and, without being cruel, looked at the potential of their children to go to college in terms of their intellectual ability and then made some decisions on who they would support and who they wouldn't support in terms of higher education. I was one they supported. (Mack)

> My parents were very supportive of attendance at college – there never seemed to be a question about me attending higher education. I also received significant support from my grandmothers. (Dan)

The participants in this study also had a mentor, or someone who provided encouragement and advice, who originated from their working-class community. Recalling the positive impact these people had on their early experiences in higher education, the study participants had a desire to also give back to their family and community by becoming mentors and providing advice to those from working-class origins that were experiencing the same challenges they had experienced many years before. In short, the participants had become, to a certain extent, organic intellectuals (Gramsci, 2003/1971, 2000).

> I was fortunate to have this cousin that was a role model for me. He was the one that my parents would turn to and say, you know, your cousin has just graduated from high school and he is going to college. Since he was a role model for me, it was like validation of what mom and dad had been saying about the value of higher education. I was fortunate to be able to talk to my cousin about what college is, what does going to college mean, and how it is different from high school. He was a big help to me in that sense and that worked out so well we are like brothers today. I think he had a fairly significant influence on my life because he was a couple of steps ahead of me and I could turn to him and ask what does this mean, how does this work. (Don)

> I do have a number of colleagues and friends who have earned their doctorates – many have come from a working-class background. They have been a tremendous help through this experience both emotionally and practically. I take a great deal of satisfaction helping others and giving advice, particularly to those from working-class backgrounds. (Dan)

It must be emphasized, however, that in terms of becoming an organic intellectual, those in this study did not intend "to protract an all-encompassing assault upon the State and the capitalist class" (Holst, 1999, p. 418). Rather than engaging in physical labor, they did intend to continue to engage in intellectual labor and "remain in contact with them (the working-class) to become, as it were, the whalebone in the corset" (Gramsci, 2000, p. 340). Because they were situated within the oppressed class they have a deep appreciation and understanding of the plight of the working-class student and can better compel awareness. An organic intellectual, then, can be anyone who has the motivation to know, feel, and understand formal higher education at a higher level than the majority of the working-class population and has the desire to take action – in this case to help those that have a desire to attend formal higher education. A prerequisite to evolving into a working-class, organic intellectual is a keen sense of one's own identity and how it conflicts, intersects and merges with middle- and upper-class cultures as well as developing an awareness of hegemony and, as a result, critical consciousness. This study offers an additional perspective to Gramsci's concept of the organic intellectual.

In summary, the findings of this study indicate that coexistence in the working- and middle-classes not only presents threats to working-class identity, which is documented in the literature, but also opportunities for growth of both the working-class student and his academic peers. Characteristics of working-class identity, such as a work ethic, short-term orientation, diligence, and others also facilitated survival and ultimate success in terms of graduation. Attitudes towards attendance in formal higher education such as feeling humble and honored were also unique findings in this study. Finally, the participants of this study were acutely aware of the sacrifices that their working-class

families provided in order for them to attend higher education. They had a desire to

become organic intellectuals – to give back to their families and communities by helping

future working-class students deal with the challenges and capitalize on the opportunities

of formal higher education. The findings of this study show that a healthy and happy

coexistence in the working- and middle-classes is very much possible; however, a

prerequisite is having a clear understanding of opportunities and threats as they relate to

one's social class positionality in higher education. Having a critical consciousness is

imperative to this understanding.

<div align="center">Implications for Future Research</div>

Current research on the impact of social class on formal higher education is

incomplete. As suggested in Chapter 1 a reason for this absence and variance in the

literature may be the primary source of scholarly work – professors who predominantly

originate from and reside in the middle- and upper-classes. Recent literature (Hall & du

Gay, 2007; Nesbit, 2005) has centered on cultural identity, class and adult education

policy, literacy issues, pedagogical issues, as well as the intersections of class, gender,

and race. However, little attention has been paid to the problem that this study addressed

- how adult working-class students make meaning of and maintain aspects of their

working-class identity while immersed in the middle- and upper-class culture of formal

higher education.

Implications of Working-Class Origin on Graduate Studies

There are a number of areas of research that are yet to be explored pertaining to the

intersection of social class and formal higher education. One area of future research is

the impact of social class identity on enrollment, participation, and graduation from

higher educational institutions with a focus on graduate school. As this study revealed the impact of class of origin on the higher education experience is not limited to entry into college or undergraduate studies. Impostership, cultural capital, and cultural suicide issues in graduate school are often amplified, as in the case with aspects of cultural suicide, and manifested in unique ways as compared to undergraduate studies.

Further, do these implications of working-class origins vary in intensity and duration for those that progress into graduate school immediately after undergraduate studies versus those, as was the case in this study, who had a gap in time between undergraduate and graduate studies? Perhaps feelings of impostership and lack of cultural capital that surfaces again in graduate school is accentuated as a result of time away from formal higher education. Maybe friends and family are more accepting of those that attend graduate school later in life versus those that attend undergraduate and graduate schools without a break. These questions, and others relating to implications of working-class origin on graduate studies, are ripe for research and study.

Intersections of Social Class and other Aspects of Multicultural Studies

Heuristic inquiry, the methodology for this study, is based on a question that is a personal challenge – in this case, my attempt to maintain aspects of a working-class identity in a middle- and upper-class environment – and a desire to understand one's self and the world in which one lives (Moustakas, 1990). Consequently this study was very focused in terms of the composition of the participant population. The participants' characteristics were very similar to and a direct reflection of me, the researcher. All were middle aged, heterosexual, white males from a working-class origin who attended formal higher education and graduate school. Further research is needed on the myriad on

intersections between social class and other aspects of multiculturalism. Did my wife, and other women from working-class origins, have the same experiences in formal higher education as the males in this study? Is their working-class identity different? How have they maintained aspects of their identity? These same questions can be asked for those working-class students from various ethnicities and races and those that have different sexual orientations. In terms of ethnicity, are there differences in working-class identity formulation and maintenance of those who families originated from Europe compared to those originating from South America? What about differences between those who trace there lineage from Ireland versus those from Germany?

Everyone in this study was also born and raised in the Northern portion of the United States with most from the Midwest (Illinois, Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin). Further research could explore the differences, if any, of students from working-class origin that were raised in different regions of the United States. Are the experiences and challenges of working-class students from the south different from those from the west or north?

Along with a geographical research focus, further studies could explore the experiences of working-class students in terms of population densities. For example, does a working-class student from the Bronx have the same issues with impostership in higher education as a student from a farm in Wisconsin? The intersections of social class and other aspects of multiculturalism are numerous, multifaceted, and largely unexplored.

Influence of Military Background on the Working-Class Student

An unintentional characteristic of the participants in this study is that they all served, or are serving, in the military. This study focused on how working-class origin, not

military training and experiences, impacted on experiences in formal higher education in terms of maintenance of identity. As a result, I purposely steered interviews and dialogue away from the impact of military experiences and culture on experiences in higher education and attempted to focus on social class. However, based on sidebar discussions as well as my own experiences, the military certainly has shaped identity and influenced approaches to attendance, experiences, and attitudes in formal higher education. This impact of the combination of military background and working-class origin on perceptions and experiences in higher education is in need of research and study.

This research and study could focus on a number of different areas. For example, the participants in this study were all officers. The military has its own social class structure – enlisted, non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and officers. Further studies could look at, for example, differences between NCOs of working-class origin compared to officers in terms of experiences and challenges in formal higher education both in the civilian education system and the military education system.

Officers also receive there commissions from various sources – the Service Academies, the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), State Academies, or direct commissions. Does the source of commission, coupled with social class of origin, influence attitudes and experience in civilian and military education? Also, are there differences depending on Service or Component? Does an Active Duty Navy officer have different experiences and attitudes than an Army National Guard officer? As is the case with research in multiculturalism, the approaches to research and study of social class and formal higher education from a military perspective are numerous.

Family Composition and Higher Education

While conducting the final group interview session for this study, one of the participants noted that we all came from stable families. That is, there were no broken homes or divorces in our backgrounds. Our discussion then centered on how this factor influenced our experiences in formal higher education as well as the maintenance of our respective working-class identities. We concluded that stability in our families must have, in some way, impacted formulation and maintenance of our identities. Further research is clearly needed to indentify how family stability impacts identity and participation in formal higher education.

Relating to family composition, another prospective study could look at family positioning and impact on identity and higher education. Does being the oldest child versus the youngest child make a difference in terms of dealing with impostership, cultural suicide, cultural capital, and the other challenges that are inherent with originating from the working-class? Is there a difference if the oldest or youngest child is male or female?

Finally, a strong concern was expressed by the participants in this study regarding their children's attitudes and perceptions of attending formal higher education in light of the fact that their children are originating from the middle-class. Considering that the father, and in some instances the mother, of these children originate from the working-class what influences, attitudes, and behaviors have been instilled in the children? Have the middle-class children of parents originating from the working-class adopted some of the characteristics of a working-class identity? If so, how does this impact their identity in terms of survival in formal higher education? Or have these middle-class children

discarded their parents' working-class identity and developed their own middle-class identity? Is there a difference in attitude, perspectives, and approaches to formal higher education by those middle-class students whose parents originated from the working-class versus those students whose parents originated from the middle- or upper-classes? This is a potential area of study that could also be examined from the perspective of race and ethnic identity. One of the participants of this study, a second generation Italian-American married to a Korean woman of upper-class origin, commented about the importance of instilling in his sons an appreciation of their Italian heritage while, at the same time, helping them to also appreciate their Korean roots. How does the merging of ethnic backgrounds and parents of different social class origins effect children in regards to attitudes and perceptions towards formal higher education? Again, there are a number of potential areas for study regarding family composition and impact on formal higher education.

<div align="center">Implications for the Practice of Adult Education</div>

This study has revealed a number of implications regarding the impact of working-class origin and identity on the practice of adult education. These implications centered on curriculum development, impact on learning and development and classroom interactions, and formal higher education responsibilities.

Social Class and Multicultural Curriculum

A significant implication for the practice of adult education is accepting and institutionalizing social class as a primary element of multiculturalism along with gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. This acceptance should then result in social class studies being fully integrated into multicultural curriculum. This integration would

require significant research and writing to include development of case studies by those that have been thoroughly engaged in social class issues. A search of the internet resulted in numerous programs in gender, race, and ethnic studies, but comparatively few in social class studies. As suggested earlier in this thesis, a reason for this may be that the vast majority of scholars, curriculum designers, and authors originate from the middle- and upper-classes and, consequently, may lack awareness of the impact of social class, particularly working-class origin, on formal higher education practice.

The results of this study have shown that social class origin and identity does have a significant impact on perceptions, attitudes, and survival in higher education. The study also highlights in the reality of hegemony and power in the middle-class world of higher education. These results, and others relating to social class, should be a part of the multicultural curriculum in formal higher education as they are in the studies of other elements of multiculturalism.

This study is an example of the result of social class awareness facilitated by higher education. During the first semester of my doctoral program we watched portions of the film *Educating Rita* as part of our studies in multiculturalism and adult education. This film triggered in me an awareness and interest of the intersection of social class, particularly working-class, and adult education. However, portions of this film and some short readings were not enough for me or, I believe, the other students in my cohort. Also, social class awareness should not be viewed as important only for those in the marginalized classes (under-class and working-class) as studies in race should not limited to those of color. This awareness is also important, perhaps more so, to those in the

classroom who are privileged in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and social class origin.

Social class and Impacts on Teaching, Learning and Perspective

This study also reveals implications for adult education in the classroom in terms of teaching, learning, and the perspectives of students from working-class origins. Professors must be cognizant of their social class origin and resulting attitudes, perceptions, and approaches towards teaching and learning. Because social class origin is physically transparent, with the possible exception of dress and manner of speaking, there may be a tendency of professors to overlook or dismiss social class origin as a factor in teaching and learning. If there is a difference in social class origin between the professor and the student, and resulting differences in speaking, body language, study habits, and reading and writing ability, the professor may develop biases against the working-class student and biases in favor of those students that that originate from the middle- or upper-classes.

The results of this study show that the working-class student is humbled to be in the higher education classroom and is under pressure, from a financial and emotional perspective, to survive. These students also have feelings of impostership, lack of cultural capital, and may be experiencing aspects of cultural suicide with friends and family. In short, the working-class student is generally highly motivated, but is also highly challenged. Professors must take these motivations and challenges into account as they establish a learning environment in their respective classrooms. They must consider strategies to connect not only to those of the dominant classes, but also to those of the working-class. They must consider individual learning strengths and weaknesses and

help facilitate the survival of the working-class student. The implications of not taking these factors into consideration are the failure of students from working-class origin and eventually a one dimensional classroom in terms of social class.

The responsibility for effective classroom interaction and dialogue also resides with the student. The student of working-class origin must take responsibility for self and be an active participant in learning. A first step in active engagement, as revealed in this study, is development of critical consciousness. Understanding power relationships, both intentional and unintentional, will help the working-class student cope with perceived inequities in the classroom and with the entire formal higher education experience. Once the student develops this critical lens he or she will be able to discern privilege and marginalization as well as the consequences of being situated in each of these categories. The critically conscious working-class students can help others, both privileged and marginalized, understand these power relationships and, as a result, facilitate equity in the classroom.

The working-class student must also recognize the challenges of being marginalized in the middle-class environment of higher education. Once these challenges, such as impostership, cultural suicide, lack of cultural capital and cultural means of production, are acknowledged strategies can be developed that may lead to resolution. After critical consciousness and self awareness is developed the working-class student is more apt to willingly engage in dialogue and learning in the classroom.

Responsibilities of Formal Higher Education

A final implication for the practice of adult education is the overall responsibility of formal higher education to recognize its role in facilitating the closing of the social class

chasm existing in the United States. The growing perception in America is that our society is ever increasingly being defined as the "haves" and "have nots" and that education, along with income, race, political party, and gender, is a factor that influences the perception of being a "have not" (Allen & Dimock, 2007). Formal higher education administrators and educators have a responsibility to address this perception by recognizing the findings revealed in this study – specifically issues with cultural capital and those associated with social class transparency in the classroom such as impostership and marginalization.

As noted earlier this thesis, some institutions are attempting to make formal higher education at "elite" schools more accessible ("Penn Will Offer Free Tuition," 2006). However, accessibility is not enough. As this study has shown, the challenges of the student of working-class origin, particularly in terms of identity, do not end once the student is admitted to an institution of higher learning. A more holistic approach must be developed to facilitate the survival, and ultimately the graduation, of the working-class student. Integration of the working-class student into formal higher education is a significant component of alleviating the growing disparity between the "haves" and "have nots."

Formal higher education also has the potential to reduce the social class chasm by addressing Habermas' concepts of communicative action and the three crises of Western society – the decline of the public sphere, the threat to civil society, and the invasion of the lifeworld.   Habermas (1971) contends that an outcome of communicative action, the synthesis of linguistic and symbolic action, is a society engaged in decision-making processes on the basis of discussion free from domination. The adult education

classroom, if free from social class as well as other forms of domination, has the potential to be a forum for this interaction and communication and, potentially, a mechanism for coordinating action.

The decline of the public sphere, Habermas' first crisis of Western society, highlights the lack of opportunities for public discussions – a public sphere where people can discuss issues and propose possible solutions (Brookfield, 2005; Habermas, 1981/1984; Habermas, 1981/1987). Power and money are overwhelming society at the expense of a public sphere where exchange of ideas and human interaction once were the dominant discourse. Consequently, the opinion of the marginalized segment of society, such as the working-class, is becoming increasingly repressed. Adult education can continue to contribute to the disempowerment of the public sphere or it can consciously seek ways to provide forums for discussion and understanding. The adult educator has a responsibility, when appropriate, to provide time for students to discuss issues and problems relating not only to society in general but also to the specific learning environment in order to express points of view and opinions.

The second crisis – the threat to civil society – comprises a threat to "all those forms of collective human association not directly controlled by the state or corporations" (Brookfield, 2005, pp. 234-235). The threat to civil society and associated formal and informal organizations is one of the causes of the decline of the public sphere. As our society continues to turn inward and becomes more and more immersed in technology such as television and other forms of media rather than face-to-face human interaction as a means of gathering information and forming opinions, the more civil society becomes threatened. Adult education can continue to facilitate this threat or can become a tool to

decrease the threat to civil society by offering open and unbiased forums for collective human association.

Invasion of the lifeworld, the third crisis occurring in Western society, can also be addressed by formal adult education. The lifeworld is how one views and interacts with the world – in short, one's identity. This interaction is based on the various lenses through which one views the world. These lenses have been created and maintained by life experiences. Respective lifeworlds are constantly being shaped and invaded by daily interactions with the dominant discourses of society. One, then, must have opportunities to reflect on these dynamics and assess their impact on his or her respective lifeworld – an opportunity that can be provided by formal higher education.

Conclusion

This study revealed a number of implications for research and for the practice of adult education. In terms of research the topic of working-class identity and impact on graduate studies has yet to be fully explored. This study has started the discussion. Also, there are a myriad of intersections between social class and other aspects of multiculturalism, to include the military culture, that are in need of further study. An unintended commonality of the participants of this study was the stability of their families while being raised. This highlighted another area of potential study – working-class family composition and the influence on identity and survival in formal higher education.

A significant implication for the practice of adult education was fully integrating social class into multicultural studies. Social class is sometimes touched on in the curriculum, but is normally relegated in importance and relevance. Also, working-class

identity and teaching, learning, and perspective are implications that must be considered by the professor as well as the student. The working-class student brings unique challenges and opportunities into the higher education learning environment. Finally, formal higher education has a responsibility to facilitate equity in our society. This can be done not only by making higher education more accessible to those of working-class origin, but also by taking a holistic approach throughout the entire educational experience to help the working-class student, and others marginalized segments of our society, survive and graduate. Habermas' concepts of communicative action and crises facing Western society also offer opportunities for formal higher education to take responsibility to facilitate equity in academia as well as in our society.

This study is a step towards fulfilling this responsibility. I explored the interaction, in terms of identity, between adult working-class students and the middle-class environment of formal higher education. The following questions were answered: What does being working-class mean to working-class students? What are the experiences of working-class students attending formal higher education? How do working-class students maintain aspects of their identity? The meanings of working-class identity, experiences in higher education, and the challenges of maintaining aspects of identity revealed in the findings of this study provide insight and understanding for those engaged in formal higher education – administrators, professors, and students alike.

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VITA

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